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EDITED BY THE REV.

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JAMES MOFFATT, M.A., D.D.

IN TWO VOLUMES

VOLUME ONE

GENESIS TO ST. MARK

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HODDER AND STOUGHTON

NEW YORK

GEORGE H. DORAN COMPANY

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CONTENTS

	PAGE
GENESIS	1
EXODUS	73
LEVITICUS	123
NUMBERS	127
DEUTERONOMY	142
JOSHUA	166
JUDGES	173
RUTH	196
THE FIRST BOOK OF SAMUEL	201
THE SECOND BOOK OF SAMUEL	219
THE FIRST BOOK OF KINGS	230
THE SECOND BOOK OF KINGS	254
THE FIRST BOOK OF THE CHRONICLES	274
THE SECOND BOOK OF THE CHRONICLES	292
EZRA	299
NEHEMIAH	301
ESTHER	307
JOB	314
PSALMS	363
PROVERBS	513
ECCLESIASTES	531
SONG OF SOLOMON	558
ISAIAH	572
JEREMIAH	650
LAMENTATIONS	671
EZEKIEL	676
DANIEL	706
HOSEA	726
JOEL	734
AMOS	736
OBADIAH	739
JONAH	740
MICAH	743
NAHUM	751
HABAKKUK	751
ZEPHANIAH	754
HAGGAI	754
ZECHARIAH	755
MALACHI	764
ST. MATTHEW	769
ST. MARK	988

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THE BOOK OF GENESIS

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GENESIS

GENESIS

In the British Museum Library there is a folio Latin Bible, published in 1546, which contains marginal notes by various Reformers. In the narrow space above the heading of Genesis two and a half lines have been inserted. The Latin sentence tells us that 'the whole Book of Genesis excels in sweetness all other books and histories'. The German reads: 'There is no more beautiful and more lovable little book'. At the end of the inscription are the initials in Greek letters: 'Ph. M.,' i.e. Philip Melanchthon.

THE BOOK OF GENESIS

It was on the book of Genesis that Luther delivered his last lectures in the Autumn of 1545. At the conclusion of his lecture on 17 November he said: 'This is the beloved Genesis; God grant that after me it may be better done. I can do no more—I am weak. Pray God that He may grant me a good and happy end.' He began no new lectures.

GENESIS—THE BOOK OF BEGINNINGS

The book of Genesis is the book of origins. There is nothing final in this book. The Divine plan of redemption is not fully unfolded, but the first movements in history towards its outworking are clearly revealed. There are three divisions.

I. Generations.— In this division there are two sections.

(*a*) We have the Bible declaration of the origin of the material universe, and it is one in which faith finds reasonable foundation. The evolutionary process has never been able to discover a link between the highest form of animal life and man; that link is supplied in the affirmation 'God created man in His own image'.

(*b*) The relation of man to God and nature was conditiond by a simple and yet perfectly clear command, which indicated the limits of liberty. Man was completed by the bringing to him of one who was of himself, and in whom he found the true complement of his own nature.

II. Degeneration.— Everything commences with the individual. Spiritual evil took material form to reach spiritual man through the material side of his being. Moving swiftly upon the degradation of the individual came that of the family. The race moved on, but the shadow of the issue of sin was on the whole of them. This ended in a Divine interference of swift and overwhelming judgment. Out of the devastation a remnant was saved, and human history started forward upon a new basis, as there emerged a new idea of social relationship, that of the nation. The book chronicles the story of the failure of this national idea. Finally, the time of continuity from Shem to Abram is declared.

III. Regeneration.— The regeneration of the individual gives us the account of the dealings of God with three men: Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. In this study of the beginnings of the regeneration of the individual the truth is revealed that the one principle through which God is able to operate is that of faith in Himself. Through the sons of Jacob the circle widens, and we see the movement toward the regeneration of the family. Through years God purged the family and society, and in the final verses of the book of Genesis the national idea is seen for a moment as a prophecy and a hope.—G. Campbell Morgan, *The Analysed Bible*, p. 3.

THE CREATION

Genesis i. and ii.

Every writing must be judged by the object the writer has in view. If the object of the writer of these chapters was to convey physical information, then certainly it is imperfectly fulfilled. But if his object was to give an intelligible account of God's relation to the world and to man, then it must be owned that he has been successful in the highest degree. Intimate communion with God, a spirit trained to discern spiritual things, a perfect understanding and zeal for God's purpose, these are qualities quite independent of a knowledge of the discoveries of science.

I. This then is the first lesson of the Bible—that at the root and origin of all this vast universe there abides a living, conscious Spirit, who wills and knows and fashions all things. The belief of this changes for us the whole face of nature, and instead of a chill, impersonal world of forces to which no appeal can be made, and in which matter is supreme, gives us the home of a Father. This becomes immensely clearer as we pass into the world of man.

II. The other great truth that this writer teaches is that man was the chief work of God, for whose sake all else was brought into being. It is conceivable that in this scarcely discernible speck in the vastness of the universe should be played out the chiefest act in the history of God. To Him who maintains these systems in their respective relations and orbits it can be no burden to relieve the needs of individuals.—Marcus Dods, *The Book of Genesis*, p. 1.

GOD THE CREATOR OF ALL THINGS

Genesis i., ii. 1-3.

There is a Persian fable that God created the world a vast plain and sent His angels to sow it with flower

seeds. But Satan was watching, bent on destruction. He buried every seed underground; he called on the rain to fall and rot God's handiwork, and so, he thought, creation was destroyed. But as he stood gazing the seeds began to grow; they rose into the sunlight and opened into a thousand forms of beauty. The new world in all its wonder revealed the wisdom and the power of the Creator.

'How do you know whether there be a God?' was asked once of a Bedouin, and he replied: 'How do I know whether a camel or a man passed my tent last night—*by their footprints in the sand*'.

CREATED!

'God created the earth.'—Genesis i. 1.

Some words do not terminate in themselves. 'Created' is only the first syllable in an infinitely greater word. What if at the end it should turn out that all the words expressive of power, wisdom, love, care, should be run into one grand vocable?

I. The word 'created' is but the first syllable of all the words that belong to it, and they a million thick, squared and cubed by other millions up to the point of infinity.

God not only created the world, He drowned the world, and in Sodom and Gomorrah He typically burned the world, and in John He so loved the world as to redeem it with blood: all this is implied in the word 'create'. We must break create as a word up into its constituent particles or elements; it is a multitudinous word, a verbal host, a countless throng of ideas, suggestions, encouragements, responsibilities.

II. God created the earth, God destroyed the earth by drowning, God burned the earth with fire, and after all these processes we come to John iii. 16, 'God loved the world'. Love is a bigger word than create. Love will never give up the world. It is given to love to save the whole earth.

III. We might now reverse the process. Instead of saying, God created, destroyed, redeemed, loved, we might say loved, redeemed, destroyed, created. This is one of the great words that reads the same backwards as forwards. There are a few such words in the English language. All the time God is creating the earth. Do not imagine that creation is a separate and final act; it is God's inclusive ministry. Whatever He does is an aspect of creation, formation, culture, development, and ultimate sanctification, and crowning with the bays and garlands of the heavenly paradise. God is creating man. There is an elementary sense in which man was created countless centuries ago: there is a spiritual sense in which man is being created every day. 'Ye must be born again' is the gospel of every sunrise; every day is birthday. We are born into a higher life, a nobler conception, a fuller manhood.

IV. At what period of this process are we standing? Some of us are standing at the period of chastisement. We are being drowned or we are being burned, we are being sorely smitten or utterly desolated; but God has promised that He will see that a remnant remains out of which He will grow the flower of immortality.—Joseph Parkes, *City Temple Pulpit*, vol. vii. p. 128.

THE MESSAGE OF THE BOOK OF GENESIS

'In the beginning God.'—Genesis i. 1.

From some points of view the book of Genesis is the most interesting in the Bible. It is the book of beginnings, the book of origins, the book of the story of God's dealings with man. It has an interest and an importance to which no other document of antiquity can pretend. When we turn to the study of Genesis as a whole, the first thing we notice is the unity of plan in the book. Though forming part of a greater whole it also is a complete work. It was written to show how Israel, in answer to the call, and in accordance with the purpose of God, gradually emerged from among many other tribes and peoples, into a separate and distinct existence as the people of Jehovah.

I. Genesis emphasizes the Divine sovereignty and supremacy. Its opening words are as emphatic a testimony to this as can be found in the whole Bible. The Bible makes no attempt to prove the existence of God, nor does it strive to prove the supremacy of God. But look on the book before us. In it everything is traced up to God. God is sovereign, God is supreme, God is first. Therefore Genesis evidences itself to be a true revelation from God. But what is true of the book is true also of life. Our lives are meant to be revelations of God. This cannot be until by utter consecration of ourselves to Him we have in our lives made God first.

II. Genesis emphasizes the Divine grace and love. The revelation of the Bible is essentially a revelation of redemption, and the redemption note is sounded from the first. The whole record of Genesis is a record of the grace of God combating man's sin. The whole story is a story of Divine love, the story of One with whom judgment is a strange work. And this love throughout all this book is seen working with a purpose.

III. Genesis emphasizes the Divine holiness. It represents God as approachable to men, and yet as unapproachable by men. This book teaches us what subsequent revelation confirms, that if the sinner is to approach God so as to be accepted by Him, he must approach God in the way of God's appointment. But this is a lesson which, in our day, we need specially to learn. We dwell so much on the Divine love and the riches of the Divine grace that we are apt to forget that the grace is only bestowed upon us in the Beloved. In our joy at the revelation which Christ made to us of the love of God, we are in danger of forgetting that that love of God reaches men so as to save them only through Jesus Christ.—H. C. Macgregor, *Messages of the Old Testament*, p. 3.

THE HOLY TRINITY

(*For Trinity Sunday*)

'In the beginning God.'—Genesis i. 1.

Some people tell us that we cannot find any mention of the word 'Trinity' in the Bible. Perhaps not;

but we do find, what is more important, the doctrine of the Holy Trinity most clearly set forth.

I. What saith the Scriptures?—The Scriptures which have been brought before us in our services to-day are all concerned with the blessed truth that our God is a Triune God, and that in the unity of the Godhead there are three Persons—God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost. The First Lesson this morning set before us the vision granted to Isaiah of the thrice-holy God, and in the Second Lesson we read of St. John's vision wherein was revealed the threefold omnipotence of God—which is, which was, and which is to be, the Almighty. This evening we read as our First Lesson the first chapter of the Bible, which tells us of *God* creating the world by the *Word*, after that the *Spirit* had moved upon the face of the waters; and in the Second Lesson (Ephesians iv.) we notice St. Paul's reference to One Father, One Lord, and One Spirit. These are but samples, as it were, of the teaching of the Scriptures on the great and glorious truth we think of to-day.

II. What saith the Church?—It is not possible for us to *understand* the great mystery thus brought before us, but the Church in some measure explains what it involves. In the Apostles' Creed we have brought before us the definite work of each Person in the Blessed Trinity. In the Nicene Creed this is still more clearly defined. In the Athanasian Creed we have the relation of these three Persons each to the other, presented to our view.

III. God, the Centre of the Universe.—The inspiring thought which comes to us from a consideration of our text is the Triune God as the Centre of all things. This first chapter of Genesis reminds us of God as the Centre of the universe. 'In the beginning God.' That is our faith in regard to the world. Geologists and scientists may tell us that the world is much older than anyone imagines, but that does not affect our faith. What does it matter to us if the world is millions of years old? We go back to the beginning of things and say that whenever that time was, God was the Creator of the universe. No scientific teaching can get behind that. Many scientists admit that there must have been a first cause, but they cannot explain to us on scientific principles what it was. It is here that the Bible supplies what is missing, and it tells us that, 'In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth'. That is the bedrock upon which the Christian takes his stand; thus he can give an answer to all the criticisms and doubts of the scientists. What the scientist cannot explain the humble believer can appreciate in the light of God's own revelation. And just as God *created* the world, so He *upholds* all things by the Word of His power. When he looks up into the heavens the believer sees behind and beyond all else 'the Glory of God'; and when he considers this great universe he thinks of it as God's handiwork. This thought gives a new interest to the study of nature; and the beauty of it all is that the Christian believer knows that He Who was the Creator, and is the Centre of the universe, is his loving Heavenly Father.

IV. God, the Centre of the Affairs of this Life.—God was not only the Creator of the world; He remains the Centre of its affairs. He it is Who makes and dethrones kings. He it is Who governs all things in earth. This is a truth which is not realized so often as it should be. Men talk of empires as though they could build them up as and when they wished; but depend upon it the empire in which He is not recognized rests upon an unstable foundation. The empire that will endure is that which is built on the eternal principles of righteousness.

V. God, the Centre of the Individual Life.—But, lastly, what God is in the universe and in the affairs of men, that He is also in the individual life. Are we conscious of this great truth that the great Triune God is the Centre of our life? that in Him we live and move and have our being? Do we realize the controlling, the guiding, the inspiring, the impelling power of God in our own individual life? If not, it is because we have let sin have dominion over us, and thus God has been shut out.

REFERENCES.—I. 1.—H. P. Liddon, *University Sermons* (2nd series), p. 38, 1890; *Sermons and Addresses*, p. 56. W. H. Hutchings, *Sermon Sketches*, p. 54. A. Coote, *Twelve Sermons*, p. 20. T. G. Bonney, *Sermons on Questions of the Day*, p. 1. A. G. Mortimer, *The Church's Lessons*, vol. i. p. 179. E. White, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxxviii. p. 331. B. Jowett, *Sermons on Faith and Doctrine*, p. 282. J. C. M. Bellew, *Sermons*, vol. iv. p. 241. H. Alford, *Quebec Chapel Sermons*, vol. iv. p. 1. I. 1-5.—C. H. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xi. No. 660. I. 2.—A. P. Stanley, *Sermons on Special Occasions*, p. 138. Bishop Browne, *Old Testament Outlines*, p. 2.

'God said, Let there be light, and there was light.'—GENESIS I. 3.

DR. A. C. BRADLEY quotes these words in his *Oxford Lectures on Poetry*, pp. 57, 58. He says, 'I will take a last example. It has probably been mentioned in almost every account of the sublime since Longinus quoted it in his work on Elevation of Style. And it is of special interest here because it illustrates at one and the same time the two kinds of sublimity which we are engaged in distinguishing. "God said, Let there be light, and there was light." The idea of the first and instantaneous appearance of light, and that the whole light of the whole world is sublime; and its primary appeal is to sense. The further idea, that this transcendently glorious apparition is due to mere words, to a breath—our symbol of tenuity, evanescence, impotence to influence material bulk—heightens enormously the impression of absolutely immeasurable power.'

'Let there be light.'—GENESIS I. 3.

THERE is a very remarkable reference to this passage in the writings of St. John of the Cross (*Obras Espirituales*, vol. ii. p. 394). The Spanish mystic is seeking to draw a clear contrast between the dark night of the soul, as it is understood by the saints, and the darkness of sin. There may be two reasons, he says, why the eye fails to see. It may be in

obscurity (*á escuras*), or it may be blind. 'God is the light and the true object of the soul; and when He fails to illuminate it, the soul is in darkness, although its vision may remain very keen. When it is in sin, or when the appetite is filled with other things, it is blind.' *'Una cosa es estar á escuras, otra estar en tinieblas.'* By the first he means the darkness of vision, a darkness caused by excess of light; by the second he means the gross darkness of sin. He uses the expression *'ciego en pecado'*—'blind in sin'. 'But he who lives in obscurity *may* live there without sin. And this in two ways: as regards his natural being which receives no light from some natural *things*, and as regards his supernatural being, which receives no light from many supernatural things. Until the Lord said, *Fiat lux* there was darkness over the face of the deep cavern of the soul's understanding. The deeper that abyss, and the more profound its caves, so much the deeper and more unfathomable is the darkness when God, who is Light, does not illuminate them with His beams.' Of itself, the writer goes on, the soul can travel only from one darkness to another —*'guiado por aquella tiniebla, porque no puede Suiar unatiniebla sino a otra teniebla'*—('guided by the darkness itself, because one darkness can lead only to another darkness'). He continues—'As David says: *"Dies diei eructat verbum, et nox nocti indicat scientiam"*. [Psalm xix. 2, 'Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night showeth knowledge'.] And thus the writer adds 'one deep of darkness calleth to another, and one deep of light to another deep of light'.

'Everywhere like calls to like, and thus to that light of grace which God has given the soul already (having opened its inward eyes to the Divine light, and made it well-pleasing to Himself) there calls another deep of grace, I mean the Divine transformation of the soul in God in which the eye of the understanding remains fully enlightened and well-pleasing unto Him.'

Genesis i. 3.

Coleridge, in his lectures on Shakespeare, observes that Shakespeare's plays are distinguished from those of other dramatists by the characteristic of 'expectation in preference to surprise. It is like the true reading of the passage: "God said, Let there be light, and there was *light*"; not, there *was* light. As the feelings with which we startle at a shooting star, compared with that of watching the sunrise at the pre-established moment, such law is surprise compared with expectation.'

A LIGHT UNTO OUR PATH

'And God said, Let there be light; and there was light. And God saw the light, that it was good.'—Genesis i. 3, 4.

'Let there be light.' It is at once the motto and the condititon of all progress that is worthy of the name. From chaos into order, from slumber into wakefulness, from torpor into the glow of life—yes, and 'from strength to strength'; it has been a condition of progress that there should be light. God saw the light, that it was good.

We thank God for His revelation in the Bible. We are all persuaded in our minds that among the means of extending that light the Bibe itself has for centuries taken the foremost place. But, with man's proneness to distort or misuse even the grandest of God's gifts, this very privilege has had a peril of its own. People have forgotten, in the using of it, the manner in which the book, under the guiding hand of God, came to take the form in which we know it now, and have neglected the help thus given to us for understanding how to use without abusing it, how to accept it as both human and Divine. It is because men, it is because teachers in the Church of God, have forgotten this that half our perplexities about the Bible have arisen.

I. The Bible and Science.—'Let there be light.' No man, I suppose, will admit, probably no man ever did admit, even to himself, that in these matters it is daylight that he fears. But has it not been true, nevertheless, and true of many of the best and most devout souls, as the Christian centuries have run their course, that—albeit unintentionally or unawares—they were setting themselves, however impotently, to thwart the Divine purpose, 'Let there be light'? What else can we say of the persistency with which —untaught by past experience—the guardians and champions of orthodox belief as based on Holy Scripture have, times without number, on the authority of their own interpretation of the Bible, denounced as presumptuous or even blasphemous error the discoveries and aims of scientific men? It was on the strength of Biblical texts that the scheme of Christopher Columbus was condemned by the Spanish Junta in 1490 as vain and indefensible. In 1616 Galileo's teaching that the earth moves round the sun was formally censured by the consulting theologians of the Holy Office 'because expressly contrary to Holy Scripture'. A generation or two afterwards English students were warned by high authority against the investigations of so true and profound a Christian thinker as Sir Isaac Newton as being 'built on fallible phenomena and advanced by many arbitrary presumptions against evident testimonies of Scripture'. And the lives of Roger Bacon, of Copernicus, of Kepler, and of many more, down even to our own day, and to incidents fresh in the recollection of many here, suggest to the thoughtful student of Holy Scripture the imperative need of a reverent and humble-minded caution in our attitude towards every controversy of the kind. We are not, indeed, required to accept at once every unproven hypothesis, or to mistake for absolute science mere assertions about that which is unknowable. Some of the votaries of science have had as little right to speak authoritatively and finally in the name of God. True science and true religion are twin sisters, each studying her own sacred Book of God, and nothing but disaster can arise from the petulant scorn of the one, or from the timidity or the tyrannies of the other. 'Let there

be light.' From the Father of light cometh every good and every perfect gift.

II. The History and Character of the Bible.—And as with the scientific knowledge which has been so strangely supposed to be contradictory to Scripture rightly used and rightly understood, so, too—must we not say it to-day?—so, too, with every reverent and honest investigation into the history and the character of the sacred volume itself. 'Let there be light.' As regards the Old Testament, we have had access in these latter days, under the over-ruling Providence of God, to a wholly new range of facts about the dawn of civilization in the ancient nations of the world. Egypt and Assyria now vie with each other in their once undreamed-of contributions to the elucidation of our Sacred Book. And every fresh discovery, every new disinterment of significant tablet or cyinder or inscription from its resting-place of literally thousands of years, seems, to me at least, to do something more towards the strengthening and deepening of our belief in the genuine inspiration of the written Word of God, and in the distinctive glory of its divinely ordered message. We can give a new application to the Gospel sentence, 'If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead'.

III. The Bible's Personal Appeal.—'Let there be light.' If it be true, as one sometimes fears it is, that there is less of the deliberate, prayerful, devotional study of the Word of God in our homes and on our knees than there used to be in England in days gone by, it is certainly true, I think, to say that there never was a time when so many people as now were bringing the whole power of trained intelligence and of cultured thoughtfulness to bear upon its every part. And that sustained effort cannot but be fruitful, cannot but react in its turn—and react healthfully for us and for our children—upon the other mode of Bible study, that mode which shapes itself in prayer. For this surely is unquestionable—he who sets himself in faith and hope to evoke from the Bible such secrets as it will disclose about the story of its structure and its growth will find himself, so to speak, forced to his knees by the very divineness of the message of guidance and of revelation which it will impart to his inmost soul.

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NEW YEAR'S THOUGHTS

'The First Day.'—GENESIS I. 5.

A WONDERFUL scene is conjured up in the story of creation, and it is not without significance that God's first work on the first day was the creation of light. All the great mass of material creation had been called into being, but thus far 'the earth was without form and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep,' and then as the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters, there came from Him Who dwelleth in the light that no man can approach unto, the irresistible mandate, 'Let there be light,' and there was light, and as the clouds rolled back and the darkness vanished before the great stream of splendid light that came from God Himself, there appeared as the light streamed over nature strange forms of matter ranging themselves into order and beauty out of darkness, and gloom, and confusion, and chaos.

May we not on this, the first day of a New Year, profitably consider some 'First Days' and see what they have to teach us?

I. The First Day of the Year.—Our thoughts naturally turn at once to New Year's Day when we keep the Feast of the Circumcision. God's gift to the world on the first day of creation was the wonderful gift of light, but on this day we think of a more wonderful gift still—the gift of His own Incarnate Son. When the time was come that one was found who was fitted by her purity and her obedience to become the mother of the Incarnate God, when she had said, 'Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it unto me according to Thy word,' and in her humility and her faith, had resigned herself to God; and when in due course the Eternal Son of God was born of her in Bethlehem, then on the eighth day He was brought to His circumcision, and then was obedient to the law for man, thus in His own person setting us that splendid example of the life of perfect obedience which alone is acceptable in the sight of God.

II. The First Day of Creation.—God's gift to the world on creation's first day was, as I have already reminded you, the gift of light. And this is His gift to you still. He gives you light, the light of conscience, the light of reason, the light of revelation, the light in the face of Jesus Christ, the Incarnate God.

III. The First Day after the Flood.—'After the rain had descended . . . on the *first day* of the month the waters were dried up,' and Noah and his family came forth, having been preserved from the Flood. God's gift to you still is the gift of *preservation*. You have passed over the troublous waters of life during the past year in the ark of God's love and care. And now, as the New Year opens before you, He gives you a preserved life, new opportunities for doing His will stretch out before you. Remember this, remember it always, that the preserved life should be a dedicated life, a life dedicated to God with sacrifice.

IV. The First Day of the Tabernacle.— God had brought His people out of Egypt; they had crossed the Red Sea! they murmured at Marah, yet they were led on to Elim and afterwards to Mount Sinai, where they remained a year, during which they were taught His will, and then on the *first day* of the first month the Tabernacle was set up and 'the glory of the Lord filled the Tabernacle'. It was the *manifested presence* of Himself as the reward of the obedient worship according to His will. You have the same gift given to you this New Year's Day.

V. The First Day of Judah's Repentance.—We pass on to the time of Hezekiah, who, deeply moved by all the misery and degradation that had come as the result of his father's evil reign, set himself heart and soul to the work of restoration. It was a great call to repentance; first to the whole nation, and then also a call which was extended to the nation of Israel, who, alas! disregarded it. But Judah listened to the call, and we are told that 'on the *first day* of the first month they began to sanctify themselves'.

VI. The First Day of Ezra's Return from Babylon.—But Judah again fell away, and the seventy years' captivity in Babylon followed. Then came the return under Zerubbabel, the House of the Lord was rebuilt and worship was restored. Later there was another large return led by Ezra, whose very purpose was that he might seek the law of the Lord and teach it to the people, and we read that 'on the *first day* of the first month he began to go up from Babylon.' You know how he went up and how he worked.

There shall yet be for us another *first day*, a day that shall never end, in which we shall possess these 'first day' gifts in perfection, if only we strive our very best to use them aright now.

References.—I. 5. Phillips Brooks, *The Mystery of Iniquity*, p. 327. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xi. No. 660.

AT THE GATES OF THE DAWN

'And the evening and the morning were the third day.'—Genesis i. 13.

Six times these words are repeated, and the one lesson that rings out is that God counts His periods, not as man does from night to night, but from evening till morning.

I. This is true of creation. At present a veil is cast over all peoples. The creature is subject to illusion, to incompleteness, or, as the Apostle says, to vanity. Probably no earthly realisation, however good and beautiful, can set forth all that there is in God; and certainly human sin has infected the house of human life, as cholera and fever infect the tenements in which they have bred. The horror of darkness is the dower of the blind forces to which some of our teachers attribute the system of 'things of which we form a part'. Creation shall participate in the glorious liberty of the sons of God. There shall be evening, there shall be morning, and a Seventh Day.

II. So of the race. The evening was dark when the children of Babel gathered in rebellion against God, and when the knowledge of the original law seemed submerged in savagery and passion. It was destined to become still darker. Darkness was to cover the earth, and gross darkness the people. There have been many dark skies since then, but never so dark as before; and no thoughtful student of history can deny that things are slowly becoming better.

III. So of the individual. Your life is dark. Sin is darkness; sorrow is darkness; and to a greater or less extent these three are part of your daily lot. But the night is far spent, the day is at hand. The darkling waves, as they break around your boat, are bearing you onward to the morning meal upon the silver sands, where you will find love has gone before you with its preparation. It shall be evening and morning, and lo! a day without night.—F. B. Meyer, *Baptist Times and Freeman*, vol. liv. p. 815.

References.—I. 14-15.—A. P. Stanely, *Sermons on Special Occasions*, p. 128.

A DIVINE REVELATION

(*For Trinity Sunday*)

'And God said, Let Us make man in Our image, after Our likeness.'—Genesis i. 26.

The word 'Trinity' is derived from the Latin word *Trinus*, which signifies 'three-fold,' or 'three-in-one'; and thus it exactly expresses the profound mystery of three Persons in the unity of one Godhead. To-day the Church most seasonably brings the doctrine of this mystery specially before us.

I. It is distinctly a Divine Revelation.—It is absolute that this doctrine of the adorable Trinity be divinely revealed. And so it has been in various parts of Holy Scripture; but we confine our thought briefly to three instances.

(*a*) *Take the text first.*—'And God said, Let Us make man in Our image, after Our likeness.' The word 'God' is, in the original, in the plural number, and yet it is connected with a singular verb. This is not an accidental violation of grammar; for if we go through the whole Bible we shall find the same thing, that is, 'Elohim,' plural, used with a singular verb; but if we read the text thus, 'And the Three-in-One said, Let Us make man in Our image, after Our likeness,' all difficulty vanishes, and we at once agree with Jewish commentators and Christian divines that even on the first page of the Bible there is affirmed the great and precious truth of a Triune Jehovah.

(*b*) *But turn from the first page of the Old Testament to some of the first pages of the New*, and this doctrine meets the eye again and in stronger form. 'And Jesus,' says St. Matthew, 'when He was baptized, went up straightway out of the water; and lo! the heavens were opened, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon Him. And lo! a voice from heaven, saying, This is My beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased.' Here are the three Divine Persons. And how beautifully and strictly in keeping with all this is the baptismal formula given by our Lord to His disciples just before He went back to His Father! 'Go ye therefore,' said He to them, 'and make disciples of all the nations, baptising them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.' Here again the doctrine of the Trinity is enunciated, and each Divine Person is not only linked in one Godhead, but put upon an equality with the other. And the like sublime things are found in the apostolic benediction. Thus the Bible asserts distinctly from beginning to

end that the Father is God; it asserts as distinctly that the Son is God; and it asserts as distinctly that the Holy Ghost is God.

II. It is the Emphatic Belief of the Church.—Take, as first proof, what is denominated 'the Apostles' Creed,' because it publishes the Deityship of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost in language that cannot possibly be mistaken. Take next what is named 'the Nicene Creed,' because it is, if anything, more emphatic than 'the Apostles' Creed,' especially in the third paragraph, having been composed by a council of holy fathers to define the perfect Christian faith in opposition to a contrary doctrine respecting the Holy Ghost. And then take what is called 'the Athanasian Creed,' because it is still more elaborate and precise than the two former creeds. In this creed it is affirmed that 'the Godhead of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost is all one, the Majesty co-eternal. And in this Trinity none is afore or after other; none is greater or less than another. So that in all things the Unity in Trinity and the Trinity in Unity is to be worshipped.'

REFERENCES.—I. 26.—H. J. Wilmot-Buxton, *The Master's Message*, p. 183. H. Melvill, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 1491, p. 65. Bishop Woodford, *Sermons Preached in Various Churches*, p. 33. C. Kingsley, *Gospel of the Pentateuch*, p. 18. I. 26-31.—F. W. Robertson, *Notes on Genesis*, p. 9. I. 26-II. 3.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—Genesis*, p. 1.

ADAM THE CHILD

'And God created man.'—GENESIS I. 27.

THE characteristic of the Jewish portraits is their derivation from the period of youth, and this chord is struck at the very beginning.

I. The man who painted Adam knew he was painting a child. Is his picture childlike enough to be universal? This artist has no pretence hand; his is the touch of a master. The Garden scene has never become absolute, and the reason is that it is planted in that field of humanity whose products neither grow nor decline.

II. Why is this a representative picture? Because in the dawning consciousness of your own infant you will find exactly the same mixture of dust and divinity. But look again at the development of your child, and you will see how cosmopolitan is this biography of the primeval Adam.

III. The common view is that the artist is describing a case of mere disobedience. That is not the deepest idea of the picture. The primitive narration has attached itself, not to the portrayal of obedience, but to the portrayal of justice. It is not the dependant forgetting the respect to his master; it is the partner ignoring his contract, the associate breaking his bond, the sharer of dual rights attempting to encroach upon the rights of the other. This child, every after child, has his tragedy inside, his dramatic personages inside, his dialogues inside. I do not think the tragedies would be less complete if the outward deed had been omitted; for the final act of injustice in the sight of heaven is ever consummated in the region of the soul.—G. MATHESON, *The Representative Men of the Bible*, p. 23.

THE ORIGIN AND THE DESTINY OF MAN

'God created man in His own image.'—GENESIS I. 27.

I. IF we would profit by our own reading of the wonderful poem of Creation which is preserved for us in the first chapter of Genesis, we must fix our thoughts on the great spiritual truths which it teaches. Think of one of these truths, perhaps the most important of all in relation to ourselves and our conduct. We may take it in the words of the text: 'God created man in His own image, in the image of God created He him.' You may ask, no doubt, how this account of the Creation of man can be reconciled with the teaching of modern science as to his cousinship with the lower animals, teaching which we receive, perhaps, with a little natural reluctance when it is first put before us. But the truth is, that what the Bible is concerned with is not man's pedigree on the side of his humble ancestors, but his heritage and his birthright as made in the image of God. That as regards his bodily form man is akin to the lower animals may be very true. It is a matter with which Scripture does not concern itself. However life came it came from the one Source of Life. But that is not to say that man has no privilege of his own in which the beasts do not share. It is this prerogative of his, which the text puts before us. However man comes to his present stage of growth, there was given to him at some point in his long history a unique gift, the reason and the will which reflect the Supreme Reason, the Divine Will. And this gift is quite independent of those bodily appetites and desires which he shares with the brutes. It is independent, for personality is one thing, nature is another. And as it is not a product of the body, so it does not perish with the body.

II. What does that teach us about our Lord's Person? Is it not this, that though He became man, took upon Him human nature with all its joys and sorrows, His Divine Personality still continues. The forces which could sadden His human life, which brought about His bitter death, could not touch or destroy His Divine Person.

III. And so, in a lower degree, indeed, and with many differences, may we say, that it is with man and his pedigree. He is an animal by nature; his bodily life and death are as the life and death of the animals over which he rules. But then his personality; what of that? Whence comes it? From his animal nature? Nay; but from God in whose image and likeness he is made. He is made after the Divine likeness in respect of his soul; and it is because we believe that, that we have a right to say that if the present is the life of beasts, it is the future which is the true life of man.—J. H. BERNARD, *Via Domini*, p. 41.

WHAT IS MAN?

'So God created man in His own image.'—GENESIS I. 27.

And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.'—GENESIS II. 7.

WHAT are the great principles of religion which are revealed to us in these early chapters of Genesis? Speaking, generally, there are three.

I. The Revelation of a Personal God.—The first is the revelation of a personal God Who made the world and rules all our life. In the Old Testament the writers never question the existence of God at all. God is there. What the Old Testament writers do give is the character and nature of that God Who is there from the beginning. Any conception of God which other religions may have must be brought to the test of the revelation of God which is made to us here. For instance, if you bring to the test the idea that man is swallowed up in God—that the finite is absorbed and lost in the infinite altogether—you find that that must be wrong, because it does not allow man that independence which the Bible narrative reveals. Now we have here quite clearly marked the position of God. God is in the beginning, and this world's reality is through the Will of God. And you and I see that behind all the processes of Nature, whatever they may be, however long these processes may have taken, however strange may be the methods by which those processes have made the universe, it is God Who, behind all, is ruling. God is the beginning, God is the means, and God is the end. That is a practical matter, not merely one of intellectual delight. All that comes to us comes from the will, from the mind, from the heart of the living Person of God.

II. The Revelation of Man's Privileges.—Man has been made in the image of God. He stands quite apart from all the rest of the Creation. He has that power of self-consciousness which belongs to no other creature. His will is not like that of the animals, determined simply by the strongest physical passion or desire. In that lies this great fact: man is capable of union with God, he is capable of receiving a Divine revelation. Science itself is willing to acknowledge that there is this unearthly element in the nature of man. But as man has a higher side, so he has a lower side. God made man of the dust of the earth. There is the revelation of the material side of man's nature. What were the actual processes by which that material clay was prepared until it became ready for the breath of God? It was God Himself Who guided those early developments till the clay was ready for the gift of self-consciousness. On the one side man is at one with Nature. At the same time man is raised distinctly above the animals by that breath of God. The long struggle continually leading us to fight for the higher ideal, the nobler life, is a constant witness to the Divine side of man. If we are made in the image of God, then we have the capacity to know God.

III. The Revelation of Man's Fall.—Yet we know how man's life, as a matter of fact, falls far short of the ideal of the Divine life. We need that to be explained, and in this early account of the Creation we have the explanation set clearly before us. There are very few references to the actual story of the fall, and yet all the while, especially after the captivity, there was a very strong sense of the gravity of sin. The Jews never looked back to a golden age, always to a golden age to come. When you look at the account of the fall and ask yourself, 'What does it really mean?' you must try to realize quite clearly what is meant about the state of man before the fall. It is perfectly true that man did possess before the fall what he afterwards did not possess—a moral purity and innocence. But man did not possess what men have sometimes thought he possessed, such perfection as perfection of intellectual capacity—such a capacity, for instance, as man possesses to-day. Man was just a child. He was perfect in the sense that he perfectly corresponded with the Will of God. Man by his disobedience to the distinct Will of God introduced sin into the world. There came a moment when this disobedience broke down the development of man's life.

Thus we see the need of redemption.

REFERENCES.—I. 27.—T. G. Bonney, *Sermons on Questions of the Day*, p. 1. G. Sarson, *A. Lent in London*, p. 142. C. Kingsley, *The Good News of God*, p. 212. A. Gray, *Faith and Diligence*, p. 139. C. Brown, *God and Man*, p. 86. Bishop Jones, *Old Testament Outlines*, p. 4. Bishop Goodman, *Parish Sermons*, vol. v. p. 1. H. Alford, *Quebec Chapel Sermons*, vol. iv. p. 35.

GOD AND MAN

'Have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.'—GENESIS I. 28.

THERE are many things which prove to be a puzzle to the brain of man, and if we try and think out first principles we often find ourselves tied up as it were in a knot. There are, however, three things in this world which the mind of man can reduce and think of as being, so to speak, first principles. Nobody can deny their existence. Here they are. We know of them, we see their working, they compose the whole of the created universe—*matter*, that which composes the whole of creation; *force*, a technical term to represent the energy and power of the universe; and *law*, those wonderful results which we see following from different causes, and yet so regularly, that man is able to count upon them, to act upon them, and to frame the whole of his life from their results.

Now these three things fail to account for three things concerning themselves.

I. They Fail to Account for their Own Existence.—You and I may study science, we may argue back, we may think out problems, we may arrive at some great conclusion, we may, indeed, understand all the mysteries of how and why, but as you get farther and farther back, you come to these three things, matter, force, and law, and there is no ingenuity of the brain of man that has yet been able to account for their existence. There is no explanation of them. You think yourself back to the far ages; you may adopt, if you like, the principle of development, evolu-

tion, of whatever you wish, but you come eventually back to these things, matter, force, law; and no man's mind can, or has hitherto invented any system that will account for their being in existence. But when you open your Bible, when you turn to the first chapter of Genesis, there you find one explanation which has held good from the earliest time, and which has no refutation even to-day. In the very first chapter, in the very first verse, in the very first words, the one and only explanation is found, 'In the beginning God.' There is no other solution; there is no other explanation.

II. Where is the Ingenuity of Man's Mind that can Conceive how these Things come to be in Action?—It is all very well to produce and publish axioms which govern theories. It is all very well to test by the most accurate scientific knowledge and prove effects, but you have to go back to the final question: How they all became active, alive, so magnificently full of energy, force, and life as we see them? There is only one explanation; there is only one answer, and you find it still in the first chapter of Genesis, 'And God said . . . "Let there be"—'

III. How is it all the Things in the World that we see are Gradually Working Out and Promoting the Welfare of Mankind?—All that the world passes through, one phase after another, one form of life giving place to another form of life. You may go into the wilds of a distant country, or into the hub of the great civilized world, London, what do you find? That law, matter, force, in its natural result is all aiding the betterment of human beings. How do you account for this? We have no special physical force that would enable us to capture the world; we have no great magnificent power which enables us, as it were, to rule the forces of Nature in ourselves, except that we find, as we look round the world, in all the created things of life, they all turn, they all develop, they are all capable of being made for the promotion of the welfare of mankind. This, I think, you will find answered in the same first chapter of Genesis, for in the twenty-ninth verse, God has there said: 'I have given you all the earth'. Here you have matter, force, and law; here you have them failing to account for their own existence and failing to account for their being in action, and the mysterious fact that it all works out in its results for promoting the welfare of human beings. It is one of the most wonderful thoughts that a man can have: God has created, God has said, God has given.

THE MANIFOLD MERCIES OF GOD

'And God saw everything that He had made, and, behold, it was very good.'—GENESIS I. 31.

THE pessimist view of the Creation, nay, of man himself, of life, of all things, is now in the ascendant. I mean by the pessimist view, the view which tends to depreciate both man and his world. The wise ones of the hour, happily only of the hour, who lead the thoughts of this generation, and are listened to as its prophets, seem to be settling to the cheerful conviction that Creation has on the whole been a blunder, of which all sentient things have to suffer the penalty in the pain and futility which torment the world.

I. I believe that this pessimist view of man and the creation is just the reaction—the inevitable reaction—against that foolishly and wearisomely optimist view which, during the last generations, the writers on Christian evidences have dinned into the ears of men. The intellectual world is just weary to nauseation of hearing that all things in the universe work together with the smoothness and constancy of a machine, whose steam power the Being whom they are pleased to call the great Artificer supplied. The curse of our theology during the last century has been this, that owing mainly to the vigour of the Deistic and Atheistic assault on the truth of the Gospel, theologians have been tempted to think that they had to make out a case for God, and to hold the citadel of their narrow theology as a Divine fortress, which they were bound to defend at any cost. They have effected a complete understanding of the scheme of the universe; have explained away or hidden all that seemed inconsistent with the benignity of the Creator, and pushed forward and magnified all that fell in with their notions of His goodness, until their Creation—the Creation which they undertook to explain and to justify, whose design they were ever ready to expound, and whose plan fitted their expositions as a key fits its wards—had come to be a very unreal and unlifelike world.

When we hear from our wise ones in the lore of nature that there is more pain than joy within the range of their sight, we remind ourselves that Scripture told us it was a travail. When they tell us that it seems to be but a blundering and futile scheme, we remind ourselves again that the Scripture tells us that it is a seed time, and what can seem so blundering and futile as casting seed into the furrows to rot under the dull pall of winter, to him who has no eye to forecast the radiance of the coming spring.

II. The grand distinctive feature of the Creation, that which reveals the loving-kindness of the Creator, and is the signature of His goodness, is the law of progress which rules its development; the continued evolution of finer, compacter, purer, nobler forms of things, as the unfolding of the purpose of the Creator proceeds, so that the world of to-day is altogether a more beautiful, orderly, and joyful world to live in, than the world, as far as we can discern its features, of myriads of years ago. There is struggle, shock, and apparent confusion without question.

The world of to-day seems built on the ruins of the world of yesterday. The feet of the living tread everywhere the dust of death. But the living now stand higher than the living of old—with more erect port, with freer gesture, with braver dress.

Something in the inner soul of nature moves her to this continual refining and elevating of form. *We* cannot be blind to the manifest hand of the living God. It is the course of development which from the

first He prophesied. As we see it complete itself we cannot help connecting it with the unseen Almighty hand. There has been through all the ages that law of progress working mightily, which is announced as the law of the Divine operation in the Scripture. All things there breathe the spirit of progress, of vital propulsive movement, of onward, upward development; progress, the onward, upward movement, is the breath of their life. It is with Creation as with history. God prophesies, not that we may be able to paint in detail the scheme of the future, but that when we see it unfold itself we may know that it is His work (Isaiah xlv. 18-25).

III. There is that in the Creation which the largest and most developed human intellect and spirit, albeit conversant with heavenly things, and familiar with the thoughts of God, contemplates with eager and keen delight, which seems to transcend its power of comprehension and its organ of expression, which bends it low in something like awestruck adoration, while it murmurs, 'O Lord, my God, how wonderful are Thy works, how glorious! In wisdom and in faithfulness hast Thou made them all.'—J. Baldwin Brown, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. vi. p. 341.

References.—I. 31.—T. G. Bonney, *Sermons on Questions of the Day*, p. 17. C. Kingsley, *The Good News of God*, p. 268. E. T. A. Morriner, *Sermons Preached at Lyme Regis*, p. 185. T. Arnold, *Sermons*, vol. ii. p. 238. II.—G. Moberly, *Parochial Sermons*, p. 61. II. 1-3.—J. Bowstead, *Practical Sermons*, vol. i. p. 19. J. Parker, *Adams, Noah, and Abraham*, p. 14.

THE CREATOR EXPLAINED BY THE CREATION

'God ended His work which He had made. —Genesis ii. 2.

Given the Creation, to find the Creator, at least to conjecture about Him.

Given the house, to discover something about the builder of it, or the owner or the occupant. It is a large house; very well, then the man behind it, who made it, or is responsible for it, must be a man of some substance and property. It is an artistically furnished house; every piece of furniture has been set down by the hands of love just in the right place and in the right light and in the right relation to every other piece: then the man who made all this arrangement must, of necessity, have the mind, the instinct, or the training of an artist. No house ever made itself, therefore I think the heavens and the earth cannot have made themselves; no candle ever lighted its own wick, therefore I should be surprised if the stars were their own lamplighters.

I. I begin to feel that if any man suggested to me that all this creation-house was built by an Infinite Power and an Infinite Intelligence, I should believe him. In very deed it seems like it; all the pieces are so vast; arithmetic endeavoured to calculate their distances, and having written an endless line of ciphers, it threw down the chalk and ran away, because it could not express in words its own discoveries. God is as great in detail as He is in the totality and massiveness of things. I read in the first chapter of the book of Genesis a most astounding thing: that God said 'Let there be light,' and He made the grass, and there is no sense of anticlimax or retrocession in the action of Divine power. God is furnishing a house for some one, and He will not leave that some one to find the grass; if God undertakes to furnish a place it will be well furnished and completely furnished, and not only will there be great lights and great spaces, but man will not be asked to create one blade of grass, it shall all be done for him.

II. God came nearer still to us in the work which He made and which He ended. He incarnated Himself, He infleshed Himself, He embodied Himself. There stands the incarnation! What is his name? Adam—'God created man in His own image, in the image and likeness of God created He him'. That is the daring solution of the great problem of human existence as given by the Bible.

III. In all the work which He wrought did He ever speak? He spake all the time. Sometimes I think there is a sound as of subdued singing, a suppressed psalm running through all the action of the Creation. 'God said'—then He spake? Yes; all things start in the word. Did not man make words? No; all the words were made before man came upon the scene at all. They were such great words that the first Speaker used in the making of His heaven-and-earth house.

God not only said, God blessed; so to say, He laid His gracious right hand upon the things and said to each, Very good; take thy place, work out the purpose which I have written in the psalm of thine heart. God not only said, and blessed, God called: gave names to things, gave names to great spaces and left some little small pieces of things which we might name, but all the great broad names, names of comprehension, names that grasp the totality and the destiny of things, He Himself made.

IV. We are invited, by a meditation like this not to go into eternity, the metaphysical and unthinkable eternity, to find God; we are invited to stand before the first molehill, before the first time-written rock that tells its tale in facial moss; we are invited to go out into the twilight and to ask, Who did this, who built this, who keeps this in order, who guarantees that these planets will not fall on this head? Surely the argument upon which the Christian faith is built is eminently reasonable, it is an argument which we apply along the whole line of our experience; then when we come into the deeper mysteries, the great spiritual verities, we are prepared to enter the holy of holies just in the degree in which we have carefully, intelligently, and lovingly walked along the line of what may be called natural creation and natural phenomena. If we have been reverent along that line we shall hear greater mysteries still.

We are asked in the New Testament to believe that God redeemed man. In very deed redemption is implied in creation. Never forget that words have not only a superficial meaning but an implied meaning, an enfolded and concealed meaning, which must

be taken out and allowed to develop in all the fulness of their beauty and poetry. So read, created means redeemed, as the beginning means the end.—JOSEPH PARKER, *City Temple Pulpit*, vol. vii. p. 3.

REFERENCES.—II. 3.—F. Corbett, *Preachers' Year*, p. 41. R. S. Candlish, *The Book of Genesis*, p. 18. II. 4.—F. W. Robertson, *Notes on Genesis*, p. 16.

'And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.'—GENESIS II. 7.

WHEN? If you look in the margin of your Bible you will see '4004 years before Christ'. Is that right? It is no part of the original book. It is only a marginal note which was made there by those who calculated according to the genealogies of those men who, generation by generation, succeeded Adam. But it will not do.

I. Age by Age.—We read this morning of the Creation of the world. We read to-night a continuation of the story and of that time when the Lord God formed man out of the dust of the ground. Have we here in this book of Genesis an account of seven actual days of twenty-four hours? 'And the evening and the morning were the first day,' 'and the evening and the morning were the second day,' and so on. Surely not. What is it that science has revealed to us about all this? It has revealed to us that the Creation as we now hold it must have taken something like 4000 million years at least. God works very slowly, and when we read of God working day by day we know that he who wrote these words meant 'age by age'. 'And the evening and the morning were the first day.' Why, the very expression suggests to us the length of time—the long night—of God's creation. From the little to the greater; from the twilight to the dawn. Thus God worked. It is very important that we should remember this: otherwise we should be so staggered in the matter of our religion; otherwise we should find ourselves face to face with such tremendous difficulties. Science has revealed so much to us that we did not know when man wrote in the margin '4004 years'.

II. The Identity of Science and the Bible.—How has God been working then? Science teaches us so much, and if we do not believe science we shall become very unsettled in our minds, and we shall say to ourselves, What about this book? is it true? can it be trusted? And then we recall to mind that our Lord Jesus Christ took this book for true and quoted from it, and we shall say to ourselves, Was He too mistaken? But we must not do that. Whatever science teaches us accurately and fairly we must face, and we need never be afraid if we do so that the truth of science will clash with God's holy word. What is it we really find in this book of Genesis? We find most accurate scientific language. We find the one who writes this book to say that through long ages God created a world, and we find that He first created that which is inorganic—to speak popularly the earth—next vegetable life, then animal life, then man's life. And that is just what science says was done. If you can read and understand the Hebrew you will find four words used to express this creation by God. The first is to form, and the next is to breathe into, and the next is to make, and the last is to create. And this is actually scientific language. But between the first and the second and the third and the fourth science finds gaps. Science has no means of explaining how the step was made from one to the other—how it was from earth to vegetable life, from vegetable to animal life with its consciousness, how from animal life with its consciousness came man with his intellectual powers and, as most scientists admit, with his spiritual being. To us as believers in the one true God, to us as Christians, the followers of the Holy One the Son of God, it comes quite simply. God worked through the long ages, beginning at inorganic matter, then by His creating power gave life which made the vegetable, then by His creating power breathed into that life that which made the animal life with its consciousness, and then created the spiritual being of man. Through the long, long ages man, if you will, was evolved by the power of God. Why, it is scriptural language! 'The Lord God formed man out of the dust of the ground.' Then what does it matter to us if scientific men find fossil remains of man which must have been in existence long ages before the 4004 years ago mentioned in the margin? We expect them to find that. So God has been working, so God has been evolving, if you will from the dust of the ground by His almighty power the creature who now is man.

III. Man's Relation to God.—You are not a bit of earth, you are not a vegetable, you are not merely an animal conscious of your being—you are a man created by God, you are the outcome of God's almighty working, God has breathed into you the breath of life and you have become a living soul. You are eternal, a son of God created in God's image and having spiritual powers. Oh, it is a wonderful ancestry! Oh, it is a wonderful dignity to have arrived at by the power of God! Are we living as if only earth? Are we living only as vegetables in this world? Are we living only as animals, conscious of animal pleasure or animal pain? Or are we living as we may live—as sons of God, conscious, living, real—the children of God in whom is eternity?

LITTLE SOULS

'The Lord God breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.'—GENESIS II. 7.

I. Little Souls. We hear people spoken of as good souls, poor souls, and the like, let us think now of those who may be called *little souls*.

It was the custom in old-fashioned gardens to cut back the shrubs and trees, which were intended by Nature to grow large and luxuriant, till they became stunted and dwarfed, even grotesque. People treat their souls in the same way. They do not let them grow as God plans, but keep cutting them back, as

it were. There is no development, no growth, and therefore no beauty in their lives; they have merely stunted souls. God intends our souls to grow and develop as our body does. A Christian is meant to grow, to advance. His watchwords are, go up higher, excelsior, amplius, higher, wider, till we come to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of Christ.

II. Marks of a Little Soul.—

1. People with little souls take narrow views of *religion*.
2. Small souled people take narrow views of *duty*.
3. People with little souls are wanting in *sympathy*.

III. The Duty of Taking a Wider View.—Let us try to take a wider view of things, of life, of religion, of duty, of our responsibilities. Let us cultivate a wider sympathy with others' needs, instead of sitting down upon our own little bundle of thorns.—H. J. Wilmot-Buxton, *Notes of Sermons for the Year*, pp. 114-20.

'Man became a living soul.'—Genesis II. 7.

The nature of man was that in which God was at last to give His crowning revelation, and for that no preparation could seem extravagant. Fascinating and full of marvel as is the history of the past which science discloses to us; full as these slow-moving millions of years are in evidences of the exhaustless wealth of nature, and mysterious as the delay appears, all that expenditure of resources is eclipsed, and all the delay justified when the whole work is crowned by the Incarnation, for in it we see that all that slow process was the preparation of a nature in which God could manifest Himself as a Person to persons.—Marcus Dods.

References.—II. 7.—J. Keble, *Sermons for Septuagesima*, p. 108. J. Budgen, *Parochial Sermons*, vol. ii. p. 40; *Sermons for the Christian Year*, vol. iii. p. 108. J. Aspinall, *Parish Sermons*, p. 250. J. Laidlaw, *The Bible Doctrine of Man*, p. 48. R. W. Evans, *Parochial Sermons*, p. 293. II. 8.—H. J. Wilmot-Buxton, *Bible Object Lessons*, p. 203. C. Perren, *Revival Sermons*, p. 301. W. L. Watkinson, *The Blind Spot*, p. 183. R. Fetherston, *A Garden Eastward*, p. 1. II. 9.—J. Keble, *Sermons for the Holy Week*, p. 446. A. Ainger, *Sermons Preached in the Temple Church*, p. 283. II. 12.—W. L. Watkinson, *The Ashes of Roses*, p. 165. II. 15.—R. E. Hutton, *The Crown of Christ*, p. 265.

GOLD AND ONYX NOT ENOUGH

'And the gold of that land is good: there is bdellium and the onyx stone.—Genesis II. 12.

Gold and bdellium and onyx—what more did it need? Is not this a sufficing inventory of the land? It needed a river. Land without river is sand, nothingness, a great ghastly image of fruitlessness and despair. But if it have gold and bdellium and onyx, is it not fruitful? No; no more is your life. You have gold and gum and grey onyx and precious stones, but no river; write yourself poor, make out yourself a bankrupt in the court of heaven.

You may use this metaphor of the river in many senses. The emblems of God are capable of being broken up into various aspects and driven along various lines of practical application. The metaphor is not confined to water only; there are other things that may stand for water in the elaboration of this great argument.

I. Here is a man who has great capacity. He is a man of insight and foresight, he balances things well, his judgments are sound, his talents are somewhat even brilliant. Then why does he not succeed in life? For want of the river. What is that river? Capital. He is abler than many, full of resource, very quick in sight and very sure in calculation, but you might as well attempt to sail a great American liner in a basinful of water as to carry forward all the possibilities of his talent when he is in want of capital, gold, and bdellium and onyx. The Divine grace utilizes all our powers, gives them scope, causes them to grow, satisfies their aspirations, ennobles their uses, and we may have everything but the wealth of God, the wealth of grace, the wealth of character, ability enough, even splendour of intellect enough, but no river of grace, no river of the true gold, no river of spiritual capital. What, then, does it all mean? Ruin. There is no way for splendour to find its road into heaven.

II. Here is a man who has capital, gold, and bdellium and onyx, and his balances pecuniary are so great that he hardly cares to count them; and yet he is to be pitied. Why so? Want of the river. What river? Health! Health turns stones into gold, deserts into gardens; health creates stars for the midnight, and revels in the splendour of the planets; health is a continual miracle, health clears a way for itself; and the man who is being pictured by my fancy at this moment has everything but health. If God would send that Pison, that stream, that member of the great fourfold Eden river into his life, the man would stand up a king.

III. Here is a very remarkable life: the man has learning and great intellectual capacity and many attributes that other men might covet or envy; and yet, oh how dismal is that life! What does it want? The river. What river? Sunshine, the light-river.

IV. And another figure which comes to my fancy is that of a man in sore loneliness. He could do much under given circumstances, but under the circumstances which now crush him he can do nothing. What does he want? The river. What river? The river of a strong friend. Some of us were nothing till the strong friend got hold of us, and then we expanded into something, and were accounted of repute and influence. There is a Friend that sticketh closer than a brother, there is a Friend accessible to all, the name, unchangeable, is Jesus of Nazareth, whom the Jews murdered, but whom God offered up in sacrifice: He is the Friend of all.—Joseph Parker, *City Temple Pulpit*, vol. i. p. 69.

THE STANDARD OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

'And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil thou shalt not eat, for in the day that thou eatest thou shalt surely die.'—GENESIS II. 16, 17.

'SIN is the transgression of the law.' Before we can understand the consequences of sin we must try to understand the nature of the law. If religious fatalism is dead, scientific fatalism does not lack its prophets. We are told that environment is everything. You cannot choose what you will think, or say, or do. There is no will in man to master the sovereign impulses of Nature.

I. The first point that strikes us is that if this is true the whole government of the world is a monstrous injustice. If there is no vice to be punished it is nothing short of a scandal that punishment should be inflicted. The fact of the matter is that the theory breaks down before the actual consciousness of men. The moral nature of man is a special communication of God.

II. We have reached the point where the problem of revelation begins to face us. If it is true, as we feel, that we can obey or disobey the will of God, what is that will? How has it been revealed to man? The education of the conscience is a great historical process. In this second chapter of Genesis, and indeed throughout the whole Bible, revelation is represented as being of two kinds—inward and outward. In the very spirit and nature of a man made in the likeness of God there is a certain elementary revelation of the will of God. There are in every conscience certain broad lines of right and wrong. To walk as we are sometimes encouraged to do by the light of nature, as if that were enough, is simply to court degeneration and decay. The spirit life needs, like every other life, to be kept alive by a friendly spiritual environment. To live in God, to absorb His quickening, vitalizing power, to hearken to His commandment, and be refreshed and strengthened by His grace—these are no fables of Scripture but living experiences of men. Revelation is from without as well as from within.

III. Commandment without example, without illustration, is morally of very little effect. 'How can you define in words where legitimate indulgence ends and where positive vice begins? What is lawful for me may not be expedient because of my brother.' Ages ago in response to human need the Ten Commandments were given. The Ten Commandments grew into a whole system and government of life. The Rabbis said 'thus and thus you should live.' But yet they could not teach the world in words the will of God.

IV. God has explained and defined. But the mind of man could not comprehend. There remained one way and only one. It was that God Himself should take in hand the task of life, and live it out before the world. He is the end and crown of revelation.—C. SILVESTER HORNE, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxxix. p. 78.

REFERENCE.—II. 16-17.—A. W. Momerie, *The Origin of Evil*, p. 1.

SATAN IN HISTORY

'And the Lord God said . . .'—GENESIS II. 18.
'And the serpent said . . .'—GENESIS III. 4.

AND between these two voices the education and discipline of man have been conducted from the first day until now. Never let us shut our eyes to facts. There is a temptation to avoid unpleasant subjects; such temptation is one of the devil's tricks.

I. 'And the Lord God said . . .' 'And the serpent said . . .,' and they both spoke practically on the first page of the first book in the Bible; the devil was nearly as instantaneously present as was God. 'And God said . . .' 'And the serpent said . . .,' and sometimes they are blended and interblended, and you can hardly discriminate between one tone and the other.

If I look abroad upon the earth so far as it is accessible to my observation, I cannot but find proofs enough that there is an enemy, call him by what name you please, account for him as you like, deny him if you will; I can not account for certain broad facts, events, collisions, tragedies, woes, losses, apart from the suggestion that there is an unslumbering enemy; I cannot trace everything to a good parent. I am not able yet to say that all things are pure, sweet, beneficent, healing, and full of blessedness. On the contrary, I can say, There is an enemy here, or there, or yonder; God never dug a grave, God never inflicted pain; there must be behind all the pain which He inflicts a reason or a suggestion which refers to some other and alien and antagonistic and most cruel force.

II. It is wonderful how the Bible from beginning to end, from almost the first page to the last, broadly, definitely, recognizes the personality and ministry of an evil one. The slime of the serpent is upon every page, his fang thrusts itself through all the rose leaves and summer beauty of life and time.

Until we get back to fundamental facts we cannot preach the Gospel; in fact, we shall have no Gospel to preach. It was not until 'the serpent said' that another voice replied, 'The seed of the woman shall bruise the head of the serpent'. The serpent speech is the first page, the first sentence, in the Christian theology.

III. Now as visibly in the one case as in the other there is certainly a good spirit abroad, a holy redeeming spirit, a gentle, tender, sympathizing spirit, a benign power that will not leave us until the red wound has been skinned over and until that skin has grown into a sufficient and permanent security. The Bible does not create God; I see God in providence, I see Him in my own life, I see Him in the family life of all my friends; He wants time for the development of His personality and the full revelation of His design and the complete outlining and outsphering of His beneficent purpose.

(1) Remember that the power of the serpent is limited. He is chained, he cannot add one link to his chain; he cannot stretch it, it is not an elastic chain, it is inflexible.

(2) And the ministry of the evil one is educational if properly received. It teaches us what we are, what we may become, it teaches us our need of redeeming love, it teaches us the vanity of love, the transitoriness of the things upon which we lavish our affection.

(3) And the power of the devil is revelatory. It will help us to understand the larger and fuller side of things; it will help us to account for some things which otherwise would distress our faith. Satan can only do a certain amount of mischief; the amount of mischief shall return upon his own head; and one day, far off, we shall see how it was that without knowing it the enemy was one of our friends.—Joseph Parker, *City Temple Pulpit*, vol. vii. p. 21.

References.—II. 18.—G. Bainton, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxxviii. p. 163. J. Aspinall, *Parish Sermons* (1st series), p. 250. C. J. Ridgeway, *The King and His Kingdom*, p. 20. II. 21, 24.—Archbishop Bourne, *Sermons in Westminster Abbey*, p. 96. II. 22.—J. C. M. Bellew, *Sermons*, vol. iii. p. 344. S. Leathes, *Studies in Genesis*, p. 31.

EVE THE UNFOLDED

'And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh.'—Genesis ii. 23.

The second chapter of Genesis is an attempt to paint not the making but the marriage of woman. It is an effort to delineate the day not of her birth but of her emergence. There are three periods indicated in the development of this primitive woman—a period of innocence or unconsciousness, a period of conscious expansion, and a period of conscious or voluntary self-repression. The picture of Eve is an unfolding of these stages. She begins, so to speak, underground. She is at first invisible in the garden. It is her period of unconsciousness, of spontaneity, of existence that has never seen itself in the mirror nor stood before the bar of its own judgment-seat.

The second period of female development. Eve has become the mistress of Adam's ground. Spontaneity is dead, artlessness is dead, simplicity is dead. It is she and not Adam that wakens first to the glories of the garden. The first conviction of being beautiful may impart to her a thrill of awe. Her gifts have ordained her to a ministry that must render her less and not more free. But there is another way in which the woman may be affected by her looking-glass pride. It is this latter experience and not the former which is the case of Eve. The charm of her new-found possession dazzled her. Her satisfaction has its root in unblushing egotism. She is tempted by the offer of wisdom to be a God. The temptation of the woman in Eden is not a temptation to disobey, but a temptation to get possession of something which can only be got through disobedience. What is this sin of the woman—extravagance.

The third stage—conscious contraction. The typical woman of the world generally settles down. The scene of her empire narrows. It is not a stooping of her pride. It is the taking pride in something new, something nobler. There has come to Eve—motherhood.—G. Matheson, *Representative Women of the Bible*, p. 29.

THE FALL

Genesis iii.

Moral evil cannot be accounted for by referring it to a brute source. Vitally important truths underlie the narrative and are bodied forth by it. But the way to reach these truths is not to adhere too rigidly to the literal meaning, but to catch the general impression.

I. Variety of interpretation in details is not to be lamented. The very purpose of such representations as are here given is to suit all stages of mental and physical advancement.

II. The most significant elements in man's primitive condition are represented by the two trees of the garden.

(*a*) The tree of life, the fruit of which bestowed immortality. Man was therefore naturally mortal, though apparently with a capacity for immortality. The mystical nature of the tree of life is recognized in the New Testament by our Lord, and by John when he describes the New Jerusalem. Both these representations are intended to convey in a striking and pictorial form the promise of life everlasting.

(*b*) The trial of man's obedience is imaged in the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. From the child-like innocence in which man originally was, he was to pass forward into the condition of moral manhood.

Temptation comes like a serpent.

III. Temptation succeeds at first by exciting our curiosity. This dangerous craving has many elements in it.

(*a*) The instinctive drawing towards what is mysterious.

(*b*) The sense of incompleteness. Few boys wish to be always boys.

IV. Through craving for a large experience unbelief in God's goodness finds entrance. In the presence of forbidden pleasure we are tempted to feel as if God were grudging us enjoyment. The very arguments of the serpent occur to our mind.

V. If we know our own history we cannot be surprised to read that one taste of evil ruined our first parents. The actual experience of sin is like the one taste of alcohol to a reclaimed drunkard.

VI. The first result of sin is shame. The form in which the knowledge of good and evil comes to us is the knowing we are naked.

VII. When Adam found he was no longer fit for God's eye, God provided a covering which might enable him again to live in His presence without dismay. Man had exhausted his own ingenuity and resources, and exhausted them without finding relief to his shame. If his shame was to be effectually removed, God must do it.—Marcus Dods, *The Book of Genesis*, p. 15.

THE FIRST TEMPTATION OF MAN

GENESIS III.

LET us consider the great First Temptation of Man, the story of Genesis III. I shall not attempt to discuss the deep question how far we are to take every detail of that chapter literally. It is no mere 'allegory'. It puts before us an awful *fact;* I am sure of this. But the first few pages of Scripture, in the nature of their subjects, are so mysterious that we may well hold our peace when the question is asked, Is every word to be taken literally? Do these chapters tell us their story in the same style of detail as that in which we are told, for example, the shipwreck of St. Paul? Is it not at least possible that, as *the last* pages of the Bible tell us of a glorious and blissful future in terms of symbol and figure, so *the first* pages of the Bible tell us in the same style of a mysterious past? Gates of pearl and streets of gold are assuredly to be understood as *symbols* of 'the glory to be revealed'. The same may be true of many a phrase used to depict the 'glory' of man's first estate, and his fall from it. But I say all this by the way. Here is the picture before us. We are called to study *the fact* of the First Temptation, *in the terms* given us in the Word of God.

What do we see, then, in the mystery so revealed to us?

I. First, we see that man was, from the beginning, in the wisdom of God, placed under a gentle but real *test* by his heavenly Friend, and permitted, through it, *to be enticed* by his enemy. His obedience was tested by a firm while mild prohibition. His will was enticed into revolt by a misrepresentation of the mind of Him who had forbidden him 'the fruit'. A thousand varieties of temptation can be grouped in one class in the light of that fact.

II. Then, the First Temptation is one in which the evil power approached man through what, in itself, was purely good. What can be fairer to thought than the fruit of a tree in the Garden of God? No poison could lurk in that 'fruit' itself. The only evil lay in the fact that, for purposes of Divine love, and perhaps only for a season, even so, its use was forbidden. The thing was good, the pure creation of the all-perfect Maker. But His command, 'Thou shalt not eat,' made the using of it evil.

III. Have we not here again a type of whole worlds of temptation? In countless cases the thing through which the temptation comes from beneath is a thing whose origin is from above, yea, from the Father of Lights, the Giver of every good and perfect gift. It is something beautiful and pure in itself, and the use of which, under other conditions, or at other times, may be as right as it is delightful. But some high reason says to us, just now, in view of that particular tree of God's own garden of pleasures, 'Do not eat'. Just now, just for us now, that charming object, that interesting occupation, that sweet society, that pleasant place is, in the Lord's wise love, to be foregone. We are asked to 'do without it; to be 'as a weaned child' about it. No condemnation is passed upon *it*. But *our use* of it would be against His will. And that makes it a test in the hands of our Friend, and an enticement in the hands of our enemy. We are at once tested and enticed by a conflict of pleasure with duty, where the pleasure in itself is pure.

IV. Then, we see, in the First Temptation, the very method and manner of the enemy's use of good for ends of evil. Through man's thought about 'the fruit' he aims a subtle thrust with a poisoned dagger at man's thought about God. He suggests that God is not love. He whispers that God withholds the fruit for selfish reasons; that He does not want man to be as happy as possible, to be too near Himself, to be too much like Himself. So, by that poisoned wound, the root of all sin is left in man. For sin, in its last analysis, is a discord between man and the blessed God. And we are at discord with His great love, not only when we openly defy His will, but when we suspect it, when we distrust it. That is, 'the little rift within the lute,' which has in it the possible discords of all imaginable actual sinning.

When the primeval human heart first listened to that dreadful suggestion, that God would say one word to His beloved creature, made in His image, which was not a word of love, then man sinned, then man fell. And the nature which so fell has felt the shock of its fall ever since; it has *kept* the discord ever since; so that only the hand of the slandered God of Love can set it right, taking away from it this fatal mischief of distrust of Him, putting into its hand 'the shield of *faith,* of *trust in Him,* wherewith it shall be able to quench *all* the fiery darts of the wicked.'—BISHOP H. C. G. MOULE.

REFERENCES.—III.—Spurgeon, *Sermons,* vol. xxxix. No. 2299; *ibid.* vol. 1. No. 2900.

SATAN'S WILES

'And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said.'—
GENESIS III. 1.

THE first words which Satan is ever recorded to have spoken must be words of interest, if it be only that they may serve as a key to unlock some of his later subtleties. And I observe at once a remarkable similarity between all the beginnings of Satan's words. I hear him coming to the first Adam—'Yea, hath God said?' then I listen to him approaching the second Adam—'If thou be the Son of God'. And there is one feature characterizing both. He begins with laying a doubt at the root. He questions; he unsettles. He does not assert error: he does not contradict truth; but he confounds both. He sets the mind at cavilling. He leaves a worm to gnaw at the core; and then he goes his way. Just so I observe his dealing when he speaks to God about Job. He opens his mouth with a question—'Does Job fear God for nought?'

So I at once take this general inference—that Satan makes his first entries—not by violent attack, but by secret sapping; and that he endeavors to confuse and

cloud the mind which he is afterwards going to kill in the dark.

I. Take the experience of a believer, and take the facts recorded in Satan's history, and it is evident in the outset that these questionings of the mind are always to be taken as Satan's temptations. The history of paradise will be sufficient to show this. The more you can resist these doubts as temptations, and bring to bear upon them your defensive armour, as you do in any moral temptation, and especially the more you throw them off as not your own, and give them back again, the sooner will be the victory; and the sooner the trial will pass away.

II. With all Satan's views, his far end is to diminish from the glory of God. You are wrong, if you think his far end is to destroy your soul: you are wrong, if you think his far end is to destroy the universe of souls. He takes these but as a means to his highest amibitious end: his final object is to derogate something from the Majesty of God. *Against God* is his spleen directed; therefore, to mar God's design, he insinuated his wily coil into the garden of Eden; to mar God's design, he met Jesus Christ in the wilderness, on the mountain top, and on the pinnacle of the temple; to mar God's design, he is always leading us to take unworthy views of God's nature and God's work.

III. It is Satan's delight to make limitations—draw boundary lines around grace. There is not a beautiful doctrine, but he will try to diminish it, and draw out of it, if he can, a proof of a limited gospel. He is always saying—'It is not for everybody: it is not for all persons: but it is for "the elect" '. 'It is not in everything; it does not go down into little particulars.' And so he tries to make the very mind of the child of God, which ought to be standing out in perfect liberty, wherewith Christ hath made it free, to be bound in the prison house. He detracts from the largeness of God's love; he will not hold the grandeur of universal love; he will not hold particular election: he hates both—because both glorify God. Particular election, showing particular love, universal redemption, the vastness of his compassion: therefore both he would put away. Satan is always disparaging or impugning universal redemption or individual election.

IV. For all these confining, limiting views there is but one remedy—it is to look at the character of God, as He is revealed in the covenant of His grace. You will observe that this is exactly what our Saviour did. When He was tempted, He threw Himself and Satan back upon 'what is written'.—J. Vaughan, *Fifty Sermons* (1874), p. 172.

THE TEMPTATION IN THE GARDEN OF EDEN

'And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, ye shall not eat of every tree of the Garden.' etc.—Genesis iii. 1-5.

How did the Tempter effect his purpose?

I. By a question.

(*a*) On the serpent-lips of the tempter it meant this:—

'May you not settle for yourself what is morally right and what is morally wrong, instead of obeying the eternal law of right? May you not feel yourself at liberty to disobey a command given you by God?'

(*b*) Mark the subtlety of the question. God gave His gifts largely, and placed on human freedom but one limitation. But the tempter hides the love, and aggravates the burden of the prohibition.

(*c*) How did Eve meet the question? Exactly as you and I have met the same question when we have been tempted to indulge in some unlawful gratification. Do we not all listen as Eve listened, doubt as she doubted, have hard thoughts of God as she had, put a barrier where God has put none, and break down defence where He has fixed it, and so place ourselves at the tempter's mercy?

II. He makes the way to sin easy by removing all fear of the consequences. There is the negation, 'ye shall not surely die.'

III. But the seductive power could not stop there. Man cannot live by doubt and by negation. Hence the Satanic doubt and the Satanic negation are followed by the Satanic promise.

(*a*) Note the malevolence of these words, 'God doth know'. Is there not a marvellous consistency in the story which puts that suggestion into the serpent's mind?

(*b*) See the fascination of the promise: 'Ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil'. Addressed to that which was noblest in man—the largeness of his capacity, the grandeur of his aims, the infinite within him. It was fascinating then to unsuspecting innocence, it is fascinating still to us in our fallen condition, most fascinating to those to whom God has given large intellect and large hearts if they have not found Him.

IV. Man has fallen through the tempter's art, but man has also triumphed over the tempter. Christ reversed the fall of man; thus did He give our nature its true exaltation and raise it to the right hand of power.—J. J. S. Perowne, *The Contemporary Pulpit*, vol. v. p. 119.

BEGINNING OF SIN AND REDEMPTION

Genesis iii. 1-15.

'The Fall,' says Dr. Cunningham Geikie, 'finds an echo in every religion in the world.' In the Thibetan story the first men were perfect like the gods; but they ate of the white sugar-sweet tree, and grew corrupt. In the oldest Hindoo temples two figures of Krishna are still seen, in one of which he is trampling on the crushed head of a serpent. In the museum of the Capitol there is an old sarcophagus which shows a naked man and woman standing beneath a tree from which the *man* is about to pluck fruit. The demon who tempts him is standing near.

There are no such thorns found in a state of nature, says Dr. Hugh Macmillan, as those produced by ground once tilled by man. In the waste clearings of New Zealand and Canada, and around the ruined

shieling on the Highland moor, thorns may be seen which were unknown before.

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THE SERPENT TEMPTING MAN

'And the Serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die.'

GENESIS III. 4.

THERE is no thought more awful than this: that sin is all around and within us, and we know not what it is. We are beset by it on every side; it dogs our every way, draws our wills under its sway, and ourselves under its dominion. It is a pestilence that walketh in darkness, and nothing stays its advances. It passes through all barriers, and pierces every stronghold. In the beginning, we are told, sin was not in the world, and that by one man's disobedience sin hath entered. Ever since this time it has taken up its abode here; and it has been followed by death, for 'death hath passed upon all men; for all have sinned.' 'This much we do know: that it is a will opposed to the will of God. A will which chooses evil is a will opposed to the will of God.' In fact, the will of man is in a state of rebellion against that of God. Whence, then, came this clashing of wills, this open rebellion, this presence of evil?

I. The first man, fresh from his Maker's hand, placed in Paradise, and appointed lord of the earth, was endowed with every requisite for developing his God-given and God-inspired nature, and fulfilling his destiny. But a tempter came to him from the midst of the animal world, and man yielded to the temptation. But when we consider that Adam was lord of this animal kingdom, and, moreover, that man alone was endued with the gift of speech, it must be evident that this tortuous animal was but the tool of that evil and serpentine Spirit, Satan, 'that old serpent called the Devil'. Under the form of this serpent, the Wicked One therefore tempted man to his destruction. The temptation of the second Adam is the counterpart of that of the first. Christ overcame, that by His victory the dominion which Satan had obtained over the whole human race. through the Fall of the guilty pair, might be destroyed. The Tempter approached our Lord openly, but he came to man in disguise. It was a real serpent (not a disguise or assumed form), perverted by Satan to be the instrument of his temptation. Satan is still, as he was from the beginning, himself a creature of God; and, as a creature, then, he made use of a creature to carry out his designs. When, then, the temptation came through one of the animal kingdom, it proceeded from a grade inferior to our first parents themselves. There could, therefore, be no palliation for their sin. Man had dominion over the beasts of the field; he must not, therefore, take the law from them. Besides, the presence of a spirit must have been self-evident, for there was both speech and reasoning power in the serpent. When, then, they listened and were persuaded, their fall was without excuse.

II. This will explain to us the sources of man's temptation. We are here upon our trial. This life is for us the time of our probation. We are free agents, and by our own will and choice we determine our eternal portion. Temptations are inevitable; no one is exempt, for we are all on the same level of our common humanity. 'To be forwarned is to be forearmed;' it is therefore real wisdom on our part to find out for ourselves the sources of temptation. In the case of our first parents we notice that the first source is:—

(1) The evil suggestion from without. Of all the trees of the garden (including the Tree of Life) man was allowed freely to eat, but it was forbidden him to eat of 'the tree of knowledge of good and evil,' under penalty of death. The command was definite and precise; the consequence of disobedience was made clear to them. Here was a positive law, and this moral code in its simplicity was sufficient for the training of man's moral nature. Without such a test of sincerity it could not have been perfected. Clearly, then, if man fell, it could only be by the violation of the Divine command.

(2) We find innocent tendencies, proclivities, which are also a source of temptation from within. The appetites, inclinations, and desires of our flesh are not in themselves sin; it is the indulgence of them under wrong circumstances which constitutes the sin. They may be the instruments of our sanctification as well as our degradation—of holiness as well as sin. As tendencies only they are perfectly innocent, they are of God's appointment, and are the means of carrying out some of His providential designs; and not till stimulated into action by evil suggestions from without do they become sinful. Having, then, got an evil suggestion from without, and possessing the tendencies within, only the third source of temptation is wanting to complete the sin.

(3) The opportunity for the sin itself. In solitude, and away from the side of her natural protector, the Tempter plied his temptation with terrible success. Thus, these three sources of temptation having 'met together and kissed each other,' the fall became inevitable.

III. The sin was committed by Eve alone. But by Adam it was repeated through her, and therefore in society. He fell through her influence. The tempted became the tempter. The strong tempted the weak, and again the weak tempted the strong. It is the weak who do most harm in God's world. The completion of weakness is the weak tempting the strong.

REFERENCES.—III. 4.—H. Alford, *Quebec Chapel Sermons*, vol. i. p. 100. F. Bourdillon, *Plain Sermons for Family Reading* (2nd series), p. 156. III. 4-6.—J. Bowstead, *Practical Sermons*, vol. ii. p. 30.

THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOOD AND EVIL

'And the Serpent said unto the woman, God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as God, knowing good and evil.—GENESIS III. 5.

CAN we believe this story? Most certainly.

It must have happened, for it happens now. It may well have been the first temptation, for it is the last, the most subtle, and the most widespread in the world. Let us notice.

I. This is a divinely inspired warning against a common temptation. Because they cannot reconcile the facts of science with these chapters many doubt their Divine inspiration. But we need not seek for proofs of the Divine Spirit in this writing. They lie upon the surface. Three things it teaches which must have come from God.

(*a*) All things were made by one God, and one only.

(*b*) All things were made by God, but one thing God did not make—sin.

(*c*) Then here we have also that truth, afterwards forgotten so long, and the rediscovery of which is revolutionizing the world to-day—the equality of woman with man.

II. What, then, is the temptation against which this passage warns us? This temptation has been the commonest down the ages, and it is the commonest to-day. The majority of young men and women who are lured from the paths of virtue and Christ are drawn away by the idea that they will 'see life,' and if they come back after as 'sadder' they will be 'wiser men'. Intellectual doubt is affecting some, practical doubt of the moral intuition is ruining more.

III. Let us consider the folly of yielding to this temptation.

(*a*) Whatever wisdom can be won through sin, it is at any rate not the highest wisdom.

(*b*) Whatever wisdom is won through sin, it does not enable us to compare sin and holiness.

(*c*) Whatever wisdom comes through sin, it does not teach us to know life.

(*d*) And yet it is a very subtle temptation. If mistake it be, it seems such a little mistake. It is symbolized by the apple. The eating of an apple was so small a thing to work such tremendous ruin.—E. ALDOM FRENCH, *God's Message Through Modern Doubt*, p. 90.

REFERENCES.—III. 6.—Bishop Bethel, *Sermons*, vol. ii. p. 165. C. Perren, *Outline Sermons*, p. 222. A. G. Mortimer. *The Church's Lessons*, vol. i. p. 196. J. Bush, *A Memorial*, p. 91.

THE FALL

(For Sexagesima Sunday)

'And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat.'—GENESIS III. 6.

A VOICE, soft, melodious, insinuating, is heard by Eve as she stands observing this strange tree, and on turning she finds that it proceeds from a serpent.

I. The Temptation.—The voice utters a question which perhaps we may venture to interpret in two different ways, according to the tone and manner in which the question was put. 'I have heard that God has given you all the trees of the gardens but one, to use for your own purposes and at your own discretion. Mistress of this fair domain, to whom we creatures are all of us subject, and to whom we naturally look for instruction, tell me if it is so. To you I come for information. I have no misgivings as to the goodness and the wisdom of the Great Creator; but I should like to have the matter explained to me.' Or it might express this thought: 'You do not really mean to tell me that God has thrown a fence of prohibition round this wonderful tree? If so—why should He do so? Why should He deny you and your husband anything? You have been accustomed to regard your Creator as a Being of love and goodness. Is this shutting you off from a part of your domain, this grudging you a fair and noble possession, consistent with the opinion you have hitherto entertained about Him? What do you say, when you consider the matter calmly?' Now, Eve seems to have taken the second interpretation; and here you have the first injection of the poison. The Tempter gets a footing in the mind of his victim by insinuating just a little incipient doubt about the goodness of God. It occurs to Eve that God was not altogether what she had been accustomed to think Him. Now at this point her duty was plain. Clearly she had made a mistake in allowing herself to be drawn into this colloquy at all, ignorant as she was of the ways of the world, and of its dark secrets. Some mischief had been done already, but it was not yet irreparable. And conscience, stirring in the breast of this child-woman, must surely have said, 'Quit this place. It is dangerous ground. Speak no more with this strange questioner. Too probably he is an enemy of your God and you.' But, unfortunately she remains, fascinated, as it would seem, and remains to carry on the conversation, in what she considers to be a generous defence of the God whom this serpent so completely misunderstands—her very continuance of the colloquy showing that she is beginning to waver.

How true a picture this is of our human life! There is a fascination for us about what is forbidden.

II. The Fall.—The Tempter's work is done. He has aimed at producing distrust of God, and he has produced it. He has carried it on till it has become a settled feeling. The love of God, which was once in the woman's heart, naturally gave way when she came to look upon God as one who grudged her the highest gratification, the noblest position. And now she is quite ready to throw aside her allegiance, to act for herself, to aspire to that pre-eminence which the Tempter has falsely promised her. And she contrives—one scarcely knows how—to draw her husband into an infatuated participation in her folly and sin. 'She did eat, and gave also to her husband with her, and he did eat.'

III. The Practical Point to which I am anxious to draw your special attention is this—that the aim of the Tempter throughout was to induce Adam to assert an independence of God, to claim for himself a position of false self-dependence. It was not the flavour of the fruit nor the beauty of the fruit that attracted the man, although his imagination may probably have thrown a glamour round the appearance of the tree, and he may have seen it through a misleading medium. We have no reason to suppose that in any respect (save that of being prohibited) the tree of knowledge of good and of evil differed from the other trees of the garden. But the flavour and the beauty were only means to an end. The thing which snared Adam was the promise that he should be as God, that he should be his own lord and master, that he should rise to all the blessedness, and dignity, and grandeur of a position in which he should recognize and bow before no will but his own. He was not beguiled so much by sensuality as by an ungovernable desire for self-exaltation.

(*a*) *Observe the consequences of the first transgression.*—It makes the transgressor, as sin always does, mean and cowardly. It induces him, as it always does, to justify himself and to lay the blame on others. It makes him, as it always does, sneakingly defiant of God. It disintegrates, as it always does, instead of bringing and binding together; and it separates two beings intended to love and to help one another.

(*b*) *We who believe in the Bible are sometimes twitted with the utter insignificance of the whole transaction.*—Well, I suggest three considerations. If a cobra bites me, the puncture is very trifling indeed, scarcely visible. Look at it, and you would say, 'A prick of a pin, nothing more'. But if bitten by a cobra I shall be a dead man in an hour. Again, if I steal only a penny, I am as truly guilty of dishonesty and of a breach of the law as if I stole a hundred thousand pounds. And, again, if sin be a virtual dethronement of the Supreme Governor of the universe, an outraging of the moral order which He has established amongst the myriads of creatures under His sway, the whole apparatus of Redemption —the Incarnation, the Death, and the Resurrection of Jesus Christ—would have been needed to right the derangement caused by the sin in the Garden of Eden, even if not a single other sin had been committed during all the successive generations of the human race.

THE DIVINE ALLEGORY OF THE FALL

'And Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God amongst the trees of the garden.'—GENESIS III. 8.

NEARLY all the most eminent Biblical scholars are now agreed that the clue to the meaning of this third chapter of Genesis is to be found by regarding it as an allegory or parable rather than as a historical document in the modern sense of the term.

I. The truth is one truth, but its several aspects are revealed in due order and sequence. As in a drama, the story moves in from point to point with increasing complication. The man shown to us is made in the image of God—he is the crown and summit of created things, in virtue of being a spiritual creature. Therein lies the core of his significance. But his moral nature is all unformed, undeveloped. Having never been tried, he cannot be said to possess a character. The narrative in Genesis helps us to understand through what experiences man outgrew his infantile condition, and how becoming conscious of a moral law, he became at the same time aware of the inward discord which is the result of a breach of law. Here, if anywhere, Adam, the first man, stands for us all. His craving for a false independence, his initial act of rebellion, his acquisition of a guilty knowledge of good and evil, his expulsion from the Garden of Eden, are the door through which he passes into the possibility of self-knowledge, and of moral freedom, won at the cost of effort and suffering.

II. Again, the first sin of Scripture is in some sort the type of all our sins. They grow out of a common root. In the language of morals, they are a revolt against the pressure of rules and obligation felt to be in conflict with personal desires. In the language of the Bible, they spring from a state of rebellion against God and the order established by Him. All our worst sins, too, are marked with a certain recklessness of consequences. In our blindness and infatuation, we excuse ourselves, but the author of the record of Genesis does not stop here. He shows us in poetic imagery the inward as well as the outward consequences of any deliberate act of rebellion. All sin, until with repentance comes pardon, alters the relation between the creature and the Creator. An estranging cloud comes between the soul and God.

III. Real religion stands and falls with the belief in a personal God, and in realizing the need of communion with Him. When once we destroy, or tamper with, the conviction that we are living, or should be living, in spiritual contact with a Divine Being who has revealed Himself to us, in His Son, worship ceases to have any real meaning. Competent observers have remarked that a reluctance to think of themselves as spiritual creatures in contact with God is one of the characteristics of those who have drunk most deeply of the spirit of this restless, inquiring age. Let us consider briefly one or two forms in which this reluctance manifests itself.

(*a*) One is levity, born of shallowness, like that of the Athenians who scoffed at St. Paul when he spoke to them of the resurrection of the dead.

(*b*) Another way of hiding from God is the refusal to listen to the voice of conscience when it condemns us, the ingrained habit of slipping away from reminders of duties neglected and obligations left unfulfilled, so finely delineated by George Eliot in the character of Tito Melema.

(*c*) We can be hiding from God even while we flatter ourselves that we are seeking His face. Even religion may be so perverted so as to become a

deadening influence when we identify it with opinions, or party views, or zeal for dogma, or external things like ceremonies, or forms of worship, or matters of Church order and discipline.—J. W. Shepard, *Light and Life*, p. 141.

ADAM AND EVE—THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD

'And they heard the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day.'—Genesis iii. 8.

I. We see Adam and Eve in the opening chapter of Genesis surrounded by the creatures that God had made, like those lower creatures in many respects, and yet absolutely different in one—the possession of a soul created in the image of God, and as they were created in the image of God, they were endowed with many great gifts—for instance knowledge.

(*a*) Through experience we have gained much knowledge, and by being taught have made our own what other people gathered by experience, but Adam and Eve had no parents, yet they had a very great knowledge of the world and its powers, and that knowledge was the direct gift of God.

(*b*) They not only knew about God, but knew God in the intimate intercourse of communion with Him, and this was the great gift which they lost to a very great extent by their sin.

(*c*) But yet this knowledge has been more than restored to us through our Lord Jesus Christ.

II. Both of these sorts of knowledge we may have.

(*a*) The first imperfectly; by the labour of investigation.

(*b*) We may know too about God, for He has given us a revelation about Himself, and has given us an infallible guide in His Church to interpret that revelation, and His Holy Spirit in our hearts to help us to understand it.—A. G. Mortimer, *Stories from Genesis*.

References.—III. 8, 9.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol i. No. 2900. H. P. Liddon, *Cambridge Lent Sermons* (1864), p. 23. H. Hayman, *Sermons in Rugby School Chapel*, p. 159. W. Mellor, *Village Homilies*, p. 212. G. Matheson, *Moments on the Mount*, p. 1. H. Macmillan, *The Olive Leaf*, p. 241. C. Kingsley, *Gospel of the Pentateuch*, p. 41. Spurgeon, *Evening by Evening*, p. 184. J. Keble, *Sermons for Septuagesima*, p. 139. G. Calthrop, *Pulpit Recollections*, p. 16. T. Birkett Dover, *A Lent Manual*, p. 1. W. Hay Aitken, *Mission Sermons* (2nd series), p. 1. C. J. Vaughan, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 3263. J. Vaughan, *Sermons to Children* (1875), p. 177. J. Van Oosterzee, *The Year of Salvation*, vol. i. p. 5. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. vii. No. 412. G. Brooks, *Five Hundred Outlines*, p. 276. III. 9.—W. F. Shaw, *Sermon Sketches*, p. 32. E. A. Bray, *Sermons*, vol. i. p. 44. J. Keble, *Sermons for Septuagesima to Ash Wednesday*, p. 103; *Sermons for the Christian Year*, vol. ii. p. 129. III. 10.—R. Hiley, *A Year's Sermons*, vol. ii. p. 65. III. 12.—C. Kingsley, *The Good News of God*, p. 347.

Genesis iii. 12.

'Adam, in the Garden of Eden, said, "The woman gave it to me, and I did eat," but he was held responsible for his actions nevertheless; and this is the great lesson to be taught to persons of feeble will and persons of arbitrary will alike.'—Dr. S. Bryant in *Studies in Character*, p. 162.

Reference.—III. 14, 15.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxxvi. No. 2165.

THE GOSPEL OF GENESIS

'It shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.' Genesis iii. 15.

Theologians have a special name for this text. They term it the 'Protevangelium,' which being interpreted is the 'First Gospel'. Who uttered this first Evangel? God Himself. To whom was the Protevangelium uttered? To Satan.

I. The Saviour's Injury to Satan.—'Her seed—it shall bruise thy head.' The margin of the Revised Version renders it 'shall lie in wait for thy head'. It has also been rendered 'shall break thy head'. An Indian Missionary told me the other day that in the East every one would understand such an allusion. A serpent is being addressed, and the poison-bag of a serpent is on or near the serpent's head. An Eastern, my friend assured me, would at once perceive that by lying in wait for a bruising or breaking the head of the serpent was meant the destroying of the poison-bag, so that though the creature might still live, its death-dealing power was done away. The Protevangelium is fulfilled in the Incarnate Saviour. When He became 'the seed of the woman' He accomplished this prediction in great degree.

(*a*) What a death-blow to Satan was and is the character of our Lord. Man is by the Incarnation shown to be capable of moral and spiritual victory. The character of Christ is at once the great proof of His duty, and the great prophecy of man's glory.

(*b*) The teachings of Christ verify this Gospel prophecy. No marvel Satan loathes these heavenly oracles, and seeks to suppress them. Seen from every angle they are matchless. Compare them with the canonical sayings of other religions, and they are as sunlight as to shadow. Christ flashed on the mind of man the most splendid theology the universe has known.

(*c*) The death of Christ lent to this message its great fulfilment. Our Lord's death was no mere individual death. It was a representative death. It was a generous death. Some one has termed it a 'borrowed' death. Such indeed it was. If the poison-bag is ever to be plucked from the destroying serpent, only a Divine Being can do it, and only a dying God. Jesus conquered the foe after He seemed hopelessly conquered by the foe. Our heavenly Achilles, albeit His wounded heel, plucked in triumph the serpent's poison-bag away.

(*d*) 'It shall bruise thy head.' This sure word is realized in the exaltation of Christ. Everything in Christianity depends on our Lord's physical resurrection. If Christ be not risen there is no Christianity.

(*e*) We see a delightful illustration of the fulfilment of this earliest Gospel promise in the conversion of sinners. Whenever a soul turns trustfully to Jesus, Satan's head is bruised.

(*f*) The sanctification ofChristians has this outcome. Beautiful lives deal Satan trenchant blows. Godliness is never merely defensive it is grandly offensive.

(*g*) Our Lord's return will give the Protevangelium its most illustrious verification. Satan will be destroyed with the brightness of His coming.

II. Satan's injury to the Saviour.

(*a*) The Conquering Christ is to be wounded in the struggle. Assuredly this prediction was fulfilled in the earthly sufferings of Christ. It was and is so in the trials of His People. All His servant's wounds are His wounds. 'Why persecutest thou me?' He inquired of the astonished Saul of Tarsus.

(*b*) The sorrows of the universe help to realize this pathetic prophecy. Nature and man are in a groaning and travailing state. There is an undertone of sadness everywhere and in everything. The universe He created and which He mystically indwells pains Him by its pains.

(*c*) But the sin of the world is the most terrible illustration of this prophetic truth. By means of the iniquity of men the serpent bruises the Saviour's heel. Sinners indeed know not what they do.—DINSDALE T. YOUNG, *The Enthusiasm of God*, p. 79.

THE PROPHECY OF THE BRUISINGS

'I will put emnity between these (the serpent) and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head and thou shalt bruise his head.'—GENESIS III. 15.

THERE is to be conflict between Christ and Satan, between good and evil—perpetual conflict. In this conflict victory will come to one side, but bruisings to both.

I. Can we have the victory without the bruisings? As we read in his biography, Bishop Creighton in his early years was visited by a dream of this kind. His theory of life, as he then held it, is not very clearly expressed, but perhaps we shall do him no injustice if we say that he was determined to be cheerful and content in all circumstances, to do his own work, to recognize his limitations, and so far as he could to keep himself free of strife. He knew that he could give to the world some valuable literary work, if he had leisure in which to prepare it. From the sanguinary conflicts of the world and the Church he shrank. For one thing he had a strong sense of the impotence of man. Man does his best and is foiled. His defeat is not due to the strength of his human foes, but to the sudden interposition of a power above. Against that power it is vain to fight.

II. But we may have the bruisings without the victory. It is possible so to be overborne by the pangs and losses and defeats of the Christian soldier as to lose faith in Divine love and providence. There is an awful possibility of giving over prayer, of coming to think that the Lord's ear is heavy that He cannot hear, and His arm shortened that He cannot save.

III. What then does the promise mean? It means that wherever Christ is there is conflict. That is the token and foundation of hope. There is enmity between the Son of man and evil and that enmity never dies. But the Son of man and his legions are bruised in the fighting. Some dream of a triumph won without pain or pang, but it is a vain dream.

IV. But the victory is sure because the leader is Christ. He did not fight merely as an example to His soldiers. His contest is much more than an addition to the records of heroism that keep the world alive. He breathes His spirit into His soldiers and He is the Conqueror. The time and the manner we must leave with Him, but He asks us to throw ourselves into the conflict, and He promises us the interpretation of reverse and delay in the world where burdens are unbound and wounds healed and mortality swallowed up of life.—W. ROBERTSON NICOLL, *The Garden of Nuts*, p. 219.

REFERENCES.—III. 15.—Phillips Brooks, *Twenty Sermons*, p. 93. J. Monro Gibson, *Ages Before Moses*, p. 98. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxii. No. 1326.

THE STORY OF THE FALL

'Unto the woman He said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception,' etc.—GENESIS III. 16-18.

BY the Fall sin entered in, and by sin a change passed over the whole world. The change affected the moral relations of man. In becoming disobedient to God he lost all control over himself. While subject to the Divine Will, he wielded absolute power over his own nature. His passions were then pure ones, held in a bond of unity and subjection. But when he rebelled, they rebelled too, and warred one against the other, bringing in turn the will into bondage to them. His will revolted against his Maker, and it became one with the will of the Evil One; it moved in concert with it, and became part of the evil which was in the world. Man represented the antagonistic power which broke the unity of God's kingdom; his will was diametrically opposed to that of God. Such is sin.

I. The moral consequences and chastisement of the Fall.

(1) Man was driven away from the Presence of God; and from two causes, shame and fear. Ashamed, for they knew that they were naked; afraid, for they feared to meet their Maker. They had lost 'that ignorance of innocence which knows nothing of nakedness'. That it was the conscience which was really at work is evidenced by their fear, which impelled them to hide themselves. Man in his innocence knew nothing of either shame or fear. And this, too, is the peculiar trait of childhood. Adam was ashamed, but yet he thought more of the consequences of sin than of the sin itself; more of his nakedness than of having broken the commandment of God. And so it ever is now; men think more of the pain, the shame, the publicity, the humiliation induced by sin, than the transgression itself. But an evil conscience still fears to be alone with God; and like Adam, the sinner would fain hide himself.

(2) The second moral consequence of the Fall is selfishness. That is the love and consequent indulgence of self; the liking to have one's own way for the

sake of having it. It is the root of all personal sin. It is the getting another centre besides the true one, round which we live and move and have our being. It brings the wills of us all into collision with the rule and will of the Eternal Good One. It is to revolve round ourselves, instead of making God the centre of our thoughts, feelings, opinions, actions, and aspirations. Everywhere there is mutual dependence, mutual support, and co-operation. 'No man liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself,' even in the body politic (2 Cor. v. 15). Where, then, is any place for selfishness in religion? We cannot keep it to ourselves; our light must shine before men, that they may glorify the Great Father in Heaven. Christ has given us something outside ourselves to live for: the poor, the sick, sinners at home, heathen abroad, and all who need our help and prayers. Further, as Adam and Eve showed their selfishness by their cowardice in hiding, and by the severity with which they regarded the sin of the other, while lenient to their own share in the transgression, so it is still; the sinner first throws the blame on others as tempters, and then upon circumstances which God has ordained.

II. The penal consequences or chastisement of the Fall were threefold:—

(1) The curse fell upon the ground. By man's sin came death; death passed from man into the rest of creation, pervading the whole; and the curse fell on the ground (Gen. III. 17, 18; Rom. VIII. 22).

(2) The second penal consequence was the impossibility of ease; pain to woman, toil to man, and finally death to both. There was to be no rest for either the weaker or the stronger, for the tempter or the tempted (Gen. III. 16-19).

(3) The third penal consequence was the being shut out from the trees of knowledge and life (Gen. III. 22-24). After the germ of death had penetrated into man's nature, through sin, it was Mercy which prevented his taking of the Tree of Life, and thus living for ever; the fruit which produced immortality could only do him harm. Immortality in a state of sin and misery is not that eternal life which God designed for man. Man's expulsion from Eden was for his ultimate good; while exposing him to physical death, it preserved him from eternal or spiritual death. And man, too, was shut out from the Tree of Knowledge. We all know this by bitter experience. With what difficulty knowledge of any kind is obtained; what intense application and labour are required. There is no royal road to learning; we must pay the price—sweat of brain—if we would unlock its priceless treasures.

Lastly, consider the future hopes of the human race. The first ground of hope is from what we were originally. Man was created in the likeness of God—perfect, upright, pure, and holy. What we have been, that we shall be. The second ground is from the evidence we have in our own feelings, that we were born for something higher; this world cannot satisfy us. 'We seek a better country, that is, a heavenly' (see Phil. III. 13, 14). The third ground is from the curse pronounced on evil. A true life fought out in the spirit of God's truth shall conquer at last. 'The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head' (Gen. III. 15). The spiritual seed culminated in Christ. But, remember, except we are in Christ, we are in guilt. 'We are yet in our sins'; for, 'as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive'.

REFERENCE.—III. 18.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxxix. No. 2299.

'In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread.'—GENESIS III. 19.

'It may be proved, with much certainty, that God intends no man to live in this world without working: but it seems to me no less evident that He intends every man to be happy in his work. It is written, "in the sweat of thy brow," but it was never written, "in the breaking of thine heart," thou shalt eat bread.'—RUSKIN, *On the Old Road*, vol. i.

REFERENCES.—III. 19.—Bishop Goodwin, *Parish Sermons*, vol. v. p. 32. S. Baring-Gould, *Village Preaching for a Year*, vol. i. p. 137. III. 20.—L. D. Bevan, *Christ and the Age*, p. 227. III. 21.—L. D. Bevan, *Christ and the Age*, p. 209. J. Keble, *Sermons for Septuagesima to Ash Wednesday*, p. 108; *Sermons for the Christian Year*, vol iii. p. 181. III. 22.—L. D. Bevan, *Christ and the Age*, p. 193. J. Martineau, *Endeavour after the Christian Life*, p. 34 (2nd series). III. 22-24.—L. D. Bevan, *Christ and the Age*, p. 243. III. 23.—F. Bourdillon, *Plain Sermons for Family Reading*, p. 38. III. 23.—C. E. Shipley, *Miscellaneous Sermons*, p. 13. III. 24.—J. Wright, *The Guarded Gate*, p. 9. M. Biggs, *Practical Sermons on Old Testament Subjects*, p. 20. III.—F. W. Robertson, *Notes on Genesis*, p. 24. A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—Genesis*, p. 10.

GENESIS IV.

'Marriage, which has been the bourne of so many narratives, is still a great beginning, or it was to Adam and Eve, who kept their honeymoon in Eden, but had their first little one among the thorns and thistles of the wilderness. It is still the beginning of the home epic—the gradual conquest or irremediable loss of that complete union which makes the advancing years a climax, and age the harvest of sweet memories in common.'—GEORGE ELIOT, *Middlemarch*.

CAIN AND ABEL

'Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the Lord, and Abel he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and the fat thereof, and the Lord had respect unto Abel and his offering, but unto Cain and his offering He had not respect.'—GENESIS IV. 3, 4, 5.

WE perceive that both these brothers recognized the duty and obligation of religious worship, but when their offerings were brought God did not receive them both alike.

I. From the nature of Abel's offering, through faith, he presented a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain. There is every reason to believe that the offering up of animals in sacrifice to God (which was the ancient way of worship) was no idea of man's; man would never, probably, have thought of such a thing had he not been taught to do so by Divine

instruction. Adam, after his fall, was probably instructed in this, for the animals from whose skins they were clothed must have been slain, and as God did not then permit the eating of animal food, these animals will doubtless have been slain in sacrifice; the slaughtered animals being types of a crucified Saviour, the skins types of Christ's righteousness, in which every saved sinner must be clothed.

II. Still the reason why Abel was preferred to Cain was not merely the nature of his offering, but the spirit, the frame of mind in which he offered it. He had faith or belief in man's fallen condition, he believed in the entrance of sin, he believed in death, he believed in that Saviour in whose blood he himself and all others who would be accepted by God must alone be cleansed. On the other hand, Cain by his offering shows that he had no faith in the promise of a Saviour, that he did not believe in the fall—no faith in the entrance of sin, no faith in the promise of a Saviour, that he did not believe in the cleansing blood of Christ.—E. J. Brewster, *Scripture Characters*, p. 1.

Reference.—IV. 3-16.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—Genesis*, p. 14.

ABEL THE UNDEVELOPED

'And the Lord had respect unto Abel.'—Genesis iv. 4.

Abel personified something which did not pertain to any special age, something which was cosmopolitan and therefore everlasting. By that cosmopolitan quality Abel was kept alive—alive amid the changing environment, alive amid the traces of the dead; he has a present voice—he yet speaketh.

I. What is this quality of which Abel is the inaugurator, and by whose inauguration he lives? He is the representative of all the great who die young. The Picture is meant to declare that no really great work is ever interrupted.

II. Its simple features show that Cain is a child of the dust! Abel is a product of the Divine breath. Both the brothers are religious, so far as the form of worship is concerned, both offer a sacrifice. The difference between the dust and the divinity does not lie in the diversity of these men's gifts, but in the diversity of their spirit.

III. The offerings are made, and each brother retires to his home. Time passes; and by and by there happens a strange thing. These brothers meet with opposite destinies. Abel has a splendid year. For Cain the wheel of fortune has turned the opposite way, and he is filled with indignation. His is the anger of a man defrauded. To him the aggravation is not so much his failure as the fact that he has failed where his brother has succeeded. Cain has begun with covetousness and has developed into envy. The sin of the garden has become procreative. Adam had been content to say, 'All these things shall be mine'; Cain has reached the darker thought, 'They at least shall not be my brother's'.

IV. In the view of the early spectator, Abel has not finished his work of sacrifice. It is only a germcell that has appeared when he is called away. His was a protest in favour of the higher over the lower life; a protest against utilitarian worship, against buying and selling in the temple of God. But it was his own higher life that he vindicated.—G. Matheson, *The Representative Men of the Bible*, p. 45.

References.—IV. 4.—G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 376. IV. 5-7.—J. Oates, *The Sorrow of God*, p. 81.

JEALOUSY

'Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell.'—Genesis iv. 5.

This cannot be considered too weak a motive to carry so enormous a crime. Even in a highly civilized age we find an English statesman saying: 'Pique is one of the strongest motives in the human mind. Fear is strong but transient. Interest is more lasting, perhaps, and steady, but weaker; I will ever back pique against them both. It is the spur the devil rides the noblest tempers with, and will do more work with them in a week than with other poor jades in a twelvemonth.'—Marcus Dods.

CAIN—WORSHIP

'And the Lord said unto Cain, Why art thou wroth? and why is thy countenance fallen? If thou dost well, shalt thou not be accepted? And if thou dost not well, sin lieth at thy door.'—Genesis iv. 6, 7.

Sin came into the world with Adam and Eve; then its fatal seed was planted in human nature.

I. Cain's sin was not only the sin of murder, but it began as all sin does, in disobedience to God. All sin is against God because it is breaking God's law.

II. Ever since the time of Cain there have been two ways in which people have worshipped God—either according to God's revealed commands or according to their own private opinion. There are a great many people who will tell you that it does not matter how you worship God, so long as you are sincere, but the Bible shows us again and again from the time of Cain right through its whole history that God will not accept worship which is founded on self-will and disobedience.—A. G. Mortimer, *Stories from Genesis*, p. 44

Reference.—IV. 6., 7.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxxii. No. 1929.

'Sin lieth at the door.'—Genesis iv. 7.

'Amongst the proverbial sayings of the Welsh, which are chiefly preserved in the form of triads, is the following one: "Three things come unawares upon a man, sleep, sin, and old age". This saying holds sometimes good with respect to sleep and old age, but never with respect to sin. Sin does not come unawares upon a man: God is just, and would never punish a man, as He always does, for being overcome by sin, if sin were able to take him unawares; and neither sleep nor old age always come unawares upon a man.'—From Borrow's *Wild Wales*, ch. lviii.

References.—IV. 7.—A. W. Momerie, *The Origin of Evil*, p. 101. A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—Genesis*, p. 22.

THE CRIME OF CAIN

GENESIS IV. 8-16.

'IN a famous picture in the Louvre, the painter shows us—amidst wan lights—pale crime fleeing, pursued by Truth and Justice. They hover as avengers overhead, armed with the torch and the sword. The criminal does not see them, perhaps, but the restless anxiety on his forehead tells us that he feels their threatenings—I might almost say that their breath burns him. Human punishments are not always certain, for God reserves His hour; but the sinner, even if he does not always lose health, fortune, life, honour, feels none the less at his heels the pursuers who threaten to plunge him into the abyss where all is lost and broken. That fugitive, if we like, is Cain, the eternal image of the sinner—even the sinner who is unknown to men—the image of all those unknown Cains who have trembled, who tremble, or will some day tremble, at the mighty voice of God. . . . It was no fiction which Victor Hugo invented in his poem on "Conscience". It is the Bible he is transposing, it is the history of the sinner he is symbolizing when he represents him to us in his verses as "dishevelled, pale in the midst of tempests—Cain, who is fleeing before Jehovah!" While his weary family are asleep, he can take no rest. He is haunted with the vision of the look of God, of conscience, which penetrates the thickest darkness.

Au fond des cieux funèbres
Il vit un œil tout grand ouvert dans les ténèbres
Et qui le regardait dans l'ombre fixément.

Vainly does he pursue his sinister flight. Even if he went to the world's end, he would find there the same gaze and the same terror. Neither the canvas of tents nor the precincts of towers—neither solitude nor the whirlwind of pleasure—can tear the sinner away from himself; neither life nor the grave can tear him away from God. Against God, against remorse, we cannot wall up either the gate of cities or the gate of hearts. That ancestral criminal, that first homicide, the murderer of Abel, symbolizes all the others, not alone those who have shed blood, but those who have soiled their souls with more wicked murders or have dragged into evil the souls of others, their innocent brothers. For them as for him, under some dark vault, some lurking-place beneath the earth:

L'œil était dans la tombe et regardait Cain!'

JULES PACHEU, *Psychologie des Mystiques Chrétiens*, pp. 47-49.

REFERENCE.—IV. 8.—A. Phelps, *The Old Testament*, p. 137.

THE EVANGELIZATION OF THE WORLD

'Am I my brother's keeper?'—GENESIS IV. 9.

I. Your brothers! where are they? Ask Jesus Christ. Did He not say, 'When I am lifted up from the earth, I shall draw all men unto Me'? They are everywhere: they are not merely those who love and respect you, but those who despise and hate you, friends and enemies alike.

II. You are the guardians of your brothers. Their interests are your interests, their welfare yours. This general truth presents itself under two aspects. Man is twofold by nature. He has a body and a soul. He suffers in both. Hence arises a double mission, at once to relieve temporal miseries and to save souls.

(*a*) You ought to compassionate and alleviate the temporal distresses of your neighbours.

(*b*) If, however, you comprehend the true dignity of the soul, the spiritual life and its immortal destiny and bliss, will you not desire to awaken others to the higher realities and possibilities of this being?

III. The love of souls! All the time the Church has lived the life of the Master it has more than felt this love; it has been penetrated by it. This is why there is in the new age and in modern life a fact unknown to antiquity, a fact peculiar to Christianity, to wit, missions. Christianity alone could give birth to them. You may be disposed to disparage them, but have you ever seriously reflected what civilized Europe would have given to pagan populations if Christian missionaries had not been there? Rifles and other fire-arms wherewith to destroy each other: brandy and opium, to brutalize and to degrade!

IV. But souls to save are not only in the far distant plains of earth. They are in your family, in your dwelling, at your hearth. They are in your streets and fields and workshops. They ply your Christian calling. Whilst therefore you endeavour to cherish a love which would embrace the whole earth, let those whom God has given to you be yet the first recipients of that love.—J. MILLER, from the French of E. Bersier's *Sermons Literary and Scientific*, p. 202.

HOME MISSIONS

'And the Lord said . . . Where is . . . thy brother? And he said, I know not: am I my brother's keeper?'—GENESIS IV. 9.

GOD'S question! Man's answer! It is not God's first question, for He had already addressed to Adam—as to the representative of the human race—that personal inquiry which the Holy Spirit still brings home to every heart convicted of sin, to every man when he first realizes that he is naked before God and longs to hide himself from Him: 'Where art thou?' No! this is God's second question, 'Where is thy brother?' And just as the first question was addressed to man upon his first conviction of sin, so this second question is addressed to man after his first struggle with his fellow-man. It is asked of the victor concerning the vanquished in the cruel competition of life, 'Where is thy brother?' Cain's answer, 'I know not,' was a lie, as most selfish answers are; but the important point occurs in the latter part of his reply, wherein he embodied, in the form of a counter-question, the great principle which God had so far only implied. In doing so he sent ringing down the ages a question, the answer to which must, to the latest

chapter of earth's history, divide men into two classes.

I. This Question is of the very Essence of the Gospel Principle.—It is at the very centre, and not at the circumference of spiritual things in the system of Christ. It is absolutely fundamental in the new or Christian covenant: for whereas the Law asked a man the question 'Where art thou?' the Gospel passed on at once to the more far-reaching question, 'Where is thy brother?' It made a man essentially his brother's keeper, and the principles of spiritual citizenship were enunciated by our Lord with the express purpose of bringing home to each one of us, His followers, this responsibility, and enabling each one of us to discharge it.

II. What is the very First Principle of Heavenly Citizenship as laid down by Christ Jesus our Lord upon the mount? 'Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.' And what did He mean by it? Surely that the first condition of heavenly possession is the absolute renunciation by the human spirit of all claim to personal ownership of any earthly possession, whether it be property or time, or talent or opportunity, with which it may have been entrusted by God. And what said He next? 'Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted.' What did our Lord mean by this but that the second great principle of His kingdom is this: that it is an impossibility for His true follower to be really happy as long as some one else is sad; that even the enjoyment of the Gospel is to be considered imperfect as long as there be those who know not of it, or have not accepted it; that the heavenly citizen will feel his brother's sorrow, his brother's pain; that he will mourn for his brother's sadness. Are not these the two principles which have been ignored or slurred over by the modern Church of Christ? Do not we feel that we need their re-stating in no uncertain terms? Is it not just at this point that the Church of Christ has failed in her efforts to grapple with the Home Mission problem of our day? It is the greatest problem that the Church of Christ has got to deal with to-day; and it is the problem which is nearest to her hand—that of the overgrown populations in the poorer parts of our great cities.

III. It is the Modern Lazarus who, by the exigencies of nineteenth and twentieth century life, has been laid at our gate full of sores.

(a) Look at the physical sore, the unhealthy surroundings, the fetid air of the close alleys or filthy slums. That atmosphere is full of evil of all description.

(b) Look at the social sore.—The people are not only herded together, but they are so far of a dead level of one class of society—and that the most helpless class—that there is no man to become a leader amongst his fellows.

(c) Look at the moral sore.—See those public-houses at every street-corner, and abounding in all directions, like the links of a chain which bind the people to their sin so that they cannot break away.

(d) Look at the financial sore.—The poor are herded in one district by themselves, and the rich (who should be their leaven, the very stewards of God in this matter) are congregated together elsewhere. Time was when master and man lived near together, and they took an interest in each other's welfare; but the masters now live far afield, in the residential districts, and the men congregate in dense masses nearer to the place of their employment.

Such is the Lazarus of poverty and misery and sin which is at our gate—the gate of every great city in our land—to-day. We need not stay to ask how it came to be there or whose fault it is that things are as they are. Selfishness and sin, we may be pretty sure, have had much to do with it. The great point to notice is that in the providence of God this poor man, this Lazarus with all his sores, is laid at our gate, that he is our brother, and that he is in our keeping.

IV. What are we Going to do with Him?—Social movements, political movements, labour movements, have all their own part—and a very important part—to take in this matter, but it will require the balm of Gilead, the spiritual medicine of the Great Physician, even of Christ, the anointing of the Holy Ghost, before these terrible sores can be healed. And to this intent some one must needs go to Lazarus and tend and care for him.—T. Brocas Waters.

KEEPING OUR BROTHER

'Am I my brother's keeper?'—Genesis iv. 9.

You remember the connexion in which these words were asked. They were the words of a man as he stood forth in the presence of Almighty God with his hands red with the blood of his murdered brother. It was an excuse which fell from the lips of a man who knew perfectly well that he was his brother's keeper, and it is the same excuse which has risen to the lips of men and women from that day forward—men and women who have been false to a charge which has been given to them, to the souls and bodies committed to their care, who have disgraced their humanity by neglecting those whom God has put it into their power to help.

I. Who is my Brother?—'Am I my brother's keeper?' Who is my brother? Think of Calvary and of the outstretched arms of the Saviour, and see there the answer to the question—who is my brother? Those arms stretched wide, that He might embrace the whole world. He teaches us, even though upon the cross, that all men are His brothers. And so when we ask 'Who is my brother; of whom am I the keeper?' the answer is, every one whom God has given you, every one whom you have the power to help, even though it be but by the kind word spoken—we are their keeper, and God looks to you to see to it that they learn from you something of His love and care.

II. How am I to 'keep' him?—'Who is my brother; and how am I to help him?' Just look for one moment at the way in which Christ helped those across whom He came.

(a) Help for the body.—Christ was surrounded daily by crowds of sick and suffering and poor. Think of the bodily suffering in its two great forms in which you and I know it—the suffering which comes from poverty and sickness—and see how He dealt with it. You remember in the miracle of the feeding of the four thousand that Christ said: 'Ye seek Me not because ye saw the works, but because ye did eat of the loaves and were filled'. But though He knew it was simply curiosity sometimes, or bodily suffering, hunger and want and poverty, still out of the abundance of His heart He did not deny them. Simply because they were hungry and poor He gave them to eat. And so Christ tells us to do to-day. What we very often forget is that those He has left with us are His representatives. 'The poor, the hungry, the stricken in Body,' He says, 'they are My representatives, and He that does it to one of these does it to Me'.

(b) Help for the Soul.—But we not only think of the way Christ dealt with actual bodily suffering amongst the poor people He came across; we remember the duty that the Church of Christ has to souls of men. Christ rarely wrought a miracle without at the same time touching the soul. And so it is to be with His Church. All systems, however valuable, which would try to make men better off as regards their state avail nothing until they touch the soul.

(c) The wider call.—Next we must look away from our own home, and think of those in our neighbourhood, our town, our country, and even abroad. They are all our brethren, for whom we have work to do. We have to send the Gospel of Christ to those thousands of additional people who are annually crowding into our great cities. These vast multitudes of people spreading out from the centre of the town or city into the suburbs, what do they find? No religious privileges, no church, no minister at all. And you say: 'Of course, if they want a church they must build one'. Yes, but they do not want a church. They *need* it badly, but it is about the last thing that some of them want. We must be ready, therefore, whenever we are asked, to help those great Home Mission Societies which seek to take to these thousands of people the blessings of the Gospel. The Church—laity as well as clergy—has to remember the teaching of our Lord in the parable of the Great Supper, when all those who were bidden would not come—and yet there was room: 'Go out into the highways and hedges and compel them to come in'.

THE FLYING ANGEL

'My brother's keeper.'—GENESIS IV. 9.

IT is a commonplace that responsibility places man in his true position in the scale of Creation, neither too high nor too low. The fact of his responsibility proves man's possession of an intelligent mind, a moral sense and will-power which he is bound to exercise deliberately and for the benefit of others. Thus, when a ship is wrecked and human lives are lost, we do not blame the winds and the waves. These blind forces of Nature simply carry out the laws imposed upon them. But we have a right to blame the captain if by neglect or incompetency he has run the vessel upon the rocks. When the lightning strikes the haystack and destroys the collected produce of the year the farmer must accept the inevitable. No other course lies before him. But if tramp or labourer has dropped a burning match among the hay the farmer is justified in expressing indignation for gross neglect of necessary precautions. Yes; man's place in Nature is too high, his power for good or evil too great, for him to attempt to shirk his unique responsibilities by classing himself with the beasts that perish. And yet, high as he is in the scale of Creation, man is not supreme. Above him stands God, the righteous Judge, against Whose decision there is no appeal; and, however much man may endeavour to delude himself with phrases such as fatalism and the like, his conscience admits that God is just in demanding at the Last Day an account of the deeds done in the body, and that upon that Great Assize should depend his own reward or punishment in the life beyond the grave.

I. Man is his Brother's Keeper.—This lesson of responsibility is not an evolution of modern ethics. At the very dawn of human life we find the truth revealed and enforced that man is his brother's keeper. From the first, life stands revealed to us as linked with life in the collocation of family and tribe. For good or ill, father and his children stood or fell together, king and his subjects. This simple, this rough-and-ready principle runs continually through the earlier books of the Old Testament. It strikes our modern minds with a certain moral shock to read that not only Dathan and Abiram, but 'their wives, their sons, and their little children' were swallowed up in the common ruin; that when Achan was convicted of a theft which involved Israel in an unexpected defeat before their enemies, not Achan only, but his 'sons and his daughters' were stoned with stones, and their bodies burned with fire. But we must remember that in the nursery period of the education of humanity lessons are taught with a dramatic simplicity suitable to an age incapable of fine distinctions. As we ponder over these past incidents we must take care not to confuse temporal with eternal punishment. Again, we must not forget that life in family or tribe was linked together not only for special punishment, but for preservation also. Noah, preacher of righteousness, was saved from the waters of the flood. But he was not saved alone. God's protection was extended to his family also.

II. Fatalism and Responsibility.—But as life became more complex moral difficulties began to perplex thoughtful minds and obstinate questionings arose. These difficulties increased as men directed their attention not so much to the central figure of influence, patriarch or king, head of tribe or family, but to those subordinate characters in the drama, those whom his actions so vitally affected for good or ill—associated in the common salvation or the common ruin, the re-

cipients of a special favour or the victims (so it seemed) of another man's sins. In dark days of depression or of national calamity a tendency emerged to doubt the justice of God, to despair of personal effort, as though after all it mattered not, when the many were punished, whether the individual did well or ill. This train of thought, we can see at once, was radically at fault, just because it missed the whole lesson by disregarding the central cause. The far-reaching results of good and evil, when rightly viewed, ought to have proved an added stimulus to the cultivation of character, a new call to personal righteousness of life. But in moments of despair it produced in weaker minds a contrary effect. Fatalism took the place of responsibility. The period of Jewish captivity witnessed the spread of pessimism, and the proverb passed from mouth to mouth: 'The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge'. It was to correct this spreading paralysis of personal effort that, by the Providence of God, Ezekiel arose with the exact message needed by the circumstances of his time. He begins by tracing the national judgment to continued national apostasy. But he goes on to explain that national apostasy is the sum total of individual apostasy. And individual responsibility cannot be evaded by attributing present calamity to the sins of a previous generation—to the faults of forefathers. He enunciates the law of personal liability. God does not merge the individual in the nation. 'All souls are Mine,' He claims. And further, 'The soul that sinneth, it shall die'. A good father may have a bad son, and that bad son may in his turn beget a good son. But, as far as moral responsibility goes, each case in God's eyes is dealt with singly.

III. The Message of the Gospel.—Ezekiel anticipates the message of the Gospel, and this in two ways. First, he calls to repentance with the promise of unconditional forgiveness. 'When the wicked man turneth away from his wickedness that he hath committed, and doeth that which is lawful and right, he shall save his soul alive.' Next, he points to the larger life beyond the grave. He extends the horizon. 'Turn yourselves,' he cries, 'and live ye;' live, that is to say, the ampler, fuller life which, commencing here on earth, is continued beyond the grave. For these perplexing questions of cause and effect, of shades of influence good and malign, of rewards and punishments, can be viewed in their completeness only and finally in the Great Beyond. Then shall we understand the mystery of the reconciliation of perfect justice and perfect love; we shall learn how it is that 'mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other.'—Bishop Harmer of Rochester.

MY BROTHER'S KEEPER

'Am I my brother's keeper?'—Genesis iv. 9.

'How sin gains dominion over human nature.'

I. Among the ties which bind men together what is stronger or more enduring than the sense of consanguinity? Nothing can abolish a man's duty to the brothers who were boys with him in one home.

II. But we leave home, and go out into a world of fierce competition. And competition encourages us in selfishness. Can we honestly cherish brotherly feelings for our successful rivals? One chief secret of Christianity is that it puts Divine power and meaning into human brotherhood. Christ binds us to our fellow-men by binding us to Himself. The life of self-sacrifice has its origin and fountains not in man, but in the heart of God.

III. As soon as we recognize that this brotherhood—even with the unthankful and the evil—is a real thing, we wake up to feel the responsibility which it involves. My duty to my brother—and especially to my weaker brother—is to safeguard him from slipping away from duty, to keep him mindful of his pledges, and faithful to his vows. In life's practical business it is not easy to remember that we have a daily responsibility to God for the men and women we mix with, the people we employ, and the people also who employ us. We are debtors to the wise and to the foolish.—T. H. Darlow, *The Upward Call*, p. 288.

THE BROTHERHOOD OF MAN

'Am I my brother's keeper?'—Genesis iv. 9.

Humanity is one great body, and we as individuals are all members of that body.

I. Man is united to man, nation to nation; and so complete is the union that no man liveth to himself. Nor is this union of social formation only; the relationship is vital. It is a spirit relationship. A mere social relationship would be poor indeed, for the term 'socialism' conveys an idea of distinction. Certainly socialism is, in a measure, a means of unification, but it is also a means of separation. But while socialism has its distinctions, while it divides into classes, it is incapable of separating from the mass. If it is weak in uniting, it is impotent to detach. There is a felt though invisible something by which man is inseparably united to man.

II. The composition of this union may be difficult to explain. But I have thought that it is God in each answering to God in all. No life is entirely void of God. Divinity has never been utterly expelled from any man. In some God sits on the throne of the heart, and governs the life; in others He resides as an unrecognized guest, subjugated by the mind of the flesh.

III. This doctrine of universal brotherhood does not diminish the importance of that other great doctrine—individual responsibility. It rather increases it. Personal responsibility may, as some one has said, 'exist independently of relative responsibility'; but the latter greatly enhances the importance of the former. We have not only to bear our own burden; we have also to bear one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.—P. H. Hall, *The Brotherhood of Man*, p. 5.

References.—IV. 9.—G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 277. Bishop Goodwin, *Parish Sermons*, vol. iv. p. 72. Archdeacon Sinclair, *Christ and Our Times*, p. 298. J. Bateman,

Sermons Preached in Guernsey, p. 18. D. W. Simon, *Twice Born and other Sermons*, vol. xxiv. No. 1399. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxiv. No. 1399.

'The voice of thy brother's blood crieth to me from the ground.'—GENESIS IV. 10.

THE famous preacher, John Geiler of Kaysersberg, used this text in an unusual way. As cathedral preacher in Strasbourg from 1478 to 1510, he was often called upon to deliver funeral orations for great men. His custom was to make the spirits of bishops and others speak in their own person, as it were, and to utter admonitions whose sternness the living preacher might have feared to imitate. Geiler's chief French biographer, the Abbé Dacheux, remarks on the truly apostolic freedom with which he was thus enabled to pour forth warnings. One of his most striking sermons was founded on the text quoted above. 'He effaced himself and made the dead speak in his own person. "Listen, my brothers," he said, "to the voice of your brother. . . . It says remember, 'Dust thou art and unto dust shalt thou return'." Borrowing the words of Job, he told, in the mournful accents of Holy Scripture, of our days which are so short and yet so full of misery; he showed the transient shadow, the scarce-opened flower which was already trampled under the feet of those who pass by. He reminded his hearers of the dread mysteries of the grave. "I have said to corruption, Thou art my father; to the worm, Thou art my mother and my sister." '

Among those who listened to Geiler of Kaysersberg were the nearest relatives and successors of bishops and other cathedral dignitaries. His pulpit method may be compared with that of Bossuet and Massillon.

The Arabs have a belief that over the grave of a murdered man his spirit hovers in the form of a bird that cries, 'Give me drink, give me drink,' and only ceases when the blood of the murderer is shed. Cain's conscience told him the same thing; there was no criminal law threatening death to the murderer, but he felt men would kill him if they could. He heard the blood of Abel crying from the earth. The blood of Christ also crieth to God, but cries not for vengeance but for pardon.—MARCUS DODS.

REFERENCES.—IV. 10.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol viii. No. 461; *ibid.* vol. xii. No. 708. IV. 15, 16.—R. S. Candlish, *Book of Genesis*, vol. i. pp. 86 and 108. IV. 23, 24.—H. Rix, *Sermons, Addresses, and Essays*, p. 18. IV. 26.—E. A. Bray, *Sermons*, vol. ii. p. 354. G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 381. IV.—J. Monro Gibson, *The Ages before Moses*, p. 116. V. 1.—J. Parker, *Adam, Noah, and Abraham*, p. 35. V. 2.—J. Laidlaw, *Bible Doctrine of Man*, p. 98. V. 3.—G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 382. V. 21-24.—J. Bannerman, *Sermons*, p. 24. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxii. No. 1307. V. 22.—C. Maclaren, *Expositions—Genesis*, p. 32. V. 23, 24.—E. A. Bray, *Sermons*, vol. i. p. 157.

ENOCH

'And Enoch walked with God: and he was not: for God took him.'—GENESIS V. 24.

THE character of Enoch is the point on which attention is fixed. He 'walked with God,' he 'pleased God'.

I. What is Implied in this Description?

(a) Agreement.—'Can two walk together except they be agreed?' Man naturally is at enmity with God, averse to Him, disliking His law. This enmity must be destroyed. There is no peace with the wicked, and as the first requisite to walking with God obedience is required.

(b) Intimate Communion.—Agreement in aim and purpose is possible apart from intimacy: but walking implies close and personal converse with Jehovah. Knowledge of God begets confidence in Him, life is lived under His eye, and in constant recognition of His presence and law.

(c) Progress.—He 'walked,' went on from grace to grace. There was activity in the spiritual life: no cessation of effort. God walks with us to lead us into full knowledge and holiness.

II. The Foundation of His Character.—What was the fount and root of this life? Genesis is silent, but the Epistle to the Hebrews gives the information 'By faith,' etc. How great this faith was we can scarcely measure, but the least faith which brings a man to God is faith in His existence and in His love. Thus walking with God becomes a source of knowledge and an aid to faith, enlarging its sphere, and giving greater power for service.

III. The Reward.—'God took him.' His aim was to please God, and he was rewarded with the high honour of going home without passing through the gates of death. When his character was mature the intercourse with heaven was more perfect.—J. EDWARDS, *The Pulpit*, vol. v.

GENESIS V. 24.

I. What was the Character of the Age in which Enoch Lived?—Now respecting the age when Enoch lived we know little, but that little is very bad. He was the seventh from Adam, and lived in the time before the flood. In those days we are told the earth was corrupt before God, and filled with violence. Every sort of wickedness seems to have prevailed; men walked after the vile lusts of their hearts, and did that which appeared good to them without fear and without shame. Such was the character of the men before the flood; and in the middle of this age of wickedness Enoch lived, and Enoch walked with God.

II. What was his Character?—You have heard he walked with God, and you know perhaps it is an expression of great praise. A man that walks with God is one of God's friends. That unhappy enmity and dislike which men naturally feel towards their Maker has been removed; he feels perfectly reconciled and at peace. Again he that walks with God is one of God's dear children. He looks upon Him as his Father, and as such he loves Him, he reveres Him, he rejoices in Him, he trusts Him in everything. And lastly to walk with God is to be always going forward, always pressing on, never standing still and flattering ourselves that we are the men and have borne much fruit; but to grow in grace, to go on

from strength to strength, to forget the things behind, and if by grace we have attained unto anything, to abound yet more and more.

III. Enoch's Motive.—Faith was the seed which bore such goodly fruit; faith was the root of his holiness and decision on the Lord's side—faith without which there has never been any salvation, faith without which not one of us will ever enter into the kingdom of heaven.

IV. Enoch's End.—We are simply informed that 'He was not, for God took him'. The interpretation of this is, that God was pleased to interfere on His servant's behalf, and so He suddenly removed him from this world without the pains of death, and took him to that blessed place where all the saints are waiting in joyful expectation for the end of all things, where sin and pain and sorrow are no more. And this, no doubt, was done for several reasons. It was done to convince a hard-hearted, unbelieving world that God does observe the lives of men and will honour those who honour Him. It was done to show every living soul that Satan had not won a complete victory when he deceived Eve; that we may yet get to heaven by the way of faith, and although in Adam all die, still in Christ all may be made alive.—J. C. Ryle, *The Christian Race*, p. 243.

ENOCH THE IMMORTAL

Genesis v. 24.

What has its sublimest consummation in the Christian consciousness had its crude form in the portrait of Enoch. That portrait was God's message of universal hope. Every man of the future aspired to be an Enoch.

I. Brief as it is, this record is a biography—the description of a rounded life. Three times the curtain rises and falls.

(*a*) We see first an ordinary man—a life in no way distinguished from his contemporaries—engrossed in family cares and engaged in secular pursuits.

(*b*) Suddenly there comes a change—drastic, complete, revolutionary. Up to the birth of his son Methuselah he has merely 'lived'; he now begins to 'walk with God'. He had lived sixty-five years as a man of the world occupied with the cares of a household. When he changes mere 'living' into walking with God he goes over precisely the same ground—he is still occupied with the care of 'sons and daughters'. No outward eye could have detected any difference.

(*c*) Now we have a third and distinctively unique scene. Enoch himself has disappeared: there is no trace of him. There is no grave for him. There is the place where the grave should have been, and there is a tablet above the spot; but in the tablet are inscribed the words 'He is not here; he is risen'.

II. Why is this man represented as escaping death? It is on the ground of holiness; it is because 'he walked with God'. Do you think that is an accidental connexion of ideas? It is the keynote to all the subsequent teaching both of the Old Testament and of the New—the prelude to all the coming music.

III. Enoch was not transplanted into foreign soil. The text says that translation was preceded by revelation—that before going out into the new world he had a picture of that world in his mind. It tells us that the beginning of the process was not the approach of earth to heaven; it was the approach of heaven to earth. He did not first go to Eshcol to try the taste of the grapes; he had specimens of the fruit brought to him—sent unto his desert as a foretaste, and this foretaste was the climax of the glory; it made the glory, when it came, not wholly new.—G. Matheson, *The Representative Men of the Bible*, p. 67.

Genesis v. 24.

'Oh! for a closer walk with God' is number one on the list of Cowper's Olney Hymns.

I. There are some hymns in our hymn books which thoughtful people decline to sing. They will tell you that the aspirations expressed are so lofty and so far above their desires, that to join in singing such hymns seems to them devoid of reality. But here we have a hymn breathing the holiest and loftiest aspirations, and yet every member of a congregation can heartily join in singing it. Every member of a congregation, whether good or bad, can honestly express a heartfelt desire for 'a closer walk with God,' and where is the man or woman who does not sigh for that 'calm and heavenly frame' of mind which springs from a 'closer walk with God'.

II. Cowper might well have selected as the motto for this hymn the words of the Apostle St. James, 'Draw nigh to God, and He will draw nigh to you'. So you see that the opening aspiration is not only thoroughly reasonable, but thoroughly scriptural, and is well calculated to give expression to the desire of every worshipper. And what prayer can be more appropriate to those who are travelling through a vale of darkness than the prayer for light! We have, thank God, the light of His Holy Book to guide our steps aright, but we need the aid of the Holy Spirit to enable us to say with the Psalmist, 'Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path'.

III. Few hours in life are more fraught with happiness than those in which we contemplate sweet intercourse with dear ones who have passed away. And yet with all their sweetness there is felt, deep down in the heart, a want that can never in this world be supplied. This is a rough illustration of the condition of the lapsed Christian. The memory of the peace that was once enjoyed mingles with the feeling of present alienation from God, which no amount of worldly excitement can obliterate. This feeling of a want, this aching void in the soul is often the precursor of the prodigal's return. He, like the son in the parable, comes to himself.—M. H. James, *Hymns and their Singers*, p. 112.

References.—V. 24.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—Genesis*, p. 38. J. Edwards, *The Pulpit*, vol. v.

J. Jackson Goadley, *Christian World Pulpit*, 1891, p. 139. C. E. Shipley, *Baptist Times*, vol. liv. p. 807. E. H. Bickersteth, *Thoughts in Past Years*, p. 21. G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 382; *ibid. Old Testament Outlines*, p. 5. V. 26.—G. B. Cheever, *American Pulpit*, p. 72. VI. 2.—J. Keble, *Sermons for the Christian Year*, vol. ii. p. 161. VI. 3.—J. Budgen, *Parochial Sermons*, vol. ii. p. 159. J. Keble, *Sermons for Septuagesima to Ash Wednesday*, p. 161. C. G. Finney, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 1675, p. 439.

THE LESSON OF THE TOWER

'And they said, Go to, let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach into heaven: and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth.'—GENESIS VI. 4.

THE form of this story belongs to the early stages of an ascending scale of civilization. The soul of the narrative is for all time. Take one obvious aspect of that soul. The builders of city and tower were men of great ambition. They would dare high things and they would do them. This is well, for God made us all for ambition. But it is part of the tragedy of our humanity that each day we are tempted to sully ambition with some phase of latent or expressed selfishness. Ambition tainted by egotism ever makes for futility.

I. A Theological Application.—This is an age of controversy. Controversy means movement, not always spiritual movement, but still movement, and all movement wisely directed becomes progress. When with the vision that trembles not because it has focussed itself upon the living Christ we look out upon the area of theological controversy, what see we? We see many things, and among them we discern a mighty building of Towers. All the builders are our brethren; and we can afford to look at them with the eyes of love, and to bestow upon them the discriminating criticism that brothers ever offer to one another.

II. The Spirit of Empire.—In the light of that lesson, let us look at our Empire beyond the seas and let us glance at things at home. We can only expect to justify empire by rising to the level of the duties it suggests. As certainly as a mere race selfishness dominates our colonial policy the plans of God will be thwarted, and later centuries will see this nation fall Babel-like to confusion and the dust. Let the tower teach us that you cannot build selfishly and also build permanently.

III. Individual Spirituality.—We are sincere in our efforts after the spiritual life. Yet the tower totters, and is in danger of falling, because at the centre of our high desires there is often so much of subtle egotism. There are people whose desire for heaven is merely self-preservation veneered with seeming spirituality. The fact remains that so long as in our religious life we are seeking something for ourselves rather than something for Christ and the people, we are in danger of repeating the experience of Babel. Learn from Babel that he only builds well who builds unselfishly.

THE SINFULNESS OF SIN

(For Sexagesima Sunday)

'And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.'—GENESIS VI. 5.

WE have four passages of Scripture put before us on Sexagesima Sunday which teach us the exceeding sinfulness of sin.

First of all we have the Gospel, which is the parable of the sower. It teaches us how much it matters whether the seed, the Word of God, sinks into our souls. It teaches us how serious the hinderances are which interfere with the sinking in of the seed, the Word of God, into our hearts. And that teaching, I am sure, is much needed, because one of the terrible signs of to-day is that so many people are going about saying and thinking that nothing very much matters—sin does not matter, it will be all the same a thousand years hence. But it does very much matter, and I want you to apply it to yourself. What are the hinderances in your heart to the seed, the Word of God, sinking in and becoming fruitful?

And then there is the Epistle, and that, you remember, is the account of St. Paul's sufferings. What does that great list of sufferings tell us? It speaks of the fact of what St. Paul felt about our Lord Jesus Christ and the great deliverance that He had wrought for him. St. Paul was a man who felt down to the depths of his inmost soul that to Jesus Christ he owed his salvation, that he owed to Him a great deliverance—deliverance from sin, deliverance from eternal death. Why do we lead such easy lives? Why is it that we dislike the least pain or the least trouble we have to endure for our religion? Because we do not realize, as St. Paul did, the great deliverance that is offered us in Jesus Christ. We have nothing approaching to St. Paul's sense of sin.

And then to fill up this lesson we have God's judgment on sin given to us in the first lesson for the morning and the first lesson for this evening, the third and sixth chapters of Genesis. The third chapter, you will remember, is the account of the Fall and God's punishment of our first parents; and this evening's lesson is the picture of the Flood, the great judgment of God upon the world of the ungodly, a picture intended, beyond question, by God to teach us the awfulness of sin and God's anger against it, and the awful consequences of sin.

I. Do we Fear Sin?—Now do we fear sin as we ought? I do not think so. I think that we are much more inclined to believe that sin does not matter, and that it will be all right in the end. We have to remember the awful possibility which hangs over every man and woman of hardening themselves into habits which become incompatible with God and God's Presence, which become eternal sin, and therefore eternally excluding from the Presence of God.

II. The Greatness of the Deliverance.—The seriousness of sin is shown again by the greatness of God's means for deliverance from sin. In the Old Testament we have His picture of the Ark, the building

of the Ark, the tremendous labour that the work must have cost. The greatness of God's work for our deliverance is the measure of the greatness of sin from which He works to deliver. But if that picture in the Old Testament of the means that God takes to deliver us is great, what shall we say of the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ? Could any greater means be imagined than the sending of the only Begotten Son from the bosom of the Father to be a man amongst men, to live the life and die the death on the Cross? Could any means be imagined greater? The supreme greatness of Calvary is always and must be the measure to the world of the terrible greatness and awfulness of sin which crucified the Son of God. It is impossible when we think of it like that to treat sin lightly, as so many do in the present day. Never say 'I cannot help it,' and 'it does not matter'. You can help it, and it does matter. The sins that you give way to habitually matter terribly. I know they matter because sin has made me other than God meant me to be. If I had never sinned I should have been much better, more useful in the world. And I not only see sin in myself, but I see its ravages in others. I see how sin has pulled down other people; I see it all about me, and I can not underrate it, and think it does not matter—it does matter. Pray, then, for godly fear, and deal with sin in yourselves, so that you may be able to help others.

III. Lead to the Saviour.—Surely that is the ambition of every man and woman, to be able to help their fellows, and to guide them to the Saviour. And the first step in leading people to the Saviour is to make them feel their need of that Saviour; and they never will feel the need of the Saviour unless they feel how terrible sin is.

REFERENCES.—VI. 5.—J. Laidlaw, *Bible Doctrine of Man*, p. 138. C. Perren, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 306. VI. 6.—H. Bonar, *Short Sermons for Family Reading*, pp. 293 and 302. VI. 8.—R. S. Candlish, *Book of Genesis*, vol. i. p. 108.

NOAH THE RENEWER

'Noah was a just man, and perfect in his generations.'—GENESIS VI. 9.

FOR the first time we are confronted with the idea of reform. Noah is not the first to protest, but he is the first to reform. With Noah, there begins the first of a series of efforts to save the world—to translate, not the man, but the earth. He is the sad spectator of a scene of moral corruption. His heart is heavy with the burden of a degenerate race.

I. What was this vision of corruption which Noah saw? The greatest danger that can meet a human soul—the danger of mistaking evil for good. This race had fixed upon the physical development as the one end in life. They had enthroned in their imagination the men of bone and sinew. They had come to look upon meekness, mercy, compassion, as unmanly things.

II. The original aim of Noah was to avert the Flood. He was not a prophet in any other sense than Jonah was a prophet. He was not magically to foretell the evitable occurrence of an event. Rather was he to proclaim that its occurrence was not inevitable—that it might or might not happen according to the righteousness of the community. The ark of safety which he proposed to build for the world was at no time the ark of gopher wood. The ark of gopher wood was never meant for the safety of the world, but, as the writer to the Hebrews says: 'For the saving of his own house'. It was only to be used when the world refused to be saved."

III. The characteristic of the life of Noah is solitary waiting.

(*a*) We first see the man in the midst of the world, lifting a solitary protest against the life of that world. His faith watching and waiting for the dawn.

(*b*) The man is lifted above the world. He is floated in the air in a lively sea. But even in this vast solitude this human soul is waiting for an earth renewed.

(*c*) The world has arisen baptized from its corruption. The old life is past but the new is not yet come. And there stands Noah—solitary, waiting still. The new life has not come, but hope has dawned.—G. MATHESON, *The Representative Men of the Bible*, p. 89.

REFERENCES.—VI. 9.—C. Kingsley, *Village Sermons*, p. 74. R. S. Candlish, *The Book of Genesis*. VI. 9-22.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions—Genesis*, p. 48, vol. i. p. 127. VI. 13.—J. Parker, *Adam, Noah, and Abraham*, p. 35.

THE OBEDIENCE OF FAITH

'Thus did Noah; according to all that God commanded him, so did he.'—GENESIS VI. 22.

GOD told Noah how He was going to punish the sin of man by a flood, and told him also of the means by which he should be saved.

I. God seldom punishes without warning us of the punishment which is coming.

II. Noah believed God's words, and showed that he believed them by setting to work at once to build the ark. It would be very difficult to find any greater lesson than the importance of acting on our belief.

III. This will lead us especially to three things:—

(*a*) To take great pains to keep all the rules of the Church.

(*b*) To pray with faith and to act on our prayers.

(*c*) To repent of our sins. Repentance requires an act of will. A repentance which stops short at being sorry for what we have done wrong is as useless as a faith which does not lead us to act upon our belief.

IV. We learn from Noah the importance of a life in which our actions really represent our convictions.

(*a*) Its importance to ourselves since it was by building the Ark that Noah found a refuge and was saved.

(*b*) Its importance to others since it was by building the Ark that Noah witnessed to the world that

he believed God's message of warning. A. G. Mortimer, *Stories from Genesis*, p. 81.

Reference.—VI. 22.—G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 383.

THE STORY OF THE FLOOD

Genesis vii. viii.

It has been remarked that though the narrative [of the Flood] is vivid and forcible, it is entirely wanting in that sort of description which in a modern historian or poet would have occupied the largest space. 'We see nothing of the death-struggle; we hear not the cry of despair; we are not called upon to witness the frantic agony of husband and wife, and parent and child, as they fled in terror before the rising waters. Nor is a word said of the sadness of the one righteous man who, safe himself, looked upon the destruction which he could not avert.' The Chaldean tradition, which is the most closely allied to the Biblical account, is not so reticent. Tears are shed in heaven over the catastrophe, and even consternation affected its inhabitants, while within the ark itself the Chaldean Noah says: 'When the storm came to an end and the terrible water-spout ceased, I opened the window and the light smote upon my face. I looked at the sea attentively observing, and the whole of humanity had returned to mud; like seaweed the corpses floated. I was seized with sadness; I sat down and wept and my tears fell upon my face.'—Marcus Dods.

References.—VII. 1.—H. J. Wilmot-Buxton, *Bible Object Lessons*, p. 1. M. Badger, *American Pulpit*, p. 96. J. Keble, *Sermons for Septuagesima to Ash Wednesday*, p. 171. *Sermons for the Christian Year*, vol. iii. p. 171. G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 118. VII. 1-7.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxiii. No. 1336. VII. 15.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. liii. No. 3042. VII. 16.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxvii. No. 1613.

NOAH SAVED IN THE ARK

Genesis viii. 1-22.

Traditions of the Flood linger among all branches of the human race except the black. Remember from the Greek story of Deucalion, when Zeus had resolved to destroy mankind, after the treatment he had received from Lycaon, Deucalion built an ark in which he and his wife Pyrrha floated during the nine days' flood which destroyed Greece. When the waters subsided, Deucalion's ark rested on Mount Parnassus.

Ten buildings the size of Solomon's temple could have been stowed away in Noah's Ark. In 1609 a Dutchman, Peter Jansen, built a vessel in the exact proportions of the ark, only smaller. Every one laughed at him, but he kept sturdily on. When his vessel was launched it carried more freight and sailed faster than any other ships of the same size.

Reference.—VIII. 1-22.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—Genesis*, p. 55.

GOD'S REMEMBRANCE OF NOAH

'God remembered Noah.'—Genesis viii. 1.

The beautiful simplicity of this language goes home to the heart of every reader. We picture Noah in his isolation, in his apparent desolateness and hopelessness, his ark alone upon the wide-spreading waters, and no living soul to hail him and to cheer him with good news. Had he thought himself forsaken and forgotten, his ark 'alone on a wide, wide sea,' we could not have wondered. But 'God remembered Noah'. When the Scriptures speak of the remembrance of God, it is usually remembrance 'for good'. So it is here.

I. The Purpose of God's Remembrance.

(a) To deliver him from danger.—The provision of the ark, into which God had appointed that Noah and his family should enter for refuge, was a measure of safety; but it now seemed as though the very refuge was itself a source of danger. How long could such a captivity with its attendant privations be endured? Were the members of this rescued family to be left to drift upon the waters and to perish? These questions were answered by the Lord remembering Noah. Let such as are placed in circumstances of peril, hardship, and anxiety be assured that whilst they remember and call upon God He will remember and will not forsake them.

(b) To reward him for his piety.—Noah had been 'faithful among the faithless,' had maintained the true religion amidst prevailing corruptions. And God did not forget His servant's justice and devoutness, but treated him with a discriminating favour. As Nehemiah afterwards entreated God to remember him for good, and to remember his works, so now doubtless the second father of the race called upon the Lord God. And his cry was not unheeded, for the Lord remembered him in mercy.

(c) To establish with him an unchanging covenant.—'God remembered Noah' to such good purpose as to undertake on his behalf, and on behalf of his posterity, engagements which have proved most advantageous and beneficial to the race. The promise was given that the waters should no more submerge the earth, that the seasons should pursue their regular and uninterrupted course; and these promises were confirmed by a sign, the bow in the clouds, at the sight of which the heart is still cheered and the hope is still inspired.

II. The Character of God's Remembrance.

(a) It is individual.—'Noah, and every living thing.' Man has the power of generalizing; but it is his imperfection that necessitates the expedient; imperfection of memory and general intellectual power; imperfection of sympathy. Every thing and every heart is present to God in its distinctiveness of individuality and condition. The very hairs of your head are numbered; He hears the young ravens when they cry.

(b) It is universal.—The ark was then the living world, and He remembered all in it. 'We are also His offspring.' The meanest thing that lived is cared for, loved, remembered by God. Be kind to dumb animals. Also, have wide sympathy and large hope. Rejoice not that you are the members of a small family, a pet few, for you are not; but that you are

the child of a Father of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named.

(c) It is not lessened by the terrible judgments which He executes.—The floods that drown a world do not quench His love, or obliterate His remembrance. The ark tossing helmless on the wide waste, and every living thing in it, is remembered by God. God remembers every living thing. He has the destinies of all creatures in His hand and on His heart. After the seemingly helpless, hopeless drifting of the ark, it will rest at last; and new heavens will smile upon a renovated earth; and a 'rainbow' will be 'about God's throne, in sight like unto an emerald'.

REFERENCES.—VIII. 1.—H. J. Wilmot-Buxton, *God's Heroes*, p. 1. VIII. 4.—C. D. Bell, *Hills that Bring Peace*, p. 23. Bishop Browne, *Sermons on the Atonement*, p. 67. VII. 9.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xi, No. 637; *ibid.* vol. xl. No. 2373.

NOAH'S SACRIFICE

'And Noah builded an altar unto the Lord; and took of every clean beast, and of every clean fowl, and offered burnt offerings on the altar. And the Lord smelled a sweet savour.'—GENESIS VIII. 20, 21.

I. WHAT was the first employment which Noah set his hand to when he came out of the ark? His soul was full of thanks and praise; as he knew the way that God had appointed, by which he and all sinful men should express their praise, he complied at once with that service of thanksgiving which God had ordained, the offering up a sacrifice.

II. But how could he afford to spare the animals which were requisite for a sacrifice? Noah had in his possession but a little stock. But Noah was a man of faith and piety: his faith led him to believe God's promise, that the fowl and the cattle should increase abundantly, and his piety led him to feel that he would sooner lose every sheep or bullock he possessed than leave his God unthanked and unacknowledged in the way that was appointed.

III. And how did God regard it? To him Noah's motives, faith, thankfulness, and obedience were as a secret refreshing scent to ourselves. Noah's faith looked above the lamb or bullock which he offered to Him whose death upon the cross they represented, and God therefore was well pleased with the faith and the obedience.

IV. What did it lead Him to promise and engage for? Such a promise that we may consider ourselves indebted to it, for God's forbearance even now, for the regularity with which our spring succeeds to winter, and our harvest to the seedtime, and our day to night. It is not because man has become a better object of God's bounty now than in the old days before the Flood. It is because God had respect to Noah's sacrifice, because in it he regarded that better sacrifice which it represented and set forth.—E. J. BREWSTER, *Scripture Characters*, p. 11.

THE FIGURATIVE ELEMENT IN BIBLE LANGUAGE

'The Lord smelled a sweet savour.'—GENESIS VIII. 21.

THERE is a saying of the rabbis, which, if its full significance be understood, and wisely applied, is worth the whole folios of their formal exegesis. It is that 'The law speaks in the tongue of the sons of men'. If the rabbis had taken to heart this saying of their own famous Rabbi Ishmael, the greater part of their exegetic system would at once have been shown to be nugatory. For that system, as it gained vogue in spite of some strong protests, is founded on the principle that Scripture language is so mysterious, so unearthly, so little accordant with the ordinary tongue of men, that it may be distorted into the most monstrous meanings, and pressed into the most exorbitant inferences. It has been a terrible disaster to the Christian Church that she accepted without challenge the vicious principles of Talmudic interpretation. Out of many dangers which have resulted from the error of literalism let me choose two.

I. Language and thought can no more exactly coincide than two particles of matter can absolutely touch each other. No single virtue, no single faculty, no single spiritual truth, no single metaphysical conception, can be expressed without the aid of analogy and metaphor. Now if this be true in general, how much more true is it of any language in which we speak of God. The untrained imagination of the world's childhood could not conceive of a bodiless and omnipresent Spirit. It was necessary, therefore, for the sacred writer to speak of God as if he had a human body; and this is what is called anthropomorphism.

II. But if harm was done by the crude errors of the heresy which insisted on exact literalism, and declared that the Trinity wore a human form, perhaps even deadlier evil arose from the imperfection of language which is technically called anthropopathy; namely, the attribution to God of human passions. When we speak of God's wrath, and fury, and fierce jealousy, and implacable rage, and describe His awful majesty, the 'Tartarean drench' of many modern sermons, or in the tempestuously incongruous language of many modern hymns, we ought to beware lest we are talking with too gross a familiarity of Him 'whose tender mercies are over all His works'. It is then most necessary to carry with us into the study of the Scriptures the perpetual sense of the shadows, the imperfection, the uncertainties of human languages. There are hundreds of passages of the Bible which have been misunderstood by millions, misunderstood for ages, misunderstood at times by perhaps nearly every living representative of the Church of God. All that we can now do is to gather up the significance of these considerations in a few general rules. (*a*) There is no basis whatever for the allegorical system of interpretation, in plain passages or ordinary narratives. To admit such a style of exegesis is to forget the very meaning and purpose of ordinary

language. (*b*) Even where we have to deal with professed metaphor, or with allegories and parables, theological conclusions may never be based on isolated expressions or collateral inferences.—F. W. Farrar, *British Weekly Pulpit*, vol. iii. p. 392.

References.—VIII. 21.—J. Burnet, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 1485, p. 17. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xi. No. 615. C. S. Robinson, *Sermons on Neglected Texts*, p. 258.

HARVEST THANKSGIVING

'While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease.'—Genesis viii. 22.

Why is it that we are grateful? Why is it that we like to express this when we realize benefits that we have received? I think we shall find that the fact of this quality of gratitude and this expression of thankfulness is implanted in us by our instincts, and that it is also a definite revelation of God, that He requires it at our hands, that a grateful, thankful disposition is that which goes to make up the character of man as God would have it.

We like when we have done a kindness to know that it has touched the heart of him to whom it has been done. We like ourselves to recognize gratitude in others. So then it is the same with our heavenly Father. That which I have read as our text is perhaps one of the first examples of it. God is accepting there the offering of thanksgiving after the Flood which overwhelmed the earth, or that portion at least which was inhabited by man. We look to the New Testament. We find that our blessed Lord especially emphasized His acceptance of gratitude and the expression of it, as in the case of the ten lepers. We might multiply instances, but we realize that God Himself has distinctly made us know that the spirit of gratitude is a spirit that He desires to see as a part of human character.

I. Why is this Harvest especially a Cause of Thanksgiving?

(*a*) *It is the fulfilment of a Divine promise.*—We remind ourselves of the goodness of God in the fulfilment of that promise that these things that go to make our lives bright and happy, the morning and the evening, the day for labour and the night for rest, the summer and the winter, and the seedtime and the harvest, they shall never cease while the earth remaineth, as they once ceased in the days of the Flood of Noah.

(*b*) *We regard it also as a fulfilment of a desire on our part as the granting of prayer.*—It is a very curious thing that our blessed Lord, Who came on earth, as we have said, to reveal God's mind with regard to men's life, when asked how to pray, taught those pattern supplications which are contained in what is called The Lord's Prayer, and if we offer these supplications day by day, and very thoughtfully, we shall quite understand how all through the year we have been crying to God for a certain thing, 'Give us day by day our daily bread,' or, 'our bread to-day for to-morrow,' as some translators would have it. We have been crying to God so to bless the earth that it may produce its fruits for our use. How far this Divine miracle would cease, were the human cry to cease, we do not know. But we know that, in answer to that Divine command, daily, a great stream of intercession goes forth to God. And so, at the end of the year we gather together, in order to return our thanks for the giving of the gift for which we have prayed; for, after all, it is by Divine arrangement that the want of one part of the earth is supplied by the plenty of the other, that means of locomotion increase as men's needs increase, so that we are fed not only by the produce of the land on which we live, but by the whole great world of which we are a part.

II. How are we to Return Thanks?

(*a*) *By the service we offer.*—It is a very striking thing, is it not, that in the Old Testament, when God prescribed great festivals for the Jews, He prescribed three of them, as distinctly in connexion with the ingathering of the fruits of the earth—the sowing, the first fruits, and the ingathering. So it was in the mind of God especially then, that thanksgiving should be offered by people united in the act of worship and praise, as it were, making beautiful the thank-offering that they sent up to heaven.

(*b*) *And then there is that further act of worship* by which we most specially and signally mark our festivals of thanksgiving, the great thank-offering in the holy communion which our blessed Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ gave us, the great thank-offering, as it used to be called in the early Church, the Eucharist, as we call it, which signifies the great service of thanksgiving.

(*c*) *We should offer ourselves,* our souls and bodies, to the service of our God. That which God would have at our hands in the time of our thanksgiving is that which we can give—an offering of ourselves.

HARVEST FESTIVAL

'While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease.'—Genesis viii. 22.

I. This passage is one of what are usually called the 'Jehovistic' sections of the book of Genesis. Specific portions of the narrative are characterized by the constant recurrence of the name 'Lord,' which is the translation in our Revised Version for 'Jehovah,' whilst other and more lengthy parts are usually distinguished by the exclusive use of the appellation 'Elohim' which is invariably rendered 'God'. This word is generic, and is in Scripture applied to the heathen divinities as well as to the true God, whilst the title 'Jehovah' or 'Lord' is specific, or rather essentially personal, and denotes the national or covenant God of Israel.

II. It is an important fact that the God of the seasons, the God of Nature, is the 'I am,' the self-existent one of Jewish worship, and that fact gets explicit statement in the earlier pages of the Revelation. An intelligent personal will is thus perceived

to be the guiding force or principle in all changes and development, whether of nature or of providence. Nothing comes to pass by chance or an inexorable necessity, as some of the more thoughtful heathen supposed; the more destructive forces of the universe, storms and floods and earthquakes, are not diabolic, the sad and malignant work of evil supernatural spirits as others thought, but, however, inexplicable, are the issue of the Almighty fiat of Him who ruleth all things according to the counsel of His own will, 'the Lord'.

III. The unchangeable faithfulness of the Lord under all His successive dispensations is one main truth and lesson of the passage now before us, the rainbow in the domain of nature being no less a visible and sure sign or token of it, than the water or the bread or wine of the Sacraments in the sphere of grace. Salvation is all of grace from beginning to end; but our special business usually is to trace the Hand which wrought it out in the bounties of nature, in the joyousness of the harvest home and the vintage.—J. Miller, *Sermons Literary and Scientific*, p. 179.

References.—VIII. 22.—D. J. Waller, *Preachers' Magazine*, vol. xix. p. 415. R. S. Candlish, *The Book of Genesis*, vol. i. p. 140. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxxii. No. 1891. IX. 1-7.—R. S. Candlish, *The Book of Genesis*, vol. i. p. 140. IX. 4.—A. G. Mortimer, *The Church's Lessons*, vol. ii. p. 1. IX. 8-17.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions—Genesis*, p. 60. R. S. Candlish, *The Book of Genesis*, vol. i. p. 151.

THE BOW IN THE CLOUD

'I will establish My covenant with you.'—Genesis ix. 11.

In the midst of wrath God remembered mercy. Upon the subsidence of the Flood and the restoration of the family of Noah to their accustomed avocations, the great Ruler and Lord graciously renewed to the human race the expression of His favour.

I. The Covenant was established between, on the one hand, the Lord Himself; on the other hand, the sons of men, represented in the person of Noah.

(*a*) *Its occasion.*—It was after the vindication of Divine justice and authority by the deluge of waters; it was upon the restoration of the order of nature as before; it was when the family of Noah commenced anew the offices of human life and toil. A new beginning of human history seemed an appropriate time for the establishment of a new covenant between a reconciled God and the subjects of His kingdom.

(*b*) *Its purport.*—It was an undertaking that never again should the waters return in fury so destructive and disastrous.

(*c*) *Its nature.*—In an ordinary covenant, the parties mutually agree to a certain course of conduct, and bind themselves thereto. Now, in any agreement between God and man, it must be borne in mind that the promise which God makes is absolutely free; He enters into an engagement of His own accord, and aware that man can offer Him no equivalent for what He engages His honour to do.

(*d*) *Its sign.*—The bow in the cloud was probably as old as the Creation, but from this time forth it became a sign of Divine mercy and a pledge of Divine faithfulness. Something frequent, something beautiful, something heavenly—how fitted to tell us of the love and fidelity of our Divine Father!

II. God is to all a Covenant God.—He has given offers of mercy, assurances of compassion, promise of life to all mankind. His covenant has been ratified with the blood of Christ. To those who enter into its privileges He says, 'This is as the waters of Noah,' etc. (Isa. liv. 9).

References.—IX. 11.—H. J. Wilmot-Buxton, *Sunday Lessons*, vol. i. p. 198. Bishop Armstrong, *Parochial Sermons*, p. 163. IX. 12, 13.—R. Winterbotham, *Sermons*, p. 84.

THE RAINBOW THE TYPE OF THE COVENANT

'And God said, This is the token of the covenant which I make between Me and you, and every living creature that is with you, for perpetual generations: I do set My bow in the cloud,' etc.—Genesis ix. 12-15.

God was pleased to impart to Noah the gracious assurance that He would 'establish His covenant,' to appoint an outward and visible sign which would serve at once to confirm men in their faith and to dispel their fears.

I. The rainbow is equally dependent for its existence upon storm and upon sunshine. Marvellously adapted, therefore, to serve as a type of mercy following upon judgment—as a sign of connexion between man's sin and God's free and unmerited grace, connecting gloomy recollections of past with bright expectations of future.

II. It is also a type of that equally distinctive peculiarity of Christ's Gospel, that sorrow and suffering have their appointed sphere of exercise both generally in the providential administration of the world, and individually in the growth and development of personal holiness. It is the Gospel of Christ Jesus alone which converts sorrow and suffering into instruments for the attainment of higher and more enduring blessings.

III. As the rainbow spans the vault of the sky and becomes a link between earth and heaven, so, in the person and work of Christ, is beheld the unchangeableness and perpetuity of that covenant of grace which like Jacob's ladder maintains the communication between earth and heaven, and thus by bringing God very near to man, ushers man into the presence-chamber of God.

IV. In nature the continued appearance of rainbow is dependent on the continued existence of cloud. In heaven, the rainbow will ever continue to point backward to man's fall and onward to the perpetuity of a covenant which is 'ordered in all things and sure'. But work of judgment will then be accomplished, and therefore the cloud inseparable from the condition of the redeemed in earth—will have no more place in heaven.—Canon Elliott, *The Contemporary Pulpit*, vol. v. p. 151.

THE MESSAGE OF THE RAINBOW

'I do set my bow in the cloud.'—Genesis ix. 13.

When a man has passed through the deep waters as Noah passed, there is a new depth in the

familiar Bible, there is a new meaning in the familiar bow.

I. What we most dread God can illuminate. If there was one thing full of terror to Noah, it was the cloud. How Noah with the fearful memories of the Flood, would tremble at the rain-cloud in the sky! yet it was there that the Almighty set his bow. It was that very terror He illuminated. And a kind God is always doing that. What we most dread, He can illuminate. Was there ever anything more dreaded than the Cross, that symbol of disgrace in an old world, that foulest punishment, that last indignity that could be cast on a slave? And Christ has so illuminated that thing of terror, that the one hope to-day for sinful men, and the one type and model of the holiest life, is nothing else than that.

II. There is unchanging purpose in the most changeful things. In the whole of nature there is scarce anything so changeful as the clouds. But God, living and full of power, would have His name and covenant upon the cloud. And if that means anything surely it is this: that through all change, and movement, and recasting, run the eternal purposes of God.

III. There is meaning in the mystery of life. Clouds are the symbol, clouds are the spring of mystery. And so when God sets His bow upon the cloud, I believe that there is meaning in life's mystery. I am like a man travelling among the hills and *there* is a precipice and I know it not, and yonder is a chasm where many a man has perished, and I cannot see it. But on the clouds that hide God lights His rainbow; and the ends of it are here on earth, and the crown of it is lifted up to heaven. And I feel that God is with me in the gloom, and there is meaning in life's mystery for me.

IV. But there is another message of the bow. It tells me that the background of joy is sorrow. God has painted His rainbow on the cloud, and back of its glories yonder is the mist. And underneath life's gladness is an unrest, and a pain that we cannot well interpret, and a sorrow that is born we know not how. Will the Cross of Calvary interpret life if the deepest secret of life is merriment? Impossible! I cannot look at the rainbow on the cloud, I cannot see the Saviour on the Cross, but I feel that back of gladness there is agony, and that the richest joy is born of sorrow.—G. H. Morrison, *Flood Tide*, p. 170.

References.—IX. 13.—J. Parker, *Adam, Noah, and Abraham*, p. 54. IX. 14.—C. Perren, *Revival Sermons*, p. 292. Baring-Gould, *Village Preaching for a Year*, vol. ii. p. 28. IX. 15.—J. Monro Gibson, *The Ages before Moses*, p. 138. IX. 16.—H. N. Powers, *American Pulpit of To-day*, vol. iii. p. 414. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. ix. No. 517. IX. 18-29.—R. S. Candlish, *Book of Genesis*, vol. i. p. 157. X. 1-5.—J. Parker, *Adam, Noah, and Abraham*, p. 64. X. 32.—S. Wilberforce, *Sermons*, p. 64. XI. 1.—J. Vaughan, *Fifty Sermons* (10th Series), p. 103. XI. 4-9.—S. Leathes, *Studies in Genesis*, p. 81. XI. 9.—F. E. Paget, *Village Sermons*, p. 223. XI. 27.—R. S. Candlish, *Book of Genesis*, vol. i. p. 181. J. Monro Gibson, *The Ages before Moses*, p. 159. XI. 31.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxxiv. No. 2011.

YOUTH AND AFTER

'And Terah died in Haran.'—Genesis xi. 32.

'And Terah *died* in Haran.' What of that?

It was not until they came to Haran that they touched, as it were, their first footprints and found the old religion. There had been little temptation to pause before on the score of a people's worship, but when, worn out in body and mind, Abram suddenly came upon the old religion, his journeyings after another faith and form of worship were at an end. It was Abram the younger man who withstood the temptations of Haran.

I. You see the thought underlying this bit of prosaic information. It simply means that the years close down the possibilities of a certain kind of moral Exodus. If you wait until you get into years before you find right principles, form good resolutions—well then it is better to make some start in the right direction, but why pile up the odds that start you never will?

The enthusiasms of old men are as rare as they are short-lived unless they are evolved out of earlier and worthy days. I am far from saying that old age necessarily blocks the way to great attempts or to conspicuous success in them. All history would cry out against such a statement. There is an old age we delight to honour and which reverses the ordinary attitude to it in the general world.

II. We may apply what has been so far advanced, first to pleasures, and secondly to something more important to you than old age, and that is—middle life.

(*a*) To everything, says the preacher, there is a time and a season, and it must be that youth is the time for amusements and pleasures which are not so much the privilege of youth as native to it. We are told that Darwin in his old age expressed regret that he had deprived himself of so many of the pleasures and resources of life by his concentration upon that study the results of which have made his name so justly famous, and no young man should give place to a doctrine of work which excludes his right to the joyous abandon of his years.

(*b*) When a man begins to sight the middle years he learns to know himself as never before or after. This is the stage where increase of knowledge often means increase of sorrow. It is in truth the sorrow of finding out our limitations, which in their first acquaintance often seem more appalling than they actually are. While youth may be saved by hope of what is to be, middle life is often lost in the drab reality of what is, and even where middle life has won success in the things men covet, and after which they strive, it may be that that success is just deadly in its reaction of monotony. Men do not always go under because they cannot do things. They fail not because they do not know what it is well to do, but because they do not choose to attempt it. And why do they not choose? So far as this question affects middle life it is largely because so few of us have the

grit to face its difficulties.—AMBROSE SHEPHERD, *Men in the Making*, p. 1.

'Now the Lord had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee.'—GENESIS XII. 1.

ABRAHAM was the father of the faithful, and we have here the first recorded test to which his faith was put. The first and one of the greatest.

I. The Substance of God's Call to Abraham.—1. *He was called from rest to pilgrimage.*—From his country and kindred and father's house, to undertake lifelong journeying. He was at an age at which he would fain rest. His wanderings seemed to be begun at the wrong end of his life. But it was then God said, 'Get thee out'. It is as life advances that the idea of journeying, 'getting out,' comes home to men. The child rests in his home; but the outside world, with its responsibilities, self-direction and support, begins at last to open to him, and he must 'get out'. So with resting among old friends, etc. We must one day 'get out'. As years increase, all things seem in constant flow. Then at death. Above all, hear God's voice telling you to set out on the Christian pilgrimage.

2. *He was called from the familiar to the untried.*—The child's familiarity with his environment is never attained to in after years. 'New faces, other minds' meet men's eyes and souls; and they know, however peaceful their lot may be, that they are not in the old, familiar home. But let us extend our idea of home. The lifelong invalid would feel from home in another room of the same house. Let God be our home, the great house in which we live and move about; then wherever He is, we shall feel at home. Most so when we leave the lower room altogether to be 'at home with the Lord' above.

3. *He was called from sight to faith.*—From the portion he had in his country and in his father's house, to wait at all times on the unseen God, and go to the land which He would show him. Let us willingly make this exchange. God is better than country, and kindred, and father's house.

II. The Characteristics of God's Call to Abraham.—1. *It laid clearly before him all that he was to surrender.*—How full and attractive the picture is made to Abraham's last sight of it; 'thy country, kindred,' etc. So, when from duty and loyalty to Christ, we make sacrifices, etc., the possessions will often seem peculiarly fascinating, just when we are to part with them.

2. *It was uncompromising.*—'Get thee out,' with no promise or prospect of ever returning. The gifts of God are never repeated in exactly the same form. The pleasures of sin must be left ungrudgingly and for ever.

3. *It was urgent.*—'Get thee out.' *Now.* 'Abraham departed, as the Lord had spoken to him.' Let *us* give the same ready, instant obedience.

'Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee.'—GENESIS XII. 1, 2.

IT was with these words that Johann Reuchlin summoned his grandnephew, Philip Melanchthon, to accept the Greek professorship at Wittenberg which was offered him, in the summer of 1518, by the Elector Frederick of Saxony. Melanchthon was at that time only twenty-one and had been studying and teaching for some years at the University of Tübingen. He wished for a change, and had written to Reuchlin that he was wasting his time in elementary work. He promised in a letter of 12 July to go wherever Reuchlin might send him and to work hard. Looking to the distant future, he hoped that the time would come when rest and literary leisure would be all the sweeter from the previous toil. On 24 July Reuchlin wrote the famous letter in which he quoted the passage from Genesis. 'I will not address you in poetry,' he said, 'but will use the true promise which God made to faithful Abraham: "Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee. And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing" (see Genesis xii.). So does my mind predict your future, so do I hope for you, my Philip, my work and my consolation. Come therefore with joyous and cheerful mind.' After giving many practical directions for his grandnephew's packing, journey, and family farewells, Reuchlin bade him not linger, but hasten. Evidently the shrewd scholar and man of business feared that if the Elector quitted Augsburg without having met his new professor, the negotiations which he himself had so cleverly arranged might fall to the ground. Dr. Karl Sell, commenting on this letter (which will be found in full in the *Corpus Reformatorum*, vol. i. pp. 32, 33), says that Melanchthon had no idea when he accepted the call of the nature of the task that lay before him in Wittenberg. 'He set forth with no presentment of the future towards that great vocation which brought him so much suffering and which has given him his place in the world's history.' His longing for literary repose was never fulfilled, but Reuchlin's prediction was realized in a way of which the writer never dreamed.

THE FIRST MISSIONARY

'Now the Lord had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee.'—GENESIS XII. 1-3.

I. How strange that call must have seemed to Abraham. It was not like the call which sends forth missionaries now. It was a command to strike out into a new and untried path. It was very indefinite as to the immediate future. He was to go to Canaan and live there. But we are not told that he preached to the people, or endeavoured to convert them to his own faith. We can look back upon Abraham's work and its fruits, upon God's promise and fulfilment, and we can see how the call of Abraham was a great step in God's purpose to train a race of men who should be missionaries to humanity.

II. In the New Testament the missionary call is renewed, only it is made more sweeping. It is no

longer to one country or nation but to all humanity. How far has this promise been fulfilled? It is one of the most encouraging signs of our own time that there is a real revival of missionary interest, a realization of our duty to preach the Gospel to the heathen and an attempt to fulfil it.—A. G. Mortimer, *One Hundred Miniature Sermons*, p. 321.

GOD CALLS ABRAM

Genesis xii. 1-9.

The same voice, says F. B. Meyer, has often spoken since. It called Elijah from Thisbe, and Amos from Tekoa; Peter from his fishing nets, and Matthew from his toll-booth; Cromwell from his farm in Huntingdon, and Luther from his cloister at Erfurt. The same voice, we may add, called the Pilgrim Fathers when on 6 September, 1620, they set sail from Plymouth in the 'Mayflower,' bound for the banks of the Hudson.

Note the three marks of the pilgrims given by Bunyan: (1) their dress was strange, (2) few could understand what they said, (3) they set very light by the wares of Vanity Fair.

References.—XII.—S. Wilberforce, *Sermons*, p. 165. XII. 1-3.—J. Aspinall, *Parish Sermons* (1st Series), p. 126. F. D. Maurice, *Patriarchs and Law Givers of the Old Testament*, p. 68. XII. 1-7.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xlviii. No. 2523. XII. 1-9.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture*, p. 66.

ABRAHAM THE COSMOPOLITAN

'And I will make of thee a great nation.'—Genesis xii. 2.

Abraham is to dream of a land beyond the years. The most mature of all the Gospels declares that he anticipated the Christian Era.

I. He is born too soon. The father of a vast multitude, he is himself a lonely figure—about his surroundings, unappreciated by his age. He has conceived an idea to which his age is a stranger, an idea the working out of which itself involves sacrifice.

II. Abraham is not the man of a village seeking a metropolis, he is the man of a metropolis seeking to extend a village. The dream which burst upon the soul of Abraham was the hope of being a secular missionary, a colonist of waste places.

III. This portrait of Abraham is the earliest attempt to represent a cosmopolitan man—a man seeking to make the world a recipient of his own blessing. He is the forerunner of that great missionary band which, whether in the sphere of religion or of culture, have been the pioneers of a new era to lands that were outside the pale. But for that very reason it was a curtailment of his sphere among contemporaries. It exposed him to social ostracism. It separated him from his age. The path selected by Abraham was a path which the world of his day did not deem heroic.

IV. The life of Abraham begins with an experience which, in germ, is identical with that of Jesus. On the threshold of his ministry there is an analogy between the first three trials of Abraham and the three temptations of Jesus.

(*a*) He is first assailed by famine; the bodily nature is made on the very threshold to protest against the enterprise.

(*b*) Then comes the temptation, not to abandon, but to accelerate it by an exercise of physical power. Nor does Abraham come forth scatheless from the trial.

(*c*) But the third temptation is destined to redeem him. There comes the call to an act of choice between worldly possessions, in which he selects the apparently barren one.

V. Abraham is a cosmopolitan at the beginning, and an individual at the end. The man who at the opening of the day has only an eye for multitudes, subsides at evening into the family circle. The starry dome is exchanged for the precincts of the tent. The sacrificial character remains, but its sphere is altered; it ceases to be a sacrifice for the nations, it becomes a surrender to the hearth.—G. Matheson, *The Representative Men of the Bible*, p. 110.

References.—XII. 2.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xliii. No. 2523. J. Vaughan, *Fifty Sermons*, p. 293. J. H. Evans, *Thursday Penny Pulpit*, vol. x. p. 113. XII. 5.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—Genesis*, p. 77. H. J. Wilmot-Buxton, *Common Life Religion*, p. 134. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xiv. No. 843; *ibid.* vol. xxxiv. No. 2011.

'And Abram passed through the land unto the place of Sichem, unto the plain of Moreh. And the Canaanite was then in the land. And the Lord appeared unto Abram, and said, Unto thy seed will I give this land: and there builded he an altar unto the Lord, Who appeared unto him. And he removed from thence unto a mountain on the east of Beth-el, and pitched his tent, having Beth-el on the west, and Hai on the east: and there he builded an altar unto the Lord, and called upon the name of the Lord. And Abram journeyed, going on still toward the south.'—Genesis xii. 6-9.

Up to the chapter out of which this text is taken, the history of the Bible is rather taken up with the history of the human race in its more general and more universal aspect. It seems to stop at this particular chapter and to look upon the human race less in its larger and universal aspect than in the national aspect of the children of God. The character of the history of the people of God is manifested in the character of the person who founded that history, and with whom the national history begins. I need not remind you that nations catch and are infected with the spirit of their founder. The history of the Israelitish people is rather the history of saintliness, than what we understand by a secular or profane history, and it had its root and foundation in him who was called the Father of the Faithful.

I. Abraham's Career.—A most remarkable career was that of Abraham. He was trained by what? By a process of separation; the giving up this, and the foregoing that. That was the keynote of Abraham's life; one time called to do this, another time called to forego that; the sign early laid upon him of the Cross. He leaves his home without a moment of delay, no hesitation about it, not even knowing where he was going. And there was vouchsafed to him for his encouragement a special manifestation, he was promised a land, a seed, and a blessing as his reward; great inheritance,

abounding posterity, and a remarkable influence. He sets out on this journey toward the promised land, which he never regarded as his real resting-place or home. It is rather typical, not of heaven, but of the visibleChurch,and of the life of individualChristians in the world; and his experience was that his life must be more or less migratory and wandering till he reached his home. The Canaanite—it is an expressive passage—was still in the land, therefore it was not heaven. He pitched his tent as we might pitch a tent or marquee in our fields, as you see gipsies pitch them whenever they find a night's lodging or resting-place; plain, homely, but enough for the purpose.

II. The Altar Built.—And side by side with this simple dwelling-place, easily removed, ever reminding him that the call might come to take it up and go somewhere else, he built an altar, rude, rough in its way, and there it was that he called upon the Lord. He built it as a spontaneous act of gratitude that should tell the passers-by of mercies countless that he had received. It was rough and rude, and, simple as it was, it was not divorced violently from homely, common-day life. Now what lies at the bottom of this simple act of the Father of the Faithful? It was the expression of what, I believe, is a profound and unquenchable spiritual instinct that seeks after God. The instinct of man has led him to localize God, sometimes in a shrine, sometimes in a dark grave. But you know that impressions pass very quickly away from us, and feelings very soon evaporate. Religion—it is not superstition, but religion as we call it, a comprehensive term—is kept in mind and made more real to us by buildings like this church, which you never mistake for anything else; and by certain rites and ceremonies and forms, which are the channels approved by generations of men, in which devotion flows. I do not say that churchgoing is religion, but I think that religion would die out without our churches. The very architecture tells the passer-by that it is something dedicated to God and to His glory. And we still believe that the strength of this great nation really lies, not in her armaments and not in her standing armies, but in her godliness, in her national piety, in her righteousness, in her reverence for God's holy day, in her devout regard for churches, and in that godliness which fetches its inspiration from all that we learn and hear and receive in these earthly temples.

REFERENCES.—XII. 6, 7.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—Genesis*, p. 82. XII. 8.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—Genesis*, p. 84. XII.—J. Parker, *Adam, Noah, and Abraham*, p. 91. F. W. Robertson, *Notes on Genesis*, p. 33. R. S. Candlish, *Book of Genesis*, vol. i. p. 181. S. Leathes, *Studies in Genesis*, p. 96. XIII. 1.—J. Parker, *Adam, Noah, and Abraham*, p. 91. XIII. 1-13.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—Genesis*, p. 85.

'Lot lifted up his eyes and beheld all the plain of Jordan, etc.
—GENESIS XIII. 10, 11.

THE lesson to be gained from the history of Abraham and Lot is obviously this—that nothing but a clear apprehension of things unseen, a simple trust in God's promises, and the greatness of mind thence arising, can make us act above the world—indifferent, or almost so, to its comforts, enjoyments, and friendships, or in other words, that its goods corrupt the common run even of religious men who possess them. . . . Could we not easily persuade ourselves to support Antichrist, I will not say at home, but at least abroad, rather than we should lose one portion of the freights which 'the ships of Tarshish bring us'. . . . Surely, if we are to be saved, it is not by keeping ourselves just above the line of reprobation, and living without any anxiety and struggle to serve God with a perfect heart. No one, surely, can be a Christian who makes his worldly interests his chief end of action.—J. H. NEWMAN.

LOT'S CHOICE

'Then Lot chose him all the plain of Jordan; and Lot journeyed east: and they separated themselves the one from the other. Abram dwelled in the land of Canaan, and Lot dwelled in the cities of the plain, and pitched his tent toward Sodom.'—GENESIS XIII. 11.

IN the story of patriarchal times we see how the possession of property brought with it new social problems for the primitive family. In this case the difficulty began not with the principals, but with their retainers. Before the difficulty struck the masters, the servants were at war. Jealousy about respective rights, and emulation to secure the better bargain crept in. Abram with his calm wisdom saw that it would be better to avoid all such unseemly quarrels by voluntarily separating. Abram with generous disinterestedness offers Lot his choice. 'If thou wilt take the left hand then I will go to the right; or if thou wilt take the right hand then I will go to the left.' It was quite like Abram to do this, in keeping with his noble nature.

I. The presence of moral greatness either raises us or dwarfs us, either prompts us to rise to the occasion or tempts us to take advantage of it. Lot lost his choice of meeting Abram's generosity. Worldly advantage was the first element in his choice. He judged according to the world's judgment; he judged by the eye. His heart was allured by the beauty and fertility of the plain. On the other side the gain was limited and hardly won.

II. Now the power of the temptation to Lot, as it is the power of it to us, was that the good of the one alternative was *present*, while the good of the other seemed distant. The one could be had at sight; the other only through faith. The seduction of the world is that it is here, palpable, to be had now. To exercise self-control for the sake of a future blessing, to put off a present good for a prospective good needs strength of character and will, and, above all, faith.

III. Faith is the refusal of the small for the sake of the large. Worldly wisdom is not wisdom; it is folly, the blind grasping at what is within reach. Lot thought he was doing a wise thing in making the choice he did, but a share in the wealth of Sodom was a pitiful substitute for a place in Abram's company and a share in Abram's thoughts and faith. And the

end was a ruined home, a desolate life, and a broken heart.—H. Black, *Edinburgh Sermons*, p. 33.

References.—XIII. 11.—G. A. Towler, *From Heart to Heart*, p. 1. XIII. 11-14.—C. Perren, *Revival Sermons*, p. 242.

ABRAHAM AND LOT—A CONTRAST

'And Abram dwelled in the land of Canaan, and Lot dwelled in the cities of the plain, and pitched his tent toward Sodom.'—Genesis xiii. 12.

Abraham's life is characterized throughout by great simplicity of motive. He is a man called of God, and true to the heavenly vision—a 'pilgrim of the invisible,' as Robertson of Brighton called him, laying by his faith and high surrender of himself the foundation of a kingdom from which the prophet and the psalmist and the apostle and our Lord Himself were to come. You get a glimpse into the inner soul of Abraham in this chapter. When it comes to a quarrel between his servants and Lot's, and the younger man is scheming how he can promote his own interests by striking a good bargain, Abraham betrays on the whole subject a lofty indifference. He is so sure about God that he feels it matters very little whether he goes to the right hand or to the left. He does not need to stoop to any mean or grasping course to get what God has promised him. And although in this difference with Lot, as the older man and the leader of the enterprise, he might have claimed the first choice, he instead surrenders it.

I. In God's Company.—I find then that acting as he did Abraham got the best of both worlds. For one thing when he left Lot he went in God's company. As always when a man does right, even at a sacrifice, he saw the heavens opened and heard God speaking. And then in making this lofty unselfish choice, Abraham discovered that he had not lost his inheritance, but rather come to the gate of it. Abraham sought heavenly riches and lo! the wealth of the world lay at his feet.

II. The Divided Heart.—Lot is the type of a man, who tried in a very mistaken use of the phrase, to make the best of both worlds, and in the end got the good out of neither. You see him at every point trying to serve two masters, fearing God and yet pitching his tent towards Sodom. If you were to sum Lot up you might say he was an unsuccessful religious man, and an unsuccessful worldling, neither satisfied on the one side of his being nor the other. Lot's was a dissatisfied life; let me try to make the statement good. For on the one side his religion was spoiled by his worldliness. When you see him in Sodom he is sitting in the gate to dispense hospitality, perhaps to administer justice. He vexes his righteous soul at the depravity that goes on about him. He is looked upon by the lawless Sodomites as in some ways a moral censor; for you remember they say, 'This one fellow came in to sojourn, and he will needs be a judge'. But you feel at once that Lot differs from Abraham in that he did not make religious principle the guiding star of his life. Right feeling, for instance, should have prompted him to refuse Abraham's generous offer of the first choice. But he did not refuse to take an unfair advantage of his kinsman. Then he pitched his tent towards Sodom, risking for worldly gear the defilement of his family.

III. A Life of Double Failure.—Then on the other side Lot's worldliness was spoiled by his religion. Another man might have let go the reins, and surrendered himself with whole-hearted zest to the sordid and vicious life of Sodom. But Lot could not do that. And why? Because following him like a spectre was the memory of the days that were gone, the uplifting communion with Abraham and with God. And so he remained in Sodom, not entering into its life, uneasy and disturbed, vexing his righteous soul from day to day but without the moral courage to leave the city, till he was thrust out by the mercy of heaven 'saved yet so as by fire'.—J. McColl, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxxiv. p. 170.

References.—XIII. 12.—W. J. Dawson, *The Comrade of Christ*, p. 243. XIII. 12-13.—R. C. Trench, *Sermons New and Old*, p. 258. XIII. 18-20.—J. Vaughan, *Fifty Sermons* (2nd Series), p. 22. C. Stanford, *Symbols of Christ*, p. 3. XIII.—F. W. Robertson, *Notes on Genesis*, p. 39. XIV. 13.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—Genesis*, p. 93. XIV. 15, 16.—J. Budgen, *Parochial Sermons*, vol. ii. p. 285. XIV. 17-24.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xliii. No. 2523; *ibid.*, vol. xlix. No. 2814.

MELCHISEDEK THE UNCANONICAL

'He was the priest of the most high God.'—Genesis xiv. 18.

A deeply veiled figure. The force of the figure lies in its background; its mystery in its mean surroundings. Melchisedek was a Canaanite. His birthplace was uncanonical. He ruled with wonderfully despotic power. What gave this man such a marvellous power? His personal sanctity. Abraham represents earth; Melchisedek is the High Priest of heaven.

I. Where did Melchisedek get that priesthood which he was certainly credited with possessing. Melchisedek was the earliest man of his class, and was therefore not ordained with hands. The first priest of God in the history of the world must have come from a house not made with hands.

II. The beginning of every ecclesiastical chain is something not ecclesiastical — something human. The churches of the Old World each began in a human soul. In Melchisedek within the precincts of one heart was laid the nucleus of all that sanctity which attached to the patriarchal line. There are three orders of priesthood in the Bible—the Patriarchal, the Jewish, and the Christian, and at the beginning of each dispensation there stands an individual life whose ordination is not made with hands. The origin of the patriarchal dispensation is the holiness of one man—the man Melchisedek. The origin of the Jewish dispensation is the holiness of one man—Moses. The origin of the Christian dispensation is from the human side the holiness of one man—the man Christ Jesus.

III. The point of comparison between Melchisedek and Christ is just the uncanonical manner of their ordination. Looking at the matter from the human side, and abstracting the attention from theological prepossessions there is nothing more remarkable than the uncanonical aspect of the Son of Man. He has obtained it 'after the manner of Melchisedek'. Unconsecrated he became the source of consecration.—G. MATHESON, *Representative Men of the Bible*, p. 43.

REFERENCE.—XIV. 18-20.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. x. No. 589.

CHRIST THE TRUE JOSEPH

'The good of all the land of Egypt is yours.'—GENESIS XIV. 20.

CONSIDER (1) What is the true principle of interpretation to be applied to a particular class of so-called 'types'; and (2) What is the relation in which Christ's people have a right to consider themselves as standing to that outer world, which in some schools of theology is described as 'their spiritual enemy' and in all schools is allowed to be the sphere of their trial.

I. In what sense do we use the words, when caught by, and gazing on, some old saintly or heroic character, whose deeds are chronicled in the history of the people of God, we say instinctively 'Here is a plain type of the Lord Jesus Christ'? What do we mean by this manner of speaking? What sort of relation between type and antitype do our words imply? 'Whatsoever things are true,' says the Gospels' most renowned preacher, 'whatsoever things are honest, whotsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, if there be any praise think on these things'. Think of them as the diadem of grace that crowned the head of Him to whom the Father 'gave not the Spirit by measure,' Who made for Himself one glorious crown of all these precious jewels and set it upon His head that all men might behold its beauty, and Who now weareth it on His throne in the heavenly place for evermore. So He was the perfect man, the 'recapitulation' of humanity, the incarnation—the prototype rather than the antitype—of all that men have ever seen or dreamed of, or pictured to themselves in fancy of the heroic, the pure, the altogether lovely and spotless, the godlike in man.

II. 'The good of all the land of Egypt is yours.' So spake Joseph to his kindred; so speaks Christ to us who are members of His body. We dwell in Egypt, and all its good things are ours, we are not taken out of the world; but by providences and graces, inscrutable in their processes, palpable only in their results, are kept from its evil and suffering, bidden to enjoy its good. For it is possible 'to use the world as not abusing it'; and not only so but to use and be the better for the use. A Christian man may come in contact with what is loathsomest and foulest, and instead of being defiled he shall be the purer, the saintlier, the nearer and the liker God. Egypt is Egypt still: a land lying under a curse; visited at times with plagues; where idols are worshipped with more zeal than God. But if I am Christ's this Egypt is mine. Its curse shall not scathe me. Its plague-spots shall not infect me. While then I assert unfalteringly my claim to all the good things of Egypt, I shall limit myself in the use of them by three main considerations: (1) By my neighbour's good; (2) By the possibility of misconstruction; (3) By a wholesome fear of becoming secularized. I know not that we need any other safeguards; and I do not find that the Gospel has multiplied restraints. A few great guiding principles are better than many subtle, fine-drawn rules.—J. FRASER, *University Sermons*, p. 18.

REFERENCE.—XIV.—J. Parker, *Adam, Noah, and Abraham*, p. 111.

GENESIS XV.

'READ the fifteenth chapter with extreme care. If you have a good memory, learn it by heart from beginning to end; it is one of the most sublime and pregnant passages in the entire compass of ancient literature.'—RUSKIN, *Fors Clarigeva* (lxiv).

REFERENCES.—XV. 1.—J. Parker, *Adam, Noah, and Abraham*, p. 120. J. Thomas, *Myrtle Street Pulpit*, vol. ii. p. 341. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xlix. No. 2814. XV. 2.—J. Kelly, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xviii. p. 165. XV. 5, 6.—Archbishop Magee, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 501. XV. 5-18.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—Genesis*, p. 101. XV. 1.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—Genesis*, p. 111. XV. 6.—E. W. Shalders, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xv. p. 235. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xiv. No. 844. A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—Genesis*, p. 116. XV. 8.—H. Woodcock, *Sermon Outlines*, pp. 87, 92. XV. 8, 9.—G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 278. XV. 11.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. vii. No. 420; *ibid.* vol. xxxiii. No. 1993. XV. 16.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. liii. No. 3043. XV.—J. Parker, *Adam, Noah, and Abraham*, p. 129.

A PARTICULAR PROVIDENCE AS REVEALED IN THE GOSPEL

'Thou God seest me.'—GENESIS XVI. 13.

GOD beholds thee individually, whoever thou art. He 'calls the by thy name'. He sees thee, and understands thee, as He made thee. He knows what is in thee, all thy own peculiar feelings and thoughts, thy dispositions and likings, thy strength and thy weakness. He views thee in thy day of rejoicing, and thy day of sorrow. He sympathizes in thy hopes and thy temptations. He interests Himself in all thy anxieties and remembrances, all the risings and fallings of thy spirit. He has numbered the very hairs of thy head and the cubits of thy stature. He compasses thee round and bears thee in his arms; He takes thee up and sets thee down. He notes thy very countenance, whether smiling or in tears, whether healthful or sickly. He looks tenderly upon thy hands and thy feet; He hears thy voice, the beating of thy heart, and thy very breathing. Thou dost not love thyself better than He loves thee. Thou canst not shrink from pain more than He dislikes thy bearing it; and if He puts it on thee, it is as thou wilt put it on thyself, if thou art wise, for a greater

good afterwards. . . . What is man, what are we, what am I, that the Son of God should be so mindful of me? What am I, that He should have raised me from almost a devil's nature to that of an Angel's? that He should have changed my soul's original constitution, new-made me, who from my youth up have been a transgressor, and should Himself dwell personally in this very heart of mine, making me His temple? What am I, that God the Holy Ghost should enter into me, and draw up my thoughts heavenward, 'with plaints unutterable?'—J. H. NEWMAN.

THE PRESENCE OF GOD

'Thou God seest me.'—GENESIS XVI. 13.

A POOR Egyptian slave-girl, Hagar, spoke these words. Her life had become unendurable, and so she ran away into the wilderness, and an angel from God came to her and told her to return. Hagar's words teach us:—

I. A lesson of God's watchful Providence. These words of Hagar are a special help to us:—

(*a*) When we are exposed to great temptations.

(*b*) In any time of trouble or sorrow or struggle.

(*c*) In time of prayer.

(*d*) When we have to make difficult decisions in our life.

II. God's presence ought to be the great joy of our life here, as it will be in our life hereafter. Heaven is simply life in God's Presence, and the best preparation we can make will be to cultivate the recollection of that Presence now.—A. G. MORTIMER, *Stories from Genesis*, p. 127.

REFERENCES.—XVI. 13.—H. Ranken, *Christian World Pulpit*, 1890, p. 276. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. ii. No. 85; *ibid.* vol. xxxi. No. 1869. XVI.—J. Parker, *Adam, Noah, and Abraham*, p. 129. XVII. 1.—A. G. Mortimer, *The Church's Lessons*, vol. i. p. 85. A. Martin, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 1878. XVII. 1, 2.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xiv. No. 845; *ibid.* vol. xviii. No. 1082. XVII. 1-9.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—Genesis*, p. 117. XVII. 5. —J. Morgan, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 382.

GOD THE GIVER

'I will give . . . '—GENESIS XVII. 8.

'I WILL give.' That is the text. It is found in Genesis, and therefore in the right place; it is heard in the Apocalypse, and therefore the great Amen cannot be far off. Let us see how the river runs, and walk by it, as it were, hand in hand with God.

I. The Lord had to incarnate Himself in little phrases and small toy meanings in order to get at man's imagination, so He says in Genesis XVII, 8, 'I will give unto thee . . . land'. Do not put a full-stop after 'land'. That is the poorest and meanest of His gifts, and would be poorer and meaner still if it did not carry with it all the other gifts by implication, suggestion, far-flashing indication of an opening universe. But the land is God's to give. The land never belonged to any one but God. It is something to know that God gives men land, and clay out of which to make bricks, and quarries out of which to dig palaces, and forests out of which to bring navies and homes of beauty.

II. 'I will give you rain.' Of course; having given us the land, He could not withhold the rain. What is the land without rain?—dust unshaped into humanity and stewardship and responsibility — a poor waste, nothing but dust, that cannot grow a flower. Now I feel to be warming towards this great notion of the One-Giver and All-Giver. 'I will give you rain'—soft water, the kind of water the roots like and pine for. Never dissociate God from land and from water; they are both His, He only can give them in any sense that will bring with it satisfaction. There is a way of appeasing hunger that does not touch the deeper inner hunger of the other self—that excites a man and mocks him every day.

III. 'I will give thee——' —what more can He give? He has given us the land, He has given us the rain, He says, 'I will give thee riches and wealth and honour'. Is there a fountain of honour in the universe? Yes, and if we seek it not, we shall find it sooner; if we do not go after riches and wealth and honour, the poor weazened things will come to us.

IV. Now He begins a higher style of talk. He was condescending all the while to get at us, so lowly was our place in the pit. Now we are coming nearer to the light. He says, 'I will give you pastors according to Mine heart' (Jer. III. 15)—bits of God's own heart, fragments of His infinite love, souls that have received the kiss and will impart it to despairing spirits.

V. He is coming very near us now. What can follow such gifts—land and rain and riches and pastors? He said, 'I will give unto thee a son'. 'For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son.' So loved—that He gave. That is the way to love. He lives to give. That is love. If you take all in and allow nothing to flow out you will one day find that your great gathering of water has burst the cistern or the deep reservoir and has gone. You come in the morning and say, 'I have an abundance of water, but I will not give you any, but you may look at it and see how rich I am; this is the reservoir, walk up this green slope, and I will show you what is worth more than crystal.' We say, 'I do not see it, where is it?' 'Wait a moment and you will see it, over this little hillock.' And we climb the hillock, and look, and the water, the gathered, stored water, kept from the poor and the needy and the thirsty, has gone. God will take it all up again into His sky and turn it into rainbows and into showers and pour it upon worthier receivers. They are storing poverty who are storing gold without God.—JOSEPH PARKER, *City Temple Pulpit*, vol. v. p. 242.

GENESIS XVII. 18.

'ABRAHAM looked upon the vigorous, bold, brilliant young Ishmael, and said appealingly to God: "O that *Ishmael* might live before Thee!" But it cannot be; the promises are to *conduct*, to conduct only. And so, again, we in like manner behold, long after Greece has perished, a brilliant successor of Greece, the Renascence, present herself with high hopes. . . . And

all the world salutes with pride and joy the Renascence, and prays to Heaven: "O that *Ishmael* might live before Thee!" Surely the future belongs to this new-comer.'—M. Arnold in *Literature and Dogma.*

References.—XVII. 18.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—Genesis*, p. 123. XVIII. 1.—*Expositor* (3rd Series), vol. ii. p. 203; *ibid.* vol. iii. p. 69. XVIII. 16-33.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—Genesis* p. 129. XVIII. 19.—G. Bainton, *Christian World Pulpit*, 5 *Nov.* 1890. J. Budgen, *Parochial Sermons*, vol. ii. p. 185. XVIII. 22.—C. J. Vaughan, *Harrow School Sermons*, p. 371. XVIII. 25.—Bishop W. Ingram, *Under the Dome.* p. 219. W. R. Inge, *Faith and Knowledge*, p. 57. Professor Story, *Christian World Pulpit*, 1891, p. 88. XVIII.—J. Parker, *Adam, Noah, and Abraham*, p. 135. XVIII. 25.—J. Vaughan, *Sermons* (15th Series), p. 117.

ABRAHAM'S INTERCESSION

Genesis xviii. 16-33.

When Scott the commentator was dying, we are told that he spoke much to those around him on the way in which his prayers for *others* had been answered. He thought he had failed less in the duty of intercession than in any other. Whether that be true of Scott or not, it is surely very true of Abraham. His nearness to God is never more apparent than when he intercedes for Sodom. Meyer notes these features of his prayer: (1) It was lonely prayer. 'He waited till on all the wide plateau there was no living man to overhear.' (2) It was prolonged prayer. '*We* do not give the sun a chance to thaw us. (3) It was very humble prayer, and (4) It was persevering prayer. 'In point of fact God was drawing him on.'

Reference.—XVIII. 17-33.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xli. No. 2400.

Genesis xviii. 32.

Burke in his 'Observations on a late Publication intituled "The Present State of the Nation,"' remarks that the author, 'after the character he has given of [England's] inhabitants of all ranks and classes, has great charity in caring much about them; and, indeed, no less hope, in being of opinion that such a detestable nation can ever become the care of Providence. He has not found even five good men in our devoted city.'

References.—XIX. 12.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. x. No. 601. XIX. 14.—C. Perren, *Revival Sermons*, p. 216. XIX. 14, 15, 17, 24-26.—R. S. Soanes, *Sermons for the Young*, p. 83. G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 120. XIX. 15-26.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—Genesis*, p. 142. XIX. 15.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. li. No. 2944. XIX. 16.—W. J. Wilmot-Buxton, *Sunday Lessons*, vol. i. p. 222. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xiv. No. 789. XIX. 17.—J. Aspinall, *Parish Sermons* (1st Series) p. 200. W. H. Hutchings, *Sermon Sketches*, p. 71. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xli. No. 2400; vol. x. No. 550. G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 119. XIX. 20.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol v. No. 248. XIX. 23.—*Ibid.* vol. xlv. No. 2642. J. C. M. Bellew, *Sermons*, vol. iii. p. 111. XIX. 26.—A. G. Mortimer, *The Church's Lessons*, vol. ii. p. 241. C. Perren, *Outline Sermons*, p. 286. H. Melvill, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 2445. XIX. 27, 28.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. x. No. 602. XIX.—F. W. Robertson, *Notes on Genesis*, p. 43. XX. 11.—J. Baldwin Brown, *The Sunday Afternoon*, p. 402. XX.—J. Parker, *Adam, Noah, and Abraham*, p. 151.

SARAH THE STEADFAST

Genesis xxi.

What is that quality in the mind of Sarah which lies below all other qualities, and which subsists when others change? It may be expressed in one word—steadfastness. The abiding secret of this woman's greatness is her own abidingness.

I. Sarah in the romantic stage. When the scene first opens in the married life of Abraham and Sarah, they are having an experience which their romance had not bargained for—the poverty of the land. For a married pair I can imagine no duller experience. This must have been Sarah's first real sorrow—not the famine in the land, but the famine in Abraham's soul. She sees her ideal husband in a new light. She has seen him in Ur of the Chaldees flaming with the poetic impulse to abandon himself for the sake of humanity. She beholds him in the land of Canaan with his fire cooled down. True he is under a cloud, and the cloud distresses her; but her eye looks beyond the cloud to the normal shining of her husband's soul.

II. She has need of all her hope; for meantime the gloom deepens. The complaint which has come to Abraham is one which seems occasionally to beset high-strung natures—a reaction of the nerves producing extreme timidity. He says to Sarah, 'We are going into a country where I shall suffer by your beauty. Men will envy me the possession of you; they will lament that you are wedded, bound; they will seek to kill me that you may be free. You can save me if you will. Pretend that you are already free.' This is the eclipse in Abraham's heart of the wifely relation itself. A more terrible strain upon a woman's conjugal love is not to be conceived. Yet this noble woman stood the strain.

III. The cloud clears from Canaan, and Abraham and Sarah return. Years pass, and for Abraham prosperity dawns. But there throbs in Sarah's heart a pulse of pain. There is as yet no heir. She says to her husband, 'Take my slave Hagar as a second wife'. She says to herself, 'If an heir should come through Hagar he will still be my son, not hers'. But Sarah has miscalculated something. She has said that even maternity will not make Hagar less her slave. In body perhaps not: but in spirit it will break her bonds. It is essential to Sarah's peace that Hagar should be not a person but a thing. The combat ends in favour of Sarah. Mother and son are sent out into the desert. Sarah has purified her home. She has relighted her nuptial fire.—G. Matheson, *Representative Women of the Bible*, p. 55.

ISHMAEL THE OUTCAST

'Cast out this bondswoman and her son.'—Genesis xxi. 10.

Israel has from the very first provided a place for the pariah—has opened a door of entrance to the

man whom she has herself turned out. Ishmael is the first pariah, the first outcast from society. To any man who had breathed the patriarchal atmosphere the expulsion from that atmosphere was death in the desert. Expulsion from the patriarchal fold was not necessarily a change of land at all: the outcast could live in sight of his former home. But the sting lay in the fact that the brotherhood itself was broken.

I. What brought Ishmael into this exile? As in nearly all cases of social ostracism he owes it partly to his misfortune—for an Eastern—of being an unconventional man. The spirit of the age is at variance with his spirit. He set up the authority of his individual conscience in opposition to the use and want of the whole community. What was that individual conviction for which Ishmael strove? Ishmael saw Hagar, his actual mother, in the position of a menial to his adopted mother. He saw her subjected to daily indignities. He listened to her assertions of a right to be equal to Sarah, of her claim to be treated as the wife of Abraham.

II. Then something happened. A real heir was born to Sarah. Ishmael was supplanted. All his hopes were withered. He seems to have thrown off the mask which had hitherto concealed his irritation. His tone became mocking, satirical. He preferred a life of independent poverty to a life of luxurious vassalage. He panted to be free. The wrath of Sarah was kindled. She moves her hand and says 'Go!' and Hagar and Ishmael issue forth from the patriarchal home to return no more. When they reach the desert their supply of water is exhausted. Hagar betook herself to prayer. It was not the God of Israel she communed with. It was her own God. But he answered her. The answer comes in the form of an inward peace. It sent no supernatural vision, because that was not needed. The means of refuge lay within the limits of the natural. The well was there, had always been there. What was wanted was a mental calm adequate to the recognition of it.

III. But the grand thing was the moral bearing of the fact. It had an historical significance. It declared that God had a place for the pariah. It proclaimed that the God of Abraham and the God of Isaac was still the God of Egypt and the God of Hagar. God is larger than all our creeds, and higher than all our theories.—G. MATHESON, *Representative Men of the Bible*, p. 1.

REFERENCES.—XXI. 6.—Spurgeon, *Morning by Morning*, p. 167. XXI. 16.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xvii. No. 974. XXI. 17.—C. Bosanquet, *Tender Grass for the Lambs*, p. 1. J. Vaughan, *Sermons to Children* (5th Series), p. 105. XXI. 19.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xix. No. 1123; *ibid.* vol. xxv. No. 1461. XXI.—J. Parker, *Adam, Noah, and Abraham*, p. 14. F. W. Robertson, *Notes on Genesis*, p. 50.

THE TEMPTATION OF ABRAHAM

GENESIS XXII.

THIS narrative has been an awful difficulty to many. Some, who have not quite cast the Bible away as God's Word, yet go near to saying that we cannot see God's Word in *this* passage. It is said by some that the whole incident must be explained by ideas in Abraham's mind, suggested by the practice of human sacrifices around him. Abraham thought on these till the feeling arose that *his* God also demanded nothing short of the life of his best beloved treasure; then this feeling mastered him as a passionate resolve, till he *all but* slew his son.

Such a view I refuse to accept. I am quite sure it is not the view meant to be given by the narrative, and I am quite sure that the narrative had the approval of our Lord Jesus Christ, as a true account of His Father's will and work. So I am sure that, somehow, God supernaturally conveyed to Abraham His command, as the absolute Lord of the life of His creatures; that Abraham obeyed not his own feelings, but that command; that he was supernaturally prevented from the final act, when his willingness to do even it at his Lord's word had been shown, and that his whole conduct received a glorious crown of approval, then and there, from heaven. All this I steadfastly believe; but I do not wonder at the difficulties many hearts have felt over the story.

Now here note some of the 'messages' of Abraham's temptation.

I. First, it was obviously a case where 'test' and 'enticement' might, and no doubt did, beset Abraham at the same time. His heavenly Friend was testing him. His dark Enemy is not mentioned; Genesis has no clear reference to him at all after Chapter III. But we may be sure he was watching his occasion, and would whisper deep into Abraham's soul the thought that if this call was from the Lord, the Lord was an awfully 'austere' Master; would not some other Deity, after all, be more kind and tolerant?

II. Then, we see where the essence of the awful test lay. Abraham was asked, in effect, two questions through it. He was asked whether he absolutely resigned himself to the Lord's ownership, and also whether he absolutely trusted his Owner's truth and love. The two questions were not identical, but they were twined close together. And the response of Abraham, by the grace of God in his heart, to both questions was a 'yes' which sounds on for ever through all the generations of the followers of the faith of Abraham. He so acted as to say, in effect, 'I am Thine, and all mine is Thine, utterly and for ever'. And this he did, not as just submitting in stern silence to the inevitable, but 'in faith'. He was quite sure that 'He was faithful who had promised.' He was sure of this because of His character; because he knew God, and knowing Him, loved Him. So he overcame. So he received the crown; he was blessed himself, and a blessing to the world.

III. Are we ever 'proved' in ways which in the least remind us of Abraham upon Moriah? Is it very strange, very dreadful, very arbitrary, to our poor aching eyes? Let us remember whose we are, and whom we trust, because we know Him. We

belong to Him by purchase, by conquest, by surrender. Therefore all our 'belongings' belong to Him, in the sense that He has perfect right to detach them from us if He thinks it well. And we rely on Him to whom we belong. *We know* that not only are His rights absolute, but so also is His love, which abideth, is Himself.

The Divine command to Abraham, not merely to surrender Isaac but to kill him, is of course the mystery of the story. I believe it is enough to say that the absolute Lord of the lives of Abraham and of Isaac had the right not only to call for Isaac's life, but to call for it *so*—having already trained Abraham up to a full reliance on His character. But we should also observe that the command would appeal to a human fact of that age, and of ages after; the fact that family was then so constituted that the child was regarded as *the property* of the parent. In the full light of the Gospel, while every filial duty is deepened and glorified, such a constitution is not possible. We may be sure that no such command will be given in the Christian age.—Bishop H. C. G. Moule.

ABRAHAM'S FAITH

'And it came to pass after these things that God did tempt Abraham, and said unto him, Abraham: and he said, Behold, here I am. And he said, Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah, and offer him there for a burnt-offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of.'—Genesis xxii. 1, 2.

I. The word tempt here means try. To those dwelling out of the Kingdom of Faith such a command as this must appear strange indeed, one exacting from a father, it seems so contrary to nature, so opposed to the very feelings sown in the heart of man; and doubtless multitudes think the same of the entire plan of salvation, as also of affliction, or trials of any sort. But there are those who have gone through difficulties, and sufferings, and have felt, however painful the trials, yet were they accompanied with brightening, purifying influences; they drew those tried ones nearer to God, in proportion as they had faith and grace to bear.

II. The conduct of men in general is influenced by reason, by feeling, by interest, but in this act of Abraham's we find all these laid aside. Abraham did not act from any of these motives, but from a principle which was in opposition to them all. Therefore when the command came, it might have startled him perhaps, but he did not criticize it, he did not sit in judgment on it, he knew where it came from, it must be right, and it must be obeyed.

III. Not only were Abraham's reason and feelings opposed to his faith, but also his highly cherished interests. In Isaac were wrapped up the father's fond affections, all his worldly hopes and prospects; through him he was taught to expect that his descendants should become a mighty nation, that from him should spring a race of kings, yea, the Messiah, the King of kings; yet when the command came to slay that son, faith led him to obey it.

IV. Besides Abraham being set before us in this Scripture as a noble example of faith and obedience to God's commands, there is another lesson which this narrative seems evidently intended to teach. We have here a lively type and illustration of the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ for the sins of men. The whole history is, in several parts, a sort of breathing picture, prefiguring by actual persons and actual sufferings the great sacrifice of Christ upon the Cross. —E. J. Brewster, *Scripture Characters*, p. 20.

References.—XXII. 1.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vols. xxii. xxiii. No. 37. XXII. 1-14.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—Genesis*, p. 152. XXII. 1-19.—J. Clifford, *Daily Strength for Daily Living*, p. 19. J. J. S. Perowne, *Sermons*. p. 332.

ISAAC THE DOMESTICATED

'Thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest.'—Genesis xxii. 2.

Isaac is distinctively a female type. He reveals human nature in a passive attitude—precisely that attitude which the old world did not like.

I. The life of Isaac is from beginning to end a suffering in private. His was that form of sacrifice which does not show, which wins no reputation for heroism.

II. Our first sight of him is the sight of an unresisting victim on an altar of sacrifice, but his attitude is not that of a mere victim. It is that of acquiescence. In the deepest sense Isaac has bound himself to the altar. He has submitted to self-effacement for the sake of his family. That submission is the type of his whole life.

III. Most probably this self-effacement on the part of Isaac did not come from a quiet nature. His sacrifice takes the form of personal divestiture. It is all inward, but the man who can give his will has given everything. His was the surrender and not the crushing of a will. The crushing of a will brings vacancy, but the surrender of a will is itself an exercise of will power.—G. Matheson, *The Representative Men of the Bible*, p. 131.

References.—XXII. 2.—J. Parker, *Adam, Noah, and Abraham*, p. 191. C. D. Bell, *Hills that Bring Peace*, p. 45. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xv. No. 868.

THE OFFERING OF ISAAC

'Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah, and offer him there for a burnt-offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of.'—Genesis xxii. 2-18.

Certain features of this severe trial closely resemble some of the operations of Divine providence known to ourselves.

I. We are often exposed to great trials without any reason being assigned for their infliction. When such trials are accepted in a filial spirit, the triumph of faith is complete.

II. Even in our severest trials, in the very crisis and agony of our chastisement, we have hope in the delivering Mercy of God. This is often so in human life; the inward contradicts the outward. Faith substitutes a greater fact for a small one.

III. We are often made to feel the uttermost bitterness of a trial in its foretelling and anticipation. Sudden calamities are nothing compared with the lingering death which some men have to die.

IV. Filial obedience on our part has ever been followed by special tokens of God's approval. We ourselves have in appropriate degrees realized this same overflowing and all-comforting blessing of God in return for our filial obedience.

V. The supreme lesson which we should learn from this history is that almighty God, in the just exercise of His sovereign and paternal authority, demands the complete subjugation of our will to His own. We are distinctly called to give up everything, to sink our will in God's; to be no longer our own; to sum up every prayer with, 'Nevertheless, not my will, but Thine be done'.—JOSEPH PARKER, *The Contemporary Pulpit*, vol. v. p. 154.

THE BACKGROUNDS OF LIFE

'Abraham lifted up his eyes and saw the place afar off.'—GENESIS XXII. 4.

ABRAHAM was on his way to offer up Isaac, and 'the place afar off' was the mountain on which he had been told to perform the sacrifice. Let me put aside at once any consideration of the object of his journey and any discussion of the disputed question of the locality. I am taking the words of the text as simply suggesting the idea of a distant view closed in by a mountain range. Views of this kind are common in Palestine. There are few parts of the country where the horizon is not bounded by a mountain outline, and though the heights are not great when compared with the higher Alps, yet the shapes and the structures are those of mountains, not hills. Our personal memories of mountain scenery in other lands are enough to give us an idea of the view which lay before Abraham. We think of distant, delicate, changing tints, purple or blue or grey, seen across a foreground of plain or valley; we think of the charm of what Ruskin calls mountain gloom and mountain glory. That was not, of course, the way in which the Jews of the Old Testament regarded their mountains. It was not love of their beauty which they felt; it was rather a sense of their awfulness. They associated mountain heights, as in the case of Mount Sinai, with the immediate presence of God. 'He that treadeth on the high places of the earth,' says the prophet Amos, 'the Lord the God of Hosts is His name.' If this belief inspired a feeling of awe about mountains, from another point of view it was not devoid of comfort. To the Psalmist the mountain horizons of his fatherland suggested the assurance of God's protection. 'I will lift up mine eyes unto the mountains from whence cometh my help.' 'As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the Lord is round about His people from this time forth and for evermore.'

We have all felt, I suppose, the beauty of the Psalmist's simile. May we not claim that it still has a meaning of value for us? Let us think for a little about the mountain backgrounds of life. Our lives are like a great landscape; each life has its own foreground and background; the foreground full of detail, full of the movement of our daily work, looming much larger on our sight than the distance beyond it, pressing upon us calls of business that we cannot put off, keeping our thoughts immersed in the ceaseless hurry and hustle of our professional career, calling continually for our immediate attention to this or that thing that has to be done. Such is the foreground of life. And then behind all this multiplicity of detail and movement come the wider horizons, the larger aspirations, the deeper convictions, the eternal truths, the unchangeable principles to which we must continually lift up our eyes if our life is to have any general plan or purpose. These are the mountain backgrounds. Both foreground and background are equally indispensable. No life can be complete that ignores either of them. But there is this difference between them. Men as a rule are naturally inclined to pay far more attention to the foreground than to the background. There are indeed sluggish or visionary natures which are content to stand aside from the ordinary activities of life, but these are exceptional. Most men find their immediate daily duties so engrossing that they are apt to neglect the view beyond. The mountain distances become blurred or blotted out. That is a great loss—how great a loss our Lord teaches us Himself by His own example. We cannot suppose that He, in His busy daily life, ever really put God out of His thoughts; always He must have had with Him the sense of His Heavenly Father's presence. Yet none the less He felt the need of going up into a mountain apart to pray.

The idea that life is like a landscape is a mere metaphor of course, but it may be helpful and suggestive. Let me try to give one or two illustrations.

I. There is the background of the inner personality, for instance. Behind the foreground of conduct comes the background of character. The teaching of Jesus covers the whole range of this spiritual landscape. He says, 'Keep My commandments'—that is the rule of conduct. But He also says (and we feel that it is a still deeper saying) 'Ye must be born again'. That is the need of regeneration of character. These two sayings are closely connected. Conduct and character must be in harmony, or there can be no real sincerity of life. Many lives, we all know, never attain this sincerity. That means a discrepancy, a want of harmony between foreground and background.

II. Then, again, there is the background of prayer. Every true prayer, it has been said, has its background and its foreground. The foreground of prayer is the intense immediate longing for some blessing which seems to be absolutely necessary for the soul to have; the background of prayer is the quiet, earnest desire that the will of God, whatever it may be, should be done. Examine from this point of view our Lord's perfect prayer at Gethsemane. In

front we see the intense longing that the cup of agony and death might pass away from Him; but behind there stands the strong, steadfast desire that the Will of God should be done. Take away either of these conditions and the prayer becomes less perfect. Leave out the foreground (I quote the words of a great preacher)—let there be no expression of the wish of him who prays—and there is left a pure submission which is almost fatalism. Leave out the background—let there be no acceptance of the Will of God—and the prayer is only a manifestation of self-will, an ill-regulated petition for personal gratification, without reference to any higher law. It is just this background of prayer on which we need to keep our eyes fixed.

III. Take again the background of Divine truth. What do we see as we look down on the foreground of our lives in these days of controversy? There lies before us a series of battle-scenes full of noise and confusion—the conflict of parties within our Church, the conflict of Church and Church, the conflict of Christian and non-Christian belief, the conflict of religion and agnosticism. We must lift up our eyes to the still, solemn mountain background which rises far away beyond the scene of conflict. There, on the distant horizon of our lives, we shall find, if we have but faith to see, that eternal truth which is one aspect of the nature of God, that truth which tests and explains and reconciles our partial and conflicting beliefs. There are times, no doubt, when to some of us the truth may be hidden from our eyes. The mountains may be veiled in clouds which we cannot pierce. But some of us perhaps have had experience of moments and moods when Divine truth seems to burst in upon the eye of the soul, and it is an immense help to be able to believe that, whether we see it or not, it is always there in the background of life, the one eternal, unchangeable goal of all the faith and of all the intellectual effort of mankind.

IV. One other spiritual background let me mention—it is the background of the Christian ideal. Behind the foreground of the actual daily lives lived by Christian men and women comes the distant ideal—and do we not constantly feel that it is unattainably distant?—which the Master has set before His Church. The teaching which presents that ideal is no mere dead record of a life that has passed away: it is a perennial reservoir of suggestiveness. Age after age has witnessed the reincarnation of the Christian ideal. It has been assailed in these days, as it has often been assailed in times past. But the movement of modern thought has not been without its compensating advantages to Christianity, and I think we may claim that in some respects we are in closer touch than men used to be with the mind and the heart of Jesus Christ.—H. G. Woods, *Master of the Temple.*

References.—XXII. 6.—J. Keble, *Sermons for the Holy Week*, p. 454. XXII. 7.—M. Biggs, *Practical Sermons on Old Testament Subjects*, p. 53. XXII. 7, 8.—F. D. Maurice, *Patriarchs and Lawgivers of the Old Testament*, p. 83. R. Winterbotham, *Sermons and Expositions*, p. 19. XXII. 9.—Bishop Armstrong, *Parochial Sermons*, p. 172. XXII. 9, 10.—C. Bradley, *The Christian Life*, p. 206. E. Blencowe, *Plain Sermons to a Country Congregation* (2nd Series), p. 163.

THE HIGHEST SELF-OFFERING

'And Abraham stretched forth his hand, and took the knife to slay his son. And the angel of the Lord called unto him out of heaven, and said, Abraham, Abraham: and he said, Here am I. And he said, Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou anything unto him: for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son, from Me.'—Genesis xxii. 10, 11, 12.

This chapter teaches us that Abraham had to discover something about God. God did not tempt Abraham to any deed of violence. Instead of that He raised the faith of Abraham and the service and even the character of Abraham to a higher level than they had ever occupied before.

I. Abraham having discovered his God of righteousness proceeds to test himself with regard to the validity of all earthly affection, and I can imagine, as he feels his pride in his dear son growing day by day, that the influence of early training would come over him. 'Would it be a sublime thing, in fact does God want it—that I offer my boy, as my father and my father's father have offered their boys to their Gods?' Then the moment comes, the resolution is taken, he sets out upon his journey, and the lad who is to be his victim accompanies him, unquestioning, for Isaac had a part in this event. Abraham binds him who is dearer than life itself to the old man, lays him on the altar, and prepares for the last dread blow. But something cries, 'Hold, lay not thine hand upon the lad.' It was as though an angel spoke to him, for God did speak in the mind of this heroic single-minded servant, who with a very dim light shining in his soul chose to serve at his best.

II. The principle herein declared, the situation herein described, has repeated itself in human history a thousand times since that far-off day—a thousand times? may be a thousand thousand times. It teaches us this—God requires no meaningless sacrifices from any man. I said no meaningless sacrifices, but there are occasions in life when earthly affection has to be sacrificed to eternal truth, when a lower love has to be offered up in the name of a higher. John Bunyan went to prison for his faith in a day when it meant much to suffer, and he endured within those prison walls some things which were harder than death. Here was a man to whom the stake would have meant nothing, a man who could have faced torture and shame and death with equanimity. He was putting on the altar what was dearer to him than a thousand lives. His blind child, his wife, his other dear ones, were offered to the service of the Most High and for love of Jesus Christ.

III. But there is a love for which men and women will sin. The wife will lie for the husband, mothers will do wrong for their children, fathers will sin for home, friend will sacrifice to the devil for friend. Know then that in every case where such decision is taken you have sacrificed husband, wife, child, self,

to the lower, and not to the higher. The highest love is the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, and by that I mean the love of Christ which never spared, never will spare those whom He calls. Consecrate all earth's affection at the altar, and if from the altar you must go to Calvary, then go! Love's highest is called for, the worthiest, the only one which you can offer in the presence of the Lamb of God.—R. J. Campbell, *Sermons Addressed to Individuals*, p. 171.

References.—XXII. 10.—R. Hiley, *A Year's Sermons*, vol. iii. p. 83. S. A. Tipple, *Echoes of Spoken Words*, p. 213.

JEHOVAH-JIREH

'And Abraham called the name of that place Jehovah-jireh; that is, the Lord will provide.'—Genesis xxii. 14.

I. The Intended Sacrifice by Abraham of Isaac.—It may be worth our while to ask for a moment what it was exactly that Abraham expected the Lord to provide. We generally use the expression in reference to outward things. But there is a meaning deeper than that in the words. What was it God provided for Abraham? What is it God provides for us? A way to discharge the arduous duties which, when they are commanded seem all but impossible for us. 'The Lord will provide.' Provide what? The lamb for a burnt-offering which He has commanded. We see in the fact that God provided the ram which became the appointed sacrifice, through which Isaac's life was preserved. A dim adumbration of the great truth that the only sacrifice which God accepts for the world's sin is the sacrifice which He Himself has promised.

II. Note on what Conditions He Provides.—If we want to get our outward needs supplied, our outward weaknesses strengthened, power and energy sufficient for duty, wisdom for perplexity, a share in the sacrifice which taketh away the sins of the world, we get them all on the condition that we are found in the place where all the provision is treasured.

Note *when* the provision is realized. Up to the very edge we are driven before the hand is put out to help us.

III. Note what we are to do with the Provision when we get it.—Abraham christened the anonymous mountain-top not by a name which reminded him or others of his trial but by a name that proclaimed God's deliverance. He did not say anything about his agony or about his obedience. God spoke about that, not Abraham. Many a bare bald mountain-top in your career and mine we have got names for. Are they names that commemorate our sufferings, or God's blessings?—A. Maclaren, *The God of the Amen*, p. 209.

References.—XXII. 14.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—Genesis*, p. 105. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxx. No. 1803. S. Martin, *Sermons*, p. 159. XXII. 15-18.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xliii. No. 2523. XXII. 16-18.—E. H. Gifford, *Voices of the Prophets*, p. 131. XXII. 18.—*Expositor* (2nd Series), vol. viii. p. 200. XXII.—F. W. Robertson, *Notes on Genesis*, p. 53. XXIII. 19.—J. Baines, *Sermons*, p. 139. XXIII.—F. W. Robertson, *Notes on Genesis*, p. 62.

REBEKAH THE FARSEEING

Genesis xxiv.

I. In the case of Sarah the real drama opens with married life. In the case of Rebekah it opens with the proposal of marriage. The offer comes from Isaac. When she sees the servant approaching she has no idea of his errand. But Rebekah has a wonderful talisman against such surprise—an astonishing power of putting herself instantaneously in the place of those to whom she is speaking.

II. There is a peculiarity about Rebekah's sympathetic insight. It is not only manifested to things near, but to things at a distance. I would call her a farseeing woman, by which I mean a woman with an insight into the future. What she sees is a vision of the coming will of God. From a worldly standpoint she could do better than marry Isaac. If Rebekah's insight had been limited to the things around her she would have rejected the suit of Isaac. To unite with a worshipper of another God was the revulsion of her soul, so from Rebekah's gaze all Hittite offers fade, and the figure of the Hebrew Isaac stands triumphant.

III. The heart of Isaac had been overshadowed by the death of Sarah. Rebekah crept into the vacant spot, and rekindled the ashes in the scene of the vanished fire. Then comes the actual motherhood of Rebekah. Two sons are born—Esau and Jacob. Esau was the natural heir to the birthright and the blessing. In the ordinary course of things he would be both monarch and priest of the Clan. But now there comes into play the extraordinary foresight of this woman Rebekah. With the eye of an eagle she watches the youth of her two boys. She finds that the first-born is utterly unfit for the great destiny that is before him. She sees that Jacob and not Esau is the man for his father's priesthood. Might not Isaac be made to ordain God's man instead of his own? Rebekah fell by fanaticism for God. She never dreamed that she was working for any end but the cause of Providence.—G. Matheson, *Representative Women of the Bible*, p. 79.

References.—XXIV. 1.—G. Woolnough, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xiv. p. 366. XXIV. 5-8.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxxiv. No. 2047. XXIV. 12.—T. L. Cuyler, *Christian World Pulpit*, 1890, p. 174.

THE CHOKED WELLS

'And Isaac digged again the wells of water, which they had digged in the days of Abraham his father.'—Genesis xxiv. 18.

I. The wells of our father may get choked. There are some wells where men were drinking when the world was young, and spite of all the ages they are still fresh, and the dripping bucket plashed in them this day. Such was the well of Jacob, for example, and Jesus, weary with His journey, drank of that, though Jacob had been sleeping in his grave for centuries; and the traveller still slakes his thirst there. But the common fate of wells is not like that. Time, changing environment, or even malicious mischief, silts them up. Perhaps the most signal instance

12557

of that choking the world has ever seen was the law of Moses in the time of Christ. Once, in the golden days of Israel, the law of Moses had been a well of water. Then came the Pharisees and Jewish lawyers, and buried God's simple law in such a mass of learned human folly, poured such a cargo of sand upon the spring, that the wells were choked, and the waters that their fathers drank were lost. And have we not found the same thing in the Gospel? Take the great central doctrine of the sacrifice on Calvary. It was the gladdest news that ever cheered the world, that Jesus died on Calvary for men. But by and by that well got silted up. It became filled with intolerable views of God. It was buried under degrading views of man. The well was choked.

II. We must each dig for ourselves to reach the water. One great blight upon the Church to-day is just that men and women will not dig. They are either content to accept their father's creed, or they are content, on the strength of arguments a child could answer, to cast it overboard. You can always tell when a man has been digging for himself by the freshness, the individuality of his religion. The humblest souls, if they have dug for themselves, and by their own search have found the water, will have a note in their music that was never heard before, and some discovery of God that is their own.

III. Our discovered wells were named long since. When Isaac dug his well at Gerar men had forgotten about the wells of Abraham. But the day came when Isaac named his wells. And when the neighbours gathered and asked him what the names were, they found they were the names that had been given by Abraham. The wells were not new. They were but rediscovered. I never dig but a new well is found. And we think at first these wells are all our own. But the day comes when we find it is not so. They are the very waters our fathers drank; but the toil and effort, the struggle and the prayer that it took us to reach them, made them so fresh to us that we thought they were a new thing in the world.—G. H. Morrison, *Flood-Tide*, p. 148.

References.—XXIV. 23.—A. Mursell, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxii. p. 195. XXIV. 27.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—Genesis*. p. 173. XXIV. 40.—H. J. Buxton, *Common Life Religion*, p. 258. XXIV. 49.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxxvii. No. 2231. XXIV. 55.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xiii. No. 772.

LOVE AND COURTSHIP

'And they called Rebekah, and said unto her, Wilt thou go with this man? And she said, I will go.'—Genesis xxiv. 58.

So much of life's weal or woe is determined by a well-advised or ill-advised love and courtship that the question cannot be approached with too serious and sympathetic attention.

I. Parental and Friendly Interest in the Love Affairs of Young People.—Nothing is more delightful, and delightfully instructive, in this idyllic tale, than the loving sympathy Abraham and Eliezer showed in the matrimonial concerns of Isaac. Look how excellently Abraham behaved himself in such a matter! He was deeply and tenderly interested that Isaac should secure a wife who would be a benediction to him. That is the right spirit. Let all parents and older friends note it and emulate it.

II. A Wife sought among the People of God.—Beware of alliances with those who are morally Canaanites and Philistines! Seek a wife, a husband, among the people of God. The perils of a godless home are of all perils the most to be dreaded. Seek God's guidance and sojourn amid what is godly.

III. Confidence in Divine Guidance Amid Love and Courtship.—Abraham never wavered in his faith that God would direct Isaac's future. He argued from God's care of his past interest to God's care of his son's future interests. Parents may be sure that, if they be believers, the God who has guided them will guide their children, His 'Angel' shall be sent to further their love and their courtship.

IV. Qualities which Promise Happiness.—When Eliezer met Rebekah in her remote home he discovered features of her personality and character which foretold that she would make a suitable wife for his master's son. And amid many qualities these are well worthy to be noted. She *was a domesticated woman.* When she appeared upon the scene she had 'her pitcher upon her shoulder'. And she used it. There is a danger to-day of Rebekah being minus her pitcher and of her not using it though she may be possessed of it. *Rebekah* was a *woman* of a *kindly disposition.* The spirit of genial courtesy possessed her. A sweet, kind, generous spirit is a powerful factor in the happiness of wedded life. Rebekah and Isaac were both graced with filial devotion. Rebekah was a devoted daughter. And as for Isaac he is, as a son, beyond all praise. It is such daughters who make faithful and loving wives. It is such sons who are afterwards devoted and affectionate husbands.

V. True Love Irradiated this Ancient Courtship.—'He loved her' is the finale of the romantic and tender story. No qualities, however good or noble, can supersede the necessity of deep and strong mutual affection. The love of Isaac and Rebekah is an essential guarantee of happy married life.—Dinsdale T. Young, *Messages for Home and Life*, p. 75.

References.—XXIV. 58.—C. D. Bell, *The Name Above Every Name*, p. 137. W. H. Aitken, *Mission Sermons*, (3rd Series), p. 51. XXIV. 63.—J. Aspinall, *Parish Sermons* (1st Series), p. 216. Spurgeon, *Morning by Morning*, p. 228. XXIV. 67.—Bishop Thorold, *The Yoke of Christ*, p. 247. XXIV.—F. W. Robertson, *Notes on Genesis*, p. 68. W. H. Buxton, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 834. T. Guthrie, *Studies of Character from the Old Testament*, p. 61. XXV. 8.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—Genesis*, p. 180. J. Parker, *Adam, Noah, and Abraham*, p. 191. A. Maclaren, *Christ in the Heart*, p. 117. XXV. 11.—Spurgeon, *Morning by Morning*, p. 48. F. W. Farrar, *The Fall of Man*, p. 223. XXV. 27.—L. D. Bevan, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 574. XXV. 27-34.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture*, p. 192. XXV. 29-34.—C. Kingsley, *The Gospel of the Pentateuch*, p. 72.

THE ATTRACTION OF THE PRESENT

'And Esau said, Behold, I am at the point to die: and what profit shall this birthright do to me?'—GENESIS XXV. 32.

ESAU's weakness and fall in the presence of his overmastering temptation.

I. Esau's good qualities are very evident, being of the kind easily recognized and easily popular among men, the typical sportsman who is only a sportsman, bold and frank and free and generous, with no intricacies of character, impulsive and capable of magnanimity. The very opposite of the prudent, dexterous, nimble man of affairs, rather reckless indeed and hotheaded and passionate. His virtues are, we see, dangerously near to being vices. Without self-control, without spiritual insight, without capacity even to know what spiritual issues were, judging things by immediate profit and material advantage, there was not in him depth of nature out of which a really noble character could be cut. This damning lack of self-control comes out in the passage of our text, the transaction of the birthright. Coming from the hunt hungry and faint, he finds Jacob cooking porridge of lentils and asks for it. The sting of ungovernable appetite makes him feel as if he would die if he did not get it. Jacob takes advantage of his brother's appetite and offers to barter his dish of pottage for Esau's birthright. Esau was hungry, and before his fierce desire for food actually before him such a thing as a prospective right of birth seemed an ethereal thing of no real value. He feels he is going to die, as a man of his type is always sure he will die if he does not get what he wants when the passion is on him; and supposing he does die, it will be poor consolation that he did not barter this intangible and shadowy blessing of his birthright. 'Behold I am at the point to die: and what profit shall this birth right do to me?'

II. This scene where he surrendered his birthright did not settle the destiny of the two brothers—a compact like this could not stand good for ever, and in some magical way substitute Jacob for Esau in the line of God's great religious purpose. But this scene, though it did not settle their destiny in that sense, revealed the character, the one essential thing which was necessary for the spiritual succession to Abraham; and Esau failed here in this test as he would fail anywhere. His question to reassure himself, 'What profit shall this birthright do to me?' reveals the bent of his life, and explains his failure. True self-control means willingness to resign the small for the sake of the great, the present for the sake of the future, the material for the sake of the spiritual, and that is what faith makes possible. He had no patience to wait, no faith to believe in the real value of anything that was not material, no self-restraint to keep him from instant surrender to the demand for present gratification. This is the power of all appeal to passion, that it is present with us now, to be had at once. It is clamant, imperious, insistent, demanding to be satiated with what is actually present. It has no use for a far-off good. It wants immediate profit.

III. But it is not merely lack of self-control which Esau displays by the question of our text. It is also lack of appreciation of spiritual values. In a vague way he knew that the birthright meant a religious blessing, and in the grip of his temptation that looked to him as purely a sentiment not to be seriously considered as on a par with a material advantage. How easy it is for all of us to drift into the class of the profane, the secular persons as Esau; to have our spiritual sensibility blunted; to lose our appreciation of things unseen; to be so taken up with the means of living that we forget life itself and the things that alone give it security and dignity. We have our birthright as sons of God born to an inheritance as joint heirs with Christ. We belong by essential nature not to the animal kingdom, but to the Kingdom of Heaven; and when we forget it and live only with reference to the things of sense and time, we are disinheriting ourselves as Esau did.—HUGH BLACK, *University Sermons*, p. 121.

REFERENCE.—XXV. 32.—J. C. M. Bellew, *Sermons*, vol. iii. p. 139.

ESAU DESPISED HIS BIRTHRIGHT

GENESIS XXV. 34.

DR. MARCUS DODS says: 'It is perhaps worth noticing that the birthright in Ishmael's line, the guardianship of the temple at Mecca, passed from one branch of the family to another in a precisely similar way. We read that when the guardianship of the temple and the governorship of the town fell into the hands of Abu Gabshan a weak and silly man, Cosa, one of Mohammed's ancestors, circumvented him while in a drunken humour, and bought of him the keys of the temple, and with them the presidency of it, for a bottle of wine. But Abu Gabshan being gotten out of his drunken fit, sufficiently repented of his foolish bargain, from whence grew these proverbs among the Arabs: More vexed with late repentance than Abu Gabshan; and more silly than Abu Gabshan—which are usually said of those who part with a thing of great moment for a small matter.'

REFERENCES.—XXV. 34.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—Genesis*, p. 198. J. Keble, *Sermons for Lent to Passiontide*, p. 104. C. C. Bartholomew, *Sermons Chiefly Practical*, p. 183. W. Bull, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxii. p. 100. Archbishop Benson, *Sundays in Wellington College*, p. 190. G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 77. J. Keble, *Sermons for Lent to Passiontide*, p. 104. XXV.—F. W. Robertson, *Notes on Genesis*, p. 71.

ISAAC THE PEACEMAKER

GENESIS XXVI. 12-25.

ISAAC gave up his wells rather than quarrel over them. A similar historical instance of peace-loving is given by Knox in his *History of the Reformation*. George Wishart, the martyr, a man, 'lowly, lovely, glad to teach, desirous to learn,' went by request to the church of Mauchline to preach there. But the Sheriff of Ayrshire, fearing the destruction of the ornaments of the church, got a number of the local gentlemen to

garrison it against the preacher. One friend of Wishart's determined to enter it by force, but Wishart, drawing him aside, said: 'Brother, Christ Jesus is as potent upon the fields as in the kirk, . . . it is the word of peace that God sends by me; the blood of no man shall be shed this day for the preaching of it.' And so, withdrawing the whole people, he came, says Knox, to a dyke on a moor-edge, upon which he ascended and continued in preaching for more than three hours.

REFERENCE.—XXVI. 12-25.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—Genesis*, p. 201.

THE BURIED WELLS

'And Isaac digged again the wells of water, which they had digged in the days of Abraham his father: for the Philistines had stopped them up.'—GENESIS XXVI. 18.

THERE is a deep sense in which every life might say, 'All my springs are in Thee'. With that vision in our hearts we need not be afraid to speak of springs of good in men's lives. To say that you can hear the ripple of a spring is not to say you never heard the splash of falling rain. You can honour the water in the well without despising the original and continuous bounty of the skies. And so, with the great overarching heaven in our minds all the time, we can begin our search for the earthly wells.

I. And they need looking for. They are often lost beneath the drift of the years, or choked up by the rubbish that a Philistine world has cast into them. And it is easy to forget that they are there. We see the ground trampled and dust-strewn, and there is little or nothing to suggest that down beneath that unpromising surface there is a spring that might be helping to refresh a tired and thirsty world.

Beneath the barren and trampled surface of humanity we must find the wells of reverence and faith and love that God Himself has sunk in these hearts of ours. Man was made to worship and believe and aspire. God made him so. This Philistine world succeeds in burying deep the springs of the heart's true life. The wells are choked.

II. That is the sad fact on which we have to concentrate our toil. But that involves another fact, bright and inspiring and thrilling—the wells are there. Isaac and his servants worked with a will, with a steady enthusiasm, amidst those piles of stones and heaps of earth. A bystander knowing nothing of the history of these desert spots might well have wondered at the sight of such hopeful toil amid such unpromising surroundings. But they who were doing the work were in possession of one fact that afforded them complete inspiration. They knew that there were springs of water if only they had the energy and patience to come at them.

The essential spirituality of human life is an ultimate fact. When we toil for the souls of men, we are not working on the strength of a speculation. We are not prospecting. Like Isaac of old, we work where our Father Himself has worked before us.

III. 'He digged again the wells of . . . Abraham his Father; . . . and called them after the names by which his father had called them.' Is not that the story of Jesus of Nazareth?

Even as Isaac found in the devastated valley of Gerar the wells of his father Abraham, so did Jesus find in the barren hearts of men the wells of His Father God. They were choked with sins and the cares of the years, but He found them and sounded them, and let into them the light and air of the sky of the Father's mercy, and set the water of life, love and faith and hope, flowing into these poor world-choked hearts.—P. AINSWORTH, *The Pilgrim Church*, p. 157.

REFERENCE.—XXVI. 18.—C. Perren, *Outline Sermons*, p. 135.

LIFE ON GOD'S PLAN

'And Isaac builded an altar there, and called upon the name of the Lord, and pitched his tent there; and there Isaac's servants digged a well.'—GENESIS XXVI. 25.

ISAAC is felt by every Bible reader to be a much less commanding figure than the men who stand on either side of him—his father Abraham and his son Jacob. He had neither the lofty and daring faith of the one, nor the other's passionate instinct of adventure. His qualities were not such as stir the imagination of the world. Passive rather than intense, he spent one of those lives that are largely controlled and arranged by other people. The influence of his friends always tended to be too strong for him; so it was, for example, when the wife he was to marry was selected by his father, and brought home to him by deputy. Hence we are apt to call him tame, torpid, and slow; at all events the too easy victim of over modesty and inertia.

But of course such a character has another side. Isaac, it is true, is unlike Abraham and Jacob; but it is they that are uncommon men, not he. Of the three he exhibits far the closest resemblance to average humanity. You will find a score of Isaacs for every Abraham that emerges. And just for that reason the fact that Isaac was given his place in the great patriarchal succession speaks to us of the truth that God is the God of ordinary people, not less than of those in whom there sleeps the Divine spark of genius or greatness. As some one has said, 'God has a place for the quiet man'. We may have neither distinguished talents nor a distinguished history, but one thing we can do, we can form a link in the chain by which the Divine blessing goes down from one generation to another. . . Pick out the three centres here, where the threads cross, and they are these, the *altar*, the *tent*, the *well*. There we see focussed sharply, and gathered up, the main constituents or impulses which are always to be found in the life of a man after God's own heart; and without being unduly imaginative or fantastic, we may decide that they stand for *religion, home, work*. . . . The man of the tent is the prey of time, and passes; the man of the altar endures for ever. Religion has in it that which is superior to time. . . . Considered as one of the threads which God's hand is weaving into the strand

of life, is not work a pure blessing? Is it not, like Isaac's will, an ever-flowing source of power and refreshment? Does not the will feed both tent and altar.—H. R. Mackintosh, *Life on God's Plan*, p. 1.

COMMON PLACE PEOPLE

'Isaac's servants digged a well.'—Genesis xxvi. 25.

Isaac is the representative of the unimportant but overwhelming majority, and his life and history stood to his descendants, and stand to us, for the glorification of the commonplace.

I. The World's Useful Drudges.—When shall we begin to see the poetry, the beauty, the eternal blessedness of common work; the loyalty, the patriotism, the high Christian service there may be in simply conducting an honest business or filling a commercial situation! Every man who conducts his business with clean hands is helping to bring in universal clean-handedness: every man who fills a situation as it ought to be filled is raising the ideal of service and enriching and beautifying his race. Isaac was not an Empire-builder like Abraham, not a great pathetic heroic figure like Jacob, he was a plain man of affairs. He stuck to his work as a sinker of wells, and for three thousand years men, to whom Abraham was a legend and Jacob a hazy tradition, have drunk of the sweet waters of Beer-sheba, and blessed the memory of the man who digged that well.

II. The Well-digger's Blessing.—And these things, important in themselves, are also parables of higher things. Your business gives you no time for the work you would so dearly like. It is all you can do to keep things straight in your own little world of trade. Never fear; you will supply your neighbour with an honest article at a reasonable price, and finding employment for those who otherwise might starve, you are digging one of father Isaac's wells. When with quaking heart you took that class book and tried to start that little class-meeting you digged a well, and thirsty souls have drunk of it and will bless you evermore. Your little Sunday-school class, your mission-room, is a well, and when this life is over for you, men will think and speak in blessing of the man that digged that well.—F. R. Smith, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxx. p. 118.

References.—XXVI. 29.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxxviii. No. 2238. XXVI.—F. W. Robertson, *Notes on Genesis*, p. 77. XXVII. 1-4.—F. W. Robertson, *Sermons* (4th Series), p. 123. XXVII. 13.—A. G. Mortimer, *The Church's Lessons*, vol. ii. p. 255. E. Cooper, *Fifty-two Family Sermons*, p. 247.

MUSIC TO THE HOUSE OF GOD

(*At a Musical Festival*)

'This is none other than the house of God.'—Genesis xxvii. 17.

I. If we ask what is the true place of music in the Church of God, we can but answer that it has a wondrous power of creating and sustaining emotion and enthusiasm. The danger lies in our confusing music designed and executed for devotional purposes with music designed for other purposes. The devotion of the performer's heart in spiritual penitence or praise must inspire the music of the Church if it is to be for the worship of God.

II. Music like all other gifts has two sides. Use it as God's gift, praise God in it, let it preach to you higher things and it will be one of your best possessions. But do nothing with it except enjoy it, let it end in nothing more lasting than a beautiful feeling and it may be a sensual snare.—Bishop Yeatman-Biggs, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxix., 1904, p. 185.

References.—XXVII. 33.—C. Parsons Reichel, *Sermons*, p. 2. XXVII. 34.—J. B. Lightfoot, *Cambridge Sermons*, p. 3. J. H. Newman, *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, p. 141. J. J. Blunt, *Plain Sermons* (2nd Series), p. 227. J. S. Barrett, *Sermons*, p. 33. Bishop Armstrong, *Parochial Sermons*, p. 1. XXVII. 37.—R. Winterbotham, *Sermons*, p. 118. XXVII. 38.—J. S. Barrett, *Sermons*, p. 33. Bishop Harvey Goodwin, *Parish Sermons* (2nd Series), p. 1. T. Arnold, *Sermons*, vol. iv. p. 133. XXVII.—F. W. Robertson, *Notes on Genesis*, p. 85.

DREAMS

'Jacob's dream.'—Genesis xxviii.

This dream deals with the supernatural, though in one sense all life is supernatural. And what happened to Jacob occurs again and again in your life and mine.

I. Jacob has deceived his father and defrauded his brother: he has fled his home. As he journeyed forward he came to the lonely and rugged hill of Bethel. The darkness overtakes him as he ascends, creeps like a shadowy ghost over him, and then covers with its deep shadow the whole of the mountain from base to summit; and so Jacob is alone in the dark night. Seeking suitable shelter, he takes a stone for his pillow, and, lying down, he is soon fast asleep, a tired, worn man. He dreams, and lo! in his dream the darkness has fled, and the whole air is lit up with supernatural glory, and the mountain-side is busy with supernatural life. The mountain is a great staircase, and ascending and descending upon it appear angel forms; while high up, as on a throne of golden splendour, he seems to see God the great Invisible: and wonderful to tell, he seems to hear a voice, the voice of the Eternal, and the actual words come floating down upon him with an infinite calm. 'I am with thee, and I will keep thee in all places where thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land.'

II. Dreams sometimes are evidences of the possibilities of our character. The dream may show the mental habit of thought, and the subjects which lie, if not nearest, at least somewhere within the heart of man. Dreams may be a warning to us all. A bad dream may be a revelation of our potential badness. It is the liberation of the evil spirit, the demon within a man. Our evil visions may be revelations of what we may be if left entirely to ourselves, and our good visions manifestations of what God means us to be, prophecies of what we might be, if living close to God in prayer.

III. Of course, from an humanistic point of view, the dream of Jacob gives us a glimpse into his char-

acter. He was far from being a perfect man, yet his dreams reveal to us that his failings were not of the essence of his life. His vision, too, was a new revelation to Jacob. It had entered the soul of Jacob and touched chords in his life which never more could be silent. This crisis marked a development in Jacob's character. Hitherto Jacob, though naturally spiritual, had been proudly self-reliant: he had complete faith in his own resources, cleverness, and strength; felt he was quite a match for most men, a match for life. He wanted to make himself, was going to be his own creator, and so in character he was at heart weak. A man who relies entirely upon himself is not at heart a strong man. Man's strength comes in the strength of his weakness. The moment a man submits his will to the Almighty he becomes a strong man, because he becomes part of God's will. The desert experience convinced Jacob of his need. It revealed to him something of his own nothingness and weakness and loneliness, and God's Almightiness and Strength and so he rises from his pillow of stone a stronger and wiser because a humbler man, and sets up his pillar of consecration while he commits the keeping of his ways to God, the great Guide and great Friend.—M. Gardner, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxxvi. p. 268.

References.—XXVIII.—F. W. Robertson, *Notes on Genesis*, p. 101. XXVIII. 10-13.—T. Sadler, *Sunday Thoughts*, p. 14. H. W. Beecher, *Sermons*, 1870, p. 643. XXVIII. 10-17.—F. D. Maurice, *The Patriarchs and Lawgivers of the Old Testament*, p. 100.

JACOB AT BETHEL

Genesis xxviii. 10-22.

Dean Stanley tells us a story of a girl whose grandfather, not believing in the existence of God, had written above his bed, 'God is nowhere'. But the child was only learning to read. Words of more than one syllable were yet beyond her, so she spelled out in her own way what her grandfather had written, and it read for her 'God is now here'. It was the great lesson that Jacob learned at Bethel.

References.—XXVIII. 10-22.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—Genesis*, p. 206. C. Perren, *Outline Sermons*, p. 257. S. A. Brooke, *Sermons* (2nd Series), pp. 231, 249. XXVIII. 11-16.—S. A. Tipple, *Echoes of Spoken Words*, p. 201.

JACOB'S DREAM

'And he dreamed, and behold a ladder set upon the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven: and behold the angels of God ascending and descending on it.'—Genesis xxviii. 12.

The vision of Jacob's ladder is God's response to two universal longings of the human heart—a craving for a Revelation, and a craving for an Incarnation.

I. A Craving for a Revelation.—'Revelation is a necessity of our thinking mind, a need of our moral nature.' As a child is born with faculties of speech, yet speech lies dormant in the breast of the child until called into exercise by the words which he hears around him, so man was created to hold communion with God, but God must speak to man before man can speak to Him. God has spoken! Jacob's seed was the elected channel of the Divine communication. The 'angels of God' ascended and descended upon Israel. The vision was a prediction. Hosea says, 'God spake with us at Bethel'. But Divine revelation was the possession of one nation in order that from thence it might become the possession of all mankind. In 'thee and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed'. As the light of heaven is adapted to every eye, and the air we breathe to every lung, so the Word of God is adapted to the mental and moral constitution of every child of the human race.

II. A Craving for an Incarnation.—'Let not God speak with us, lest we die,' is the voice not only of Israel but of humanity. No ancient religion is without the presentiment of an incarnation. The popular idea of Jacob's ladder is false. The vision was that of a staircase of rock. The Rock of Israel was to be no inaccessible crag, but a staircase, a means of communication between earth and heaven. This vision was the grand prefiguration of the coming Mediator who was to bridge the chasm between a holy God and sinful man. In the 'fullness of time' Christ came. The ultimate end of the Incarnation was atonement. 'Without shedding of blood is no remission.' The angels of God cannot ascend and descend upon the body of which Christ is the Head unless sin be removed. 'He put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.' Yet something more is needed for communion between God and man. Salvation is not merely pardon of sin—it is renewal—it is restoration—it is a new birth—a communication of a Divine life—a new nature—a new power.

III. The same Lord Who, on the Day of Pentecost, gave some Apostles and some Prophets and some Pastors and Teachers, has still Gifts for Men.

(*a*) *Every minister of Christ, every servant of the Cross, must be 'endued with power from on high'* if he is to have any real success. 'Without Me ye can do nothing.' How did the Apostles receive the baptism of the Holy Ghost? It was vouchsafed in answer to prayer. 'Ask and ye shall receive.' Fervent, persevering prayer is the secret of holiness; it is also the secret of power and the prelude of victory. King Alfred has left a memorable passage in which he sets forth the ideas with which he assumed the charge of his distracted realm. He says it is above all things necessary for a king that he hath in his kingdom prayer-men, army-men, workmen. The King of kings needs these three classes of men in every age, and never more than now, and it is in proportion as we, the clergy, and you, the laity, are men of prayer we shall be men of war, bold in our assaults on the strongholds of Satan and the fortresses of sin, and also at the same time workmen needing not to be ashamed as we build up the temple of the living God.

(*b*) *The vision at Bethel is full of encouragement.*—Every vision of God, every opened heaven, first humbles and then strengthens, from the vision of Jacob's ladder, with the accompanying words, 'I will

never leave thee,' to that revelation vouchsafed to the aged St. John in the Isle of Patmos, so dear to hearts fearful of falling into heresy and sin, in which the Apostle saw the stars, the angels of the churches, held and kept in the strong right hand of the glorified Lord. The heavens are opened to-day! The gift of Pentecost has never been recalled! The illuminating light of the Spirit is not dim; His fires of love are not chilled; the Sacraments are as valid to-day as when administered by apostolic hands; the Gospel is still the 'power of God unto salvation'. The final victory lies with the Cross of Christ.

THE RETURN OF THE ANGELS

'And he dreamed, and behold a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven: and behold the angels of God ascending and descending on it.'—GENESIS XXVIII. 12.

'And Jacob went on his way, and the angels of God met him.'
GENESIS XXXII. 1.

WELLNIGH twenty years had passed away since Jacob had had his vision at Bethel. They had been years of hard and constant labour; they had been years of remarkable prosperity. No longer was Jacob an empty-handed fugitive, leaving his home for an uncertain future. God had been with him, and had advanced him wonderfully, and had blessed him in his basket and his store. And now he was a rich and prosperous man, master of herds and flocks innumerable, and with a host of servants at his call, ready to further him in every venture. There are men who prosper and who pay for prospering by never seeing the angels any more. They win their fortune, but they lose their vision, and so are they poorer than at one-and-twenty. But Jacob, for all his cunning shrewdness, was not the man to lose his hold on God; he had a heart that thirsted after God even in his most worldly and successful days. Now he was on his way home to Canaan, and as he journeyed the angels of God met him. This was the second time, for—twenty years before—had they not flashed upon his sight at Bethel? And what I want to do to-night is this, I want to take these two angelic visits, and to show you how they differed from one another, and how these differences have their meanings still.

I. First, then, the former angels were seen among the hills; but the latter upon the trodden highway.

We can readily picture the scenery at Bethel, where Jacob saw the ladder to the heavens. It was a place of wild and rugged grandeur, touched with the mystery of highland solitudes. At home, in the pasture-land of rich Beer-sheba, his eye had looked out upon the rolling downs. There was nothing sublime or awful at Beer-sheba; it was a sweet and satisfying prospect. But here it was different; here there were rugged cliffs, and rock up-piled on rock in wild confusion; and it was here among the hills of Bethel that Jacob had his first vision of the angels. It was a resting-place of highland grandeur, and the spirit of Jacob was uplifted by it. He was thrilled with the high sense of the sublime, as he lay down amid the loneliness of nature. But it was not amid a grandeur such as that that he had his vision when twenty years were gone—he went on his way and the angels of God met him. He was no longer a romantic youth; he was a conventional and unromantic wayfarer. And the road was familiar, and it was hard and dusty, and there was none of the mystery of Bethel here. And yet the angels who had shone at Bethel, in the delicious hour of freedom and of youth, came back again on to the common road, where feet were plodding along wearily.

Now it seems to me that, if we are living wisely, we ought all to have an experience like Jacob. If we have had our hour at Bethel once, we ought also to have our Mahanaim. The man who climbs may have his glimpse of heaven; but so has the man who simply pushes on. And that is the test and triumph of religion, not that it irradiates golden moments, but that it comes, with music and with ministry, into the dusty highroad of to-day. We all grow weary of the routine sometimes. We are tempted to break away and take our liberty. But it was not when Jacob broke into his liberty that the angels of God met with him again. It was when Jacob went upon his way, and quietly and doggedly pushed on, and took the homeward road and did his duty, although seductive voices might be calling.

II. Again, the former vision came in solitude, but the latter vision in society. That is another difference to be noted between Bethel and Mahanaim. At Bethel Jacob was utterly alone. For the first time in his life he was alone. He was an exile now from the old tent where he had passed the happy days of boyhood. And at that very hour (for it was sundown) his brother Esau would be wending homeward, and his aged father would be waiting him, and his mother would be busy in the tent. It is such memories that make us lonely. It was such memories that made Jacob lonely. He saw his home again, and heard its voices; and it was night, and round him were the hills. And it was then, in such an hour of solitude, when he might cry and there was none to answer, that Jacob had his vision of the angels. Do you see the difference at Mahanaim? Jacob was not solitary now. His wife was there; his family was there; his servants and his shepherds were about him. And the road was noisy with the stir of life—shouting of drover and lowing of the herd—and now there was a snatch of song, and now the laughter of his merry children. At Bethel there was utter solitude; at Mahanaim was society. At Bethel there was none to answer; at Mahanaim there were happy voices. And the point to note is that the angels who flashed upon the solitude at Bethel came back again amid that intercourse.

III. There is another difference, perhaps the most significant of all. At Bethel the angels were on a shining staircase; at Mahanaim they were armed for war.

And so we learn the old and precious lesson that God reveals Himself just as we need Him. He never gives us what we shall want to-morrow; He gives us

richly what we need to-day. Just as water, poured into twenty goblets, will take the different shape of every goblet, so the grace of God poured into twenty days, will fill the different need of every day.—G. H. Morrison, *The Return of the Angels*, p. 1.

NEARER, MY GOD, TO THEE

'And he dreamed, and behold a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven.'—Genesis xxviii. 12.

The Bible asks us to believe that God did occasionally reveal Himself through the vehicle of dreams. Of course it does not follow from this that God must continue for an indefinite period of time such a method of communication with the spirit of man. Many of the dreams recorded in the Scriptures were vouchsafed to individuals outside the covenant made with Israel, and with regard to the rest it may be remarked that they belong to a very early age when the knowledge of God was scanty and ill-defined.

I. While some of the Bible dreams sound the note of warning, others, including Jacob's at Bethel, are harbingers of blessing. An exile from home, he was not an exile from heaven; for in his sleep he saw the world that is not seen.

II. Hazlitt said: 'In Jacob's day there was a ladder between heaven and earth, but now the heavens have gone further off, and become astronomical'. But that is only true in the minds of those who have misunderstood the nature of God. There is no dethronement of man by any theory of astronomy, for he is neither less nor more man than he was before; he is still the creature of God's love.—W. Taylor, *Twelve Favourite Hymns*, p. 46.

JACOB'S LADDER

Jacob's ladder, set up on earth, and reaching to heaven; what does it typify or represent but that new way of approach to God which is opened to us in Jesus Christ?

I. The fact that it is Jacob's ladder, that so early as his time God gave notice of a Mediator increases our reverence and admiration for His goodness. It shows how far back in God's counsels the great plan of man's redemption was prepared.

II. Like Jacob we sometimes in our judgment may light upon a solitary place. We must draw near to God, trusting to nothing but the merits and intercession of His dear son. 'He is the way.'

III. The particular promise that God made to Jacob. He renewed the covenant that He had made with Abraham, and promised that from him should spring the Messiah.

IV. The effect of this remarkable dream on Jacob. When he awakened his soul was filled with awe. It were well if something of this reverent spirit were to be found among worshippers.—R. D. B. Rawnsley, *Village Sermons*, Series iii. p. 53.

References.—XXVIII. 12.—J. W. Bardsley, *Many Mansions*, p. 20. F. Corbett, *The Preacher's Year*, p. 149. Bishop Woodford, *Occasional Sermons*, p. 242. J. E. Vaux, *Sermon Notes* (2nd Series), p. 66. XXVIII. 13.—G. Matheson, *The Scottish Review*, vol. iii. p. 49. XXVIII. 15.—H. Melvill, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 1921. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxvii. No. 1630. XXVIII. 16.—J. B. Lightfoot, *Cambridge Sermons*, p. 300. J. Aspinall, *Parish Sermons* (1st Series), p. 269. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. vii. No. 401.

JACOB AT BETHEL

'This is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven.'—Genesis xxviii. 17.

Jacob had his Bethel, and it came to him just at the moment when we should least have expected it, just at the time when he was smarting under the sense of his own sin, and loneliness, and outlawry. The King of Love Himself appears to him, and says: 'I will go with thee wherever thou goest'. Man's extremity is God's opportunity.

I. What makes our Bethel? Is it not the sense of God's nearness to us and our need of Him? The churches would all be full if the people felt their need of God, for this is God's house, and we want it to be the gate of heaven. Now, and here in God's house, we may look up into heaven and see there our Saviour, Who loves us with an everlasting love, and round about Him those whom we have 'loved and lost awhile'.

II. Before we leave Jacob, let us look at his beautiful prayer to God, in which he vows a vow of obedience. This is the use of all Bethels—that as God speaks to us we may make our vows back to Him. Church and churchgoing will do us no good unless we hear God speaking to us in the reading of His Word, and in the preaching, and in the prayers, and in the music, and unless, having heard God's Voice, we do our part and answer back and make our vows that God shall be our God. Will you do this, will you rejoice before God with this blessed vow of Jacob's, 'The Lord shall be my God'? Oh, it will help you so all through your life. This is the house of God; we desire that it should be the gate of heaven. You see sometimes little children pointing upwards, but the Book says that heaven is where God is, and if God is here then heaven has begun upon earth. If God is here, then His love is with us, and we shall grow more loving here and now.

References.—XXVIII. 17.—J. Vaughan, *Fifty Sermons*, (9th Series), p. 81. XXVIII. 19.—J. Eames, *Sermons to Boys and Girls*, p. 155. XXVIII. 20-22.—H. Allon, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxv. p. 60.

'Of all that Thou shalt give me, I will surely give the tenth unto Thee.'—Genesis xxviii. 22.

Jacob's vow has been the preacher's theme in every age, yet its teaching for the Christian Church has never been more greatly needed than it is to-day. Permit me, therefore, to put before you a few thoughts on giving to God as suggested by our text.

I. How we can Give to God.—God, who giveth to all men liberally and upbraideth not, requires us to give to Him in return.

(*a*) *We give to Him when we give to those whom He has left, or made, poor in worldly substance.*—The widow, fatherless, unfortunate, incapable, even

those who by sin and prodigality have brought themselves to want. As the father leaves little patches in his garden, and says to his children, 'I leave *you* to cultivate these; those are *your* little gardens,' so does our Heavenly Father leave, in those poor and needy ones, patches in His great garden for us to dress and keep; and he that 'giveth to the poor lendeth to the Lord'.

(*b*) *We give to him when we promote the great purposes which He has at heart.*—An earnest man is so bound up with his purposes and work that they are, as it were, but a larger self. We speak of men 'embarking' in enterprises—going into them as the pilot into his ship. The wind that wafts the ship on carries *him* upon his way. Christ is steering the ship of this world's destinies and those of individual souls to the shore of safety and purity and bliss, and to help to fill its sails is to waft on Christ Himself on His triumphal way. Give to promote Christ's cause on the earth, and you are giving to God.

II. The Motive Power.—All motive power which constrains men to give to God is from God Himself.

1. *A recognition of dependence upon God.*—'All that *Thou* shalt give me.' 'What hast thou that thou hast not received?' Tenants of God, we owe Him our rent of cheerful giving.

2. *Gratitude to God.*—'All that Thou shalt give me.' How generous is that 'all'. 'We are always giving, giving,' said one. 'Not quite that,' was the reply, 'but we are always getting, getting.' He gives life and friends; He gave His Son; He giveth the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him. 'What shall I render unto the Lord for all His benefits?'

3. *Imitation of God.*—As He gives let *us* give. Be the children of your Father, Who maketh His sun to shine and His rain to fall on the just and unjust.

4. *Response to God.*—'Of all that Thou shalt give I shall give.' God's giving to us is the seed which He sows in our hearts and lives, to bring forth from them the fair harvest of kindliness, beneficence, helpfulness. What could He do for His vineyard that He has not done? Surely a 'tenth' is but a small return for such bountiful sowing.

III. Practical Rules for Giving.— 1. *Seize special times of blessing for devising liberal things for God.*—It was just after Jacob had his wonderful and comforting vision that he made this vow. As the swift current of the stream tells of the height of the mountains in which it took its rise, so if we seize the time of signal blessing from God for opening a fresh spring of devotedness and beneficence, its bountiful and eager flow will be preserved far into the tame plains of our ordinary life.

2. *Lay your plans and adapt your expenditure for giving.*—'I shall surely give.' Out of my abundance, if I have it; out of my poverty, if that is my lot. As the ancient Greeks spilt a little wine from the cup before tasting it, as a libation to the gods, so let us provide *first* for God. The first-fruits. I may want pictures, books, delicacies, fine clothes, travel, sight-seeing, even ordinary comfort, but 'I shall surely give'. If you have no *other* luxury, make sure of the luxury of doing good.

3. *Bring system to your aid in giving.*—Not to check your generous impulses; but still, as the groundwork, there should be *system*. System as the measure, which, after filling, the heart is free to shake and press together, and make to run over.

RACHEL THE PLACID

GENESIS XXIX.

You will meet her type continually in the modern world. Do you not know women who seem to go through life easily?

I. When Rachel is keeping her father's sheep at the Well of Haran she sees advancing a young man. It is her cousin Jacob. He has come as a fugitive, flying from his brother's vengeance. Jacob breaks into the red heat of love. He is dazzled by Rachel's beauty. He makes an offer to Laban for the hand of his younger daughter. He promises to serve him for seven years, and the offer is accepted. The seven years are past, and the happy day is coming. But there are two dissentients to the general joy. The one is Laban, the other is Leah. She has cherished for Jacob a secret and passionate love. The solemn act is completed. What is that face which emerges from the veil. It is not Rachel; it is Leah.

II. We can in a measure explain Jacob's acquiescence. But Rachel—it is her placidness that surprises us. Why does she not protest? Her placidness was appropriate, for two reasons.

(*a*) The artist is describing a race and time wherein everything that happens is received as an act of Divine will.

(*b*) There was something about this young woman's religion which would make her not wholly averse to polygamy. She was not altogether emancipated from the belief that in addition to the Almighty God of heaven there were certain subordinate deities allowed to carry out His will on earth. Specially in the regions of the home she sought a sphere for these. So Rachel accepted her ill fortune with a good grace—almost with graciousness.—G. MATHESON, *Representative Women of the Bible*, p. 105.

REFERENCES.—XXIX.—F. W. Robertson, *Notes on Genesis*, p. 110. XXX. 1; 48-50.—F. W. Robertson, *Notes on Genesis*, p. 113. XXX. 27.—H. J. Wilmot-Buxton, *Common Life Religion*, p. 223. XXXI. 3-5.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxvii. No. 1630. XXXI. 13.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxi. No. 1267. XXX. 48-50.—F. W. Robertson, *Notes on Genesis*, p. 113.

JACOB THE ASPIRING

'The angels of God met him.'—GENESIS XXXII. 1.

WE are accustomed to think of Jacob as a character of lights and shadows mingling without reason.

I. As commonly understood, the portrait of this man does present an inconsistency. This apparently bad man has a beautiful dream, so beautiful that it has become immortal. What the best men of the past had not seen this fraudulent youth beholds.

II. Why did the artist give such a vision to such a man? The previous life of Jacob had not been that prosaic thing which the popular view would have us believe. This dream of the night was in the first instance a dream of the morning, and the vision which Jacob saw in the desert was the vision which had followed him amid the haunts of men. Jacob, then, appears from the very outset as a mentally aspiring man. He wanted to be the cleric of the family, the ecclesiastic of the clan.

III. But in Jacob's Bethel dream there is a penal as well as a pleasurable element. He pronounced the spot of the vision to be a 'dreadful place'. The dream had a retributive as well as a rewarding function. To be a Churchman in those days was to be a power; it was to wield an influence far beyond the strength of the secular arm. Jacob felt what many a young man now feels—the social uplifting involved in the clerical office. This was the bane of his dream, and this was the feeling which the vision reproved.

IV. The effect of Jacob's dream in one word was 'Peniel'. He never would have wrestled at Peniel if he had dreamed at Bethel! This dream gave him a conscience. It told him that to be an angel of God was a very serious thing.

V. There is a curious suggestion in the picture of this conflicting period of Jacob's life. The angel with whom he is struggling is represented as saying 'Let me go! for the day breaketh'. Jacob found it easier to be good by night than by day. But his greatest glory is reserved for his hour of greatest solitude—the hour of death. There the angel of the struggle appears once more. He is still the angel of ministration, but he is no longer a mere helper to Jacob—he is inciting Jacob to bless others. The dying man becomes for the first time the universal benefactor.—G. Matheson, *Representative Men of the Bible*, p. 152.

THE SEASON FOR DIVINE HELP

'Jacob went on his way, and the angels of God met him.'—Genesis xxxii. 1.

I. The important word here is the word 'met'. It is distinctly implied that no supernatural help came to Jacob at the beginning. He went out on his own way and on the strength of his own resources; it was only in the middle of his journey that he encountered the angels of God. And I believe this is typical of the life of every man. We are most of us under a mistake on this point. We often see young people waiting for a special call to some mission—for a manifest intervention of God that says, 'This is the way; walk ye in it'. The special call does not come at the outset; they must start without it. There is a great difference between not having a special call to go and having a special call not to go. The latter case is a very common one, and it should certainly be taken as a prohibition. Many a man has a family dependent on him for bread. Many a woman has an aged mother to nurse. Many a youth has an ancestral taint of delicacy which incapacitates for active service. All these hear a voice which says, 'Do not work today in my vineyard'. Sometimes a man has no prohibition, but simply an inability to see the full length of the way. In extreme youth I was offered in a crowded town an appointment which involved weekly preaching at two services. I had only twelve sermons, and I did not see where the thirteenth was to come from. I was tempted to decline. But I asked myself the question, 'Are you adequate to the twelve?' and I answered 'yes'. Then I said to myself: 'God's presence will not reveal itself till your own power is exhausted. He has given you twelve talents to begin with. Do not bury them, do not lay them up in a napkin; go in your own strength as far as you can; and on the way He will meet you and light your torch anew.' The experience was abundantly realized. If there is a multitude to be fed in the wilderness, it is no proof of your disqualification that you have only five loaves. You have five; and that is your call to a beginning. You have probably material for ten people. Minister to the ten! Do not let the eleventh frighten you beforehand! Take each case as it comes! Break the bread as far as it will go! Refuse to paralyse yourself by looking forward! Keep the eleventh man in abeyance until you have come up to him; and then the angels will meet you with their twelve baskets, and the crowd will greet you with their blessings, and the limit will expand into an overflow.—G. Matheson, *Messages of Hope*, p. 27.

ST. MICHAEL AND ALL ANGELS

'The angels of God.'—Genesis xxxii. 1.

I. All the Company of Heaven.—It is not the custom in this day to think as much about this unseen holy existence as men did in days that are gone. It is impossible for us to read the Holy Scriptures without constantly observing that those who lived in the days of the writers of these sacred books very fully believed in the existence near about them of endless holy beings belonging to God's unseen kingdom, holy souls serving God either in worship or in ministration to the sons of men. In the book of Genesis we read of Jacob and the angels. Passing on to a later stage we read of the ministration by Angels in the times of the great prophets Elijah and Elisha, and, not to multiply instances, we can readily recall the words of the Hebrew Psalmist when he speaks of the angel of God tarrying round about those of the sons of men who fear God. Passing to the New Testament, we can think of the appearance of angels to minister to One no less great than the Son of Man at the end of His temptation, to minister to Him in the Garden of Gethsemane when His mind was overwrought with the greatness of the thoughts which pressed upon Him then; and we read of angels, too, appearing on the Resurrection day with their message of explanation of the things which the faithful Disciples saw. But in our own day we do not perhaps realize quite so fully that there is ever about us, above us, this great realm of unseen beings under the government of God, pure and holy souls, servants of the same God

Whom we serve, and it may be that perhaps in thinking too seldom of them we miss an uplifting thought that we might otherwise have to help us in our religious life. May we not endeavour, acting upon the suggestion which comes to us at this time through the occurrence of Michaelmas Day, the feast of St. Michael and all Angels, to see whether we cannot put some more thought about the great realm unseen into our minds?

II. Joy amongst the Angels.—Not only may we in our times of worship have our thoughts uplifted and imaginations warmed, our conception extended, by thinking of all the inhabitants of this great unseen world over which our God rules, but we can go out from our worship into the world of our daily duties in which we meet as men and women. We know well, as Christian men and women held down by their human infirmities, by the sins which they are continually committing, we can go out with the thought that not only may we in church worship be linked with the holy angels of God, but we can go out with the thought that these angels are with us during the life we live day by day, taking cognizance of all the efforts we make to win other souls to God, and we go out with the assurance that there is joy in the presence of these angels of God when through the effort of ourselves or through the effort of any other believer in the Lord one sinner only repenteth. Let us be encouraged at this time by the thought of the greatness of the realm to which we belong. God, in calling us into His service and making us His sons, has not made us members of a small concern, not united us into a tiny family, but has given us a great birthright, made us members of an immense kingdom. We profess in our creed our belief in Him as 'Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible,' and as members of that great kingdom, as members of that immense family over which God rules and shows His love, let us go forward inspirited and ennobled, determined that, so far as our influence reaches, other souls shall get to know the greatness of this inheritance which has become ours. So may we be strengthened to be more happy and joyful in our own lives, more useful to those who are about us in the world, and thereby bring more honour, praise, and glory to our God.

JACOB, A PRINCE WITH GOD

GENESIS XXXII. 1-32.

JACOB'S name was changed to Israel. Why are the names of men changed? Sometimes it is just the fashion of the times; sometimes it is for safety in time of peril, as when John Knox signed himself John Sinclair (his mother's name); but in the Bible change of name indicates change of character, or a new and true appreciation of what a man really is. Abram becomes Abraham, Simon becomes Peter, Saul becomes Paul. In the clear light of heaven there is to be a new name given to every one that overcometh.

REFERENCES.—XXXII. 1.—R. W. Winterbotham, *Sermons*, p. 461. XXXII. 1-2.—A. Maclaren, *Christ in the Heart*, p. 195. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxvi. No. 1544. A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—Genesis*, p. 214. XXXII. 7, 11, 24, 28.—J. Clifford, *Daily Strength for Daily Living*, p. 39. XXXII. 9, 12.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—Genesis*, p. 222. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. lii. No. 3010.

REMEMBRANCE OF PAST MERCIES

'I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth, which Thou hast shewed unto Thy servant.'—GENESIS XXXII. 10.

JACOB'S distinguishing grace . . . was a habit of affectionate musing upon God's providences towards him in times past, and of overflowing thankfulness for them. Not that he had not other graces also, but this seems to have been his distinguishing grace. All good men have in their measure all graces; for He, by whom they have any, does not give one apart from the whole: He gives the root, and the root puts forth branches. But since time, and circumstances, and their own use of the gift, and their own disposition and character, have much influence on the mode of its manifestation, so it happens, that each good man has his own distinguishing grace, apart from the rest, his own particular hue and fragrance and fashion, as a flower may have. As, then, there are numberless flowers on the earth, all of them flowers, and so far like each other; and all springing from the same earth, and nourished by the same air and dew, and none without beauty; and yet some are more beautiful than others; and of those which are beautiful, some excel in colour and others in sweetness, and others in form; and then, again, those which are sweet have such perfect sweetness, yet so distinct, that we do not know how to compare them together, or to say which is the sweeter; so is it with souls filled and nurtured by God's secret grace—J. H. NEWMAN.

REFERENCES.—XXXII. 10.—J. Baldwin Brown, *Aids to the Development of the Divine Life*, No. vii. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxx. No. 1787. XXXII. 11, 12.—*Ibid.* vol. xlix. No. 2817. XXXII. 12.—*Ibid.* vol. xxxiii. No. 1938; *ibid. Evening by Evening*, p. 109. J. Vaughan, *Fifty Sermons*, 1874, p. 235.

THE NAME OF GOD

'And Jacob was left alone; and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day. . . . And Jacob asked him, and said, Tell me, I pray thee, thy name.'—GENESIS XXXII. 24 and 29.

AMONG simple and primitive folk people are named after what they are, and therefore to tell their name is to tell their nature. Thomas means a twin, Peter means a rock, and in old days, or among primitive tribes in our own day, a man would not be called Thomas unless he were a twin, nor Peter unless there were something about him, or the circumstances of his birth, reminding of a rock. So are the names of God in the Old Testament. They are the revelations of His nature, or aspects of His character. 'God spake unto Moses, and said unto him, I am the Lord: And I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, by the name of God Almighty, but by My name Jehovah was I not known unto them.' Thus there comes to Moses a deeper insight into the Divine

nature than was attained by his forefathers. To them God was known only as power, God Almighty; to Moses He becomes known as the Eternal Unity, the Supreme One. Once more—and this, surely, is the most beautiful of all the names revealed to those men of olden time—'And the Lord descended in the cloud' . . . 'and proclaimed the name of the Lord. And the Lord passed by before him and proclaimed, The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth.'

I. To us as much as to any Patriarch or Prophet, both to us and to our children as much as to the men who lived three thousand years ago, there is nothing in all the world and in all our life so important as the name of God. In every supreme crisis of our lot, when in the presence of wrong, or of shipwreck, or grief, or misfortune, or death, when we feel our littleness and weakness amid the great forces which move the world, the one thing we need to know is the name or character of God. If His name be Father and His heart eternal kindness, then there is light in the darkness, however dark it be.

II. The Story of Jacob's Midnight Wrestling.—Jacob had travelled a long way since that dark day of the cheated birthright and the stolen blessing. He had travelled a long way since the dream of the angels on the ladder and the sound of God's voice above. His heart had been softened and ripened by the experiences of life, by Rachel and by the children; and he had grown rich in something more than in flocks and herds, in camels and in goats, in friendships, in affections, in the cherished treasures of the heart; and the man was changed, deepened in insight and in character; and here, in this matter, sees he is face to face with the consequences of the sin of his youth. To-morrow perhaps the pitiless vengeance of the desert chieftain may fall not only on him, but on all whom he loves. The sense of security and comfort fell away from Jacob, as once and again it falls from you and from me. His life was stripped bare by his own conscience, and in that hour of suspense and of terror, when the evil of his own deed seemed coming back to judgment, in that hour of midnight silence and solitude, he felt the unseen presence with him which is the only stay of man in his extremity and in his agony. He cried, Tell me, I pray Thee, thy name. Tell me, thou unseen visitor to my soul. Art thou mercy or art thou judgment? Art thou love or fear. Art thou truly my God and my safety, or dost thou disregard my cry and look down unmoved as these stars in the midnight sky while I am delivered to the fate I have deserved.

III. There are Secret Wrestlings of the Soul which can only be told in Parable.—The anguish of them refuses the poor interpretation of our common speech. So the wrestling of Jacob by the ford Jabbok is pictured to us. 'There wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day.' It is not possible to come out of such a struggle without some change of character, some mark or scar which shall remain with us all our earthly days, and so we read and interpret the meaning of that touch of the unseen visitor which made Jacob from that day forward halt upon his thigh.

IV. It is not to the Wise and Learned only or chiefly, it is not to the reason and intellect that God oftenest tells the secret of His name. It is for those who wrestle and strive with Him, those who struggle and pray, for light and beauty and the presence divine; to those stricken with their own sins and sorrows, or the sins and sorrow of the world, or they who are bewildered with the evidence of their own ill-doing, or pity for the ill-doing of others, who cry out to Him in their loneliness, 'Tell me, I pray Thee, Thy name'. And these it is who all their life afterward can catch amid the disasters and the distresses of life, amid the ruin of hopes and the separations of love, the music of a finer harmony, the music of the everlasting chime. These it is who can behold, not indeed unmoved, but confident in a righteous purpose and a final recompense, who can behold in faith the catastrophes of the human lot which make up so much of human history.

References.—XXXII. 24.—Bishop Boyd Carpenter, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 608. Archbishop Magee, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 1708. XXXII. 24, 26, 30.—J. T. Bramston, *Fratribus*, p. 58. XXXII. 32.—D. Wilton Jenkins, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. — p. 170.

WRESTLING WITH GOD

'I will not let thee go, except thou bless me.'—Genesis xxxii. 26.

This passage has been for ages, not only the *locus classicus* but also the chief resources of inspiration, for persevering and persistent prayer. Many of us can remember to what an extent the old divines loved to linger with extraordinary affection upon the incident of Jacob at Penuel, and how eloquently they expounded the lesson of every detail of the narrative.

I. Now there is a certain mastery that every man has to acquire and win if he is to rise to the height of his being and attain his full development. He will have to be master of his circumstances and prove master of his fate, but more especially he will have to master himself, and not only so, but the highest spiritual blessings are reserved only for those who do obtain the victory over self, and who by means of conflict gain supremacy over their lower nature. In the respect in which God envelopes and encircles our lives and is in all our environment and has permitted our limitations and our disabilities, there is no reason why any man who has to fight against great odds should not suppose that he is wrestling with God, and only realize the higher blessings as he wins them and wrests them from his opponent. In this sense a man prevails with God.

II. Further, this self-mastery is a condition of our mastery and effective influence over others. Our impression is that we have more difficulty with regard to other wills and other men's actions. But, after all, the surest key to the hearts of other men is to know how to find our way to our own darker recesses of being.

III. This triumph is one of prayer and faith. In Hosea we read that 'he had power over the angel and prevailed, he wept and made supplication to him' (XII. 4). This wrestling was a distinct triumph of prayer and prayer's supreme effort. The incident is that of the clashing of wills, and it ended, as all true prayer does, in the complete surrender to the Divine and the cheerful acceptance of God's purpose and plan. —J. G. JAMES, *Problems of Prayer*, p. 193.

REFERENCES.—XXXII. 26.—J. T. Bramston, *Sermons to Boys*, p. 66. W. H. Aitken, *Mission Sermons* (3rd Series), p. 38. F. W. Farrar, *The Fall of Man*, p. 236. XXXII. 28-29.—F. W. Robertson, *Sermons* (1st Series), p. 36. XXXII. 28.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. lii. No. 2978; *ibid.*, vol. xlii. No. 2486. XXXII. 29.—Bishop Thorold, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxi. p. 145.

THE DEFEAT UNDER SIN

'And as he passed over Penuel the sun rose upon him, and he halted upon his thigh.'—GENESIS XXXII. 31.

THE battle had been severe, mysterious, life-long. From that battle Jacob came out victorious—decidedly and completely victorious. Nevertheless, his own thigh was put out of joint by the power which he was defeating. And long after he was doomed to feel the loss and the damage which he had there sustained. 'The sun rose' upon Jacob; but still 'he halted upon his thigh'.

In the great conflict with sin the issue is quite safe at last to all those who engage in it with an honest purpose and a true heart. Still, none come off without many a scar. You may 'bruise the head' of the serpent which is in you; but it will not be till that serpent has 'bruised your heel'. You may wrestle and prevail; but there will be touches of the enemy which will leave their long and bitter memories. Reverses, disasters, defeats, there will be all along in the spiritual warfare, even to the very gate of heaven. The way to heaven is made up of falling down and rising up again. The battle is no steady, onward fight; but rallies and retreats—retreats and rallies.

I. Reasons for Defeat.—Let us endeavor to see the reasons of these defeats under sin, which recur, again and again, in a regenerate man. Perhaps many of us are not sufficiently alive to the truth that the old sin of the character continues, and continues with unabated force, in the heart of a child of God.

(*a*) *Ingenuity of the enemy.*—Sometimes, by an ingenious stratagem of the enemy, an entirely new temptation, or an old temptation in a perfectly new form, suddenly presents itself. You had been looking for danger on the one side, when at once it rises up before you on the other. Had you only been looking for it in that direction it would have been nothing. It is its unexpectedness which gives it its influence and its success.

(*b*) *A reduction of grace.*—All sin in a believer must arise from the reduction of grace. And whence that reduction of grace? From grieving the Holy Ghost. And whence the grieving of the Holy Ghost? An omission of something or other;—prayer, the means of grace, some safeguard. And whence that omission? Carelessness. And whence that carelessness? Pride, always pride; self-confidence, self-exaltation.

(*c*) *Empty places.*—Another secret in your failures lies in empty places. You can never simply expel a sin, you must introduce the opposite to the sin, and so occupy the ground. You can do nothing by a vacuum. Therefore it is that you are overcome. You must fill the heart with good; then there will not be room for the sin.

II. Defeat as Training.—Yet defeat is part of your training. It may be converted into a positive good to your soul. God can and will overrule guilt to gain. Let me see how.

(*a*) *Sorrow for sin.*—There is no sorrow for sin compared to the sorrow after a fall. It is not the sins which we did before the grace of God, but the sins after we have tasted peace, which make the bitterness of repentance. All the great recorded sorrows for sins are sorrows after falls. Therefore God has allowed this defeat to teach you repentance.

(*b*) *Humbling required.*—Depend upon it, you wanted humbling. God saw that you would never be what you wished to be,—that you would never be what He wanted you to be,—that you would never do what He wanted you to do for him,—till you were humbled. He saw that nothing would humble you but sin. Other things had been tried and had failed. Therefore, God, as He is wont, took up His severest method, and let you fall, to humble you.

(*c*) *And punishment.*—Only go lower, consent to humiliation, accept that sin as a punishment. Yield yourself to the penitential feeling which is stealing over you. And thank God that He still loves you well enough to give you that miserable sense of sin, and shame, and nothingness.

(*d*) *Restoration.*—Fourthly, get up from your fall as quickly as you can; the danger does not lie in the depth of a fall, but in the length of the time that we lie fallen. The deepest water will not drown us if we do not stay in it; and the shallowest water will destroy life if we do.

(*e*) *Union with Christ.*—Fifthly, look more to your union with the Lord Jesus Christ. You see what you are, and what you are without Christ.

You may 'halt'; but 'the sun' will 'rise' upon your 'halting'. You may cross over the last passage more as a poor, forgiven sinner crosses—but your crossing will be a safe one.

REFERENCE.—XXXII. 31.—J. Vaughan, *Fifty Sermons* (6th Series), p. 33.

ENDURANCE, THE CHRISTIAN'S PORTION

'All these things are against me.'—GENESIS XXXII. 36.

FROM his youth upwards Jacob had been full of sorrows, and he bore them with a troubled mind. His first words are, 'If God will be with me . . . then shall the Lord be my God'. His next, 'Deliver me, I pray thee'. His next, 'Ye have troubled me'. His next, 'I will go down into the grave unto my son

mourning'. His next, 'All these things are against me'. And his next, 'Few and evil have the days of the years of my life been'. Blow after blow, stroke after stroke, trouble came like hail. That one hailstone falls is a proof, not that no more will come, but that others are coming surely; when we feel the first we say, 'It *begins* to hail,'—we do not argue that it is over, but that it is to come. Thus was it with Jacob; the storm muttered around him, and heavy drops fell while he was in his father's house; it drove him abroad. It did not therefore cease because he was out in it: it did not end because it had begun. Rather, it continued, because it had begun; its beginning marked its presence; it began upon a law, which was extended over him in manhood also and old age, as in early youth. It was his calling to be in the storm; it was his very life to be a pilgrimage; it was the very thread of the days of his years to be few and evil.—J. H. Newman.

References.—XXXII.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, Nos. 2739, 2817, 2979, 3010. F. W. Robertson, *Notes on Genesis*, p. 116.

Genesis xxxiii.

'And he had a fine revenge; but when Jacob, on his journey, heard that his brother was near with 400 men, and made division of his flocks and herds, his man-servants and maid-servants, impetuous as a swollen hill-torrent, the fierce son of the desert, baked red with Syrian light, leapt down upon him, and fell on his neck, and wept. And Esau said, "What meanest thou by all this drove which I met?" And Jacob said, "These are to find grace in the sight of my Lord"; then Esau said, "I have enough, my brother; keep that thou hast unto thyself". O mighty prince, didst thou remember thy mother's guile, the skins upon thy hands and neck, and the lie put upon the patriarch as, blind with years, he sat up in his bed snuffing the savoury meat? An ugly memory, I should fancy!'—Alexander Smith in *Dreamthorp*.

References.—XXXIII. 9-11.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. 47, No. 2739. XXXIII.—F. W. Robertson, *Notes on Genesis*, p. 116. XXXV. 1.—C. Perren, *Outline Sermons*, p. 308. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxiv. No. 1395. A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—Genesis*, p. 233. XXXV. 1-3.—C. Perren, *Revival Sermons*, p. 180.

'Then Jacob said unto his household, and to all that were with him, Put away the strange gods that are among you, and be clean and change your garments.'—Genesis xxxv. 2.

St. John of the Cross says: 'When the patriarch Jacob wished to go up to the Mount of Bethel in order to build there an altar to God on which he should offer sacrifice, he first gave three commands to his household.' He applies these three commands to the spiritual life of the Christian. The strange gods are the 'outside affections and attachments'. 'Use clean means to get rid of the worldly appetites still left in the soul.' And the third thing we must have in order to reach the high mountain is a change of garments. Through the means of the former two works God will change our garments from old to new, putting in the soul a new understanding of God in God, the old understanding of man being left behind and a new love for God in God implanted. He will empty the will of all its old human desires and tastes and will put within the soul a new knowledge and an abysmal delight, all other knowledge, all old imaginations, having been cast aside. Thus He will cause to cease all that belongs to the old man, which is the clothing of the natural being, and will clothe the soul in new and supernatural garments according to all its powers.—*Obras*, vol. i. p. 21.

Reference.—XXXV. 8.—J. W. Bergen, *Servants of Scripture*, p. 12.

THE BIRTH OF BENJAMIN

'And it came to pass, as her soul was in departing (for she died) that she called his name Ben-oni; but his father called him Benjamin. And Rachel died, and was buried in the way to Ephrath, which is Beth-lehem.'—Genesis xxxv. 18, 19.

I. Of all that we read in the book of Genesis of the faith of the patriarchs, there are few examples that shine forth more strongly than this of Jacob in the name that he gave his son; being able to look beyond the present sorrow to the power of God that was to be revealed. But for that faith, no doubt he might well have been content to have left the mother's name unchanged. But he knew not only from whom the sorrow came, but whereto he had promised that all sorrows should lead; in Jacob's seed all families of the earth were to be blessed; and as each of his sons were born, even to this last, he would rejoice as feeling that the blessing came nearer and was multiplied. Thus it was that Jacob's faith was rewarded by the power of the right hand of the Most High revealed above all memories of sorrow.

II. Yet the sorrow itself is not without a Gospel lesson; indeed the lesson of the sorrow contributes to and bears part in the triumph. Benjamin was born and Rachel died, not at home, but on a journey; not even in such a home as Jacob had, when, stranger and pilgrim though he was, he pitched his tent, and built an altar, and digged a well, and bought a piece of ground with money of the sons of the people of the land. From that home they were driven; it was this flight most likely that brought on the mother's hard labour; so that we may say the sorrow wherein Benjamin was born came from his brethren's sin, from the folly wrought in Israel and the corruption that is in the world through lust. And even so it was when Bethlehem saw the birth of another Son of sorrow and of power, that sorrow was in Him part of this saving work of love. It became Him who was to be known as a Man of Sorrows to come as a Child of Sorrows; but He was not only born in sorrow Himself, He was a Son of His mother's sorrow too. Her loneliness teaches us scarcely less than this; for whereas He had a work to do that we cannot share in, her work was altogether the same as ours, so that her example comes the more closely home to us. For her Son to be homeless was a part of the suffering He undertook for our sake, and by its merit avails for our profit; but she was only one of ourselves, a believer as we are or ought to be; and therefore if she was

a wanderer with Him and suffered with Him, we are taught that we must suffer with Him before we can reign with Him.

III. But not only sorrow generally is a discipline to faith and a means for growth in holiness; this special trouble of the wanderer and the homeless is one which it specially befits us that we should learn to know and feel. For however perfect happiness God may have given us on earth, this world or any place in it is not our real home after all. One day we must leave it, and we must have learned beforehand to find a home wherever He is who loves us, if our departure is to be with joy, and according to the old bridal blessing, 'From home to home'.—W. H. Simcox, *The Cessation of Prophecy*, p. 11.

References.—XXXV. 29.—F. W. Robertson, *Notes on Genesis*, p. 126. XXXV.—F. W. Robertson, *Notes on Genesis*, p. 121. XXXVI. 24.—*Expositor* (2nd Series), vol. i. p. 352.

JOSEPH AND HIS BRETHREN

Genesis xxxvii.

With the story of Joseph we come to the last division of Genesis. The development and progress of the household of Jacob, until at length it became a nation in Egypt, had Joseph as a pioneer. The fullness of the narrative is worthy of consideration. There is a fourfold value and importance in the record of Joseph's life. (1) It gives the explanation of the development of the Hebrews. (2) It is a remarkable proof of the quiet operation of Divine Providence overruling evil, and leading at length to the complete victory of truth and righteousness. (3) It affords a splendid example of personal character. (4) It provides a striking series of typical illustrations of Christ. Joseph exemplifies the testing and triumph of faith.

I. Joseph's Home Life.—Joseph was the child of Jacob's later life, and escaped all the sad experiences associated with the earlier years at Haran. His companions were his half-brothers, the grown-up sons of Bilhab and Zilpah. From all that we have hitherto seen of them they must have been utterly unfit companions for such a youth. The difference between the elder brethren and Joseph was accentuated by the fact that 'Joseph brought unto his father the evil report of his brethren'. It is sometimes thought that Joseph is blameworthy for telling tales, but there does not seem any warrant for regarding him as a mere spy. There was, however, something much more than this to account for the differences between Joseph and his brethren. The gift of a coat of many colours (or pieces), or rather the 'tunic with sleeves,' was about the most significant act that Jacob could have shown to Joseph. It was a mark of distinction that carried its own meaning, for it implied that exemption from labour which was the peculiar privilege of the heir or prince of the Eastern clan. And so when his brethren saw these marks of special favour, 'they hated him, and could not speak peaceably unto him'.

II. Joseph's Dreams.—The hatred of the brothers was soon intensified through the dreams that Joseph narrated to them. They were natural in form as distinct from any Divine vision, and yet they were clearly prophetic of Joseph's future glory.

III. In the Course of their Work as Shepherds Jacob's Elder Sons went to Shechem.—It is not surprising that Israel wished to know how it fared with his sons and with his flocks. He therefore commands Joseph to take the journey of inquiry. The promptness and thoroughness of obedience on the part of Joseph is very characteristic of him. It has often and truly been pointed out that Joseph seems to have combined all the best qualities of his ancestors—the capacity of Abraham, the quietness of Isaac, the ability of Jacob.

IV. Joseph's Brethren.—The conspiracy was all very simply but quite cleverly concocted, every point was met, the wild beast and the ready explanation. They shrank from slaying but not from enslaving their brother.

V. The Outcome.—Reuben seems to have been away when the proposal to sell Joseph was made and carried out. People are often away when they are most needed. They carried out their ideas with great thoroughness. Jacob refused to be consoled. We cannot fail to note the unutterable grief of the aged patriarch. There was no expression of submission to the will of God, and no allusion to the new name—Israel—in the narrative.—W. H. Griffith Thomas, *A Devotional Commentary*, p. 3.

References.—XXXVII.—F. W. Robertson, *Notes on Genesis*, p. 135. XXXVII. 1-11.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—Genesis*, p. 234. XXXVII. 3.—J. Vaughan, *Sermons to Children* (4th Series), p. 317.

THIRD SUNDAY IN LENT

'And when they saw him afar off, even before he came near unto them, they conspired against him to slay him.'—Genesis xxxvii. 18.

We will divide this subject into two parts. First of all, let us consider it from the point of view of the brethren, and then as it concerns Joseph.

I. The Attitude of the Brothers.—1. *A distinction without a difference.*—First of all, notice the distinction these men draw between actual murder and casting him into this pit and letting him die there. Do you know, we are sometimes inclined to draw the same distinction in our conduct towards people? Are there not a great many men and women who would rather cut off their right hand than take the life of another, though they will make the life of that other a living death? Put forth their hand to slay a brother? Not so; but by their words day by day, and by their conduct day by day, they will make the life of that friend, that one who perhaps should be very near and dear to them, a misery by unkind words and insinuations and suggestions, by unkind, thoughtless, careless conduct. And what of our relation to our Lord? There are many people who will not boldly throw Him over by joining the ranks of the atheists, who yet bring grief and sorrow and pain to His loving heart day after day.

2. *Willing to receive gifts.*—Notice also that these brethren were quite willing to receive the gifts brought by their brother Joseph, and yet cast him into the pit. Can you find anywhere a scene of greater callousness and cruelty than this scene? Again let us take care lest we do the same.

3. *Evil minds find evil everywhere.*—And then, while thinking of the brethren, notice how evil minds will always find evil, noisome, pestilent food wherever they come. What possible temptation to any man could be a caravan of merchantmen on their way down to traffic? and yet here are these brethren with minds bent on evil, falling under the temptation to wrong-doing found in such an innocent thing as a caravan of men going down to Egypt.

II. Lessons from Joseph.—Now let us turn our thoughts for a few minutes to Joseph; we may learn three very useful lessons from this incident.

1. *Life is not easy.*—First notice that life is not a very easy thing after all. Here is Joseph, no doubt as bright and beautiful a specimen of a boy as you would wish to see anywhere, full of good resolutions, full of high ideals, realizing God's blessing within him, realizing God's gifts and power working and expanding and growing within him. I suppose he thought that he was going to sweep away all difficulty, and then suddenly there comes this terrible thing, this awful difficulty. I suppose we all start more or less like Joseph started, thinking that we are going to make something of life, and that we are going, whatever happens to other people, straight ahead. But disillusionment comes before very long. There comes an awakening, and we find that life is a way beset with briars and thorns, that there are difficulties and dangers.

2. *Difficulties meant to strengthen.*—Here we learn that all these difficulties and trials of life are not sent to destroy but to strengthen. They are sent in the way of attainment. Joseph had a great life-work before him. He was to become ruler of a mighty nation, to save the life of a nation. He must be prepared for that work by the suffering, the toil, and the trial. Let us lay hold of that thought for our comfort. God wants you to do some great work in the world, not great perhaps as the world counts greatness, but some great and good work for Him. He wants your life to be a useful, noble, and true life, and the way he fits it is by trial, difficulty, danger, that you may be taught where strength is to be found, how truly to make life noble and successful.

3. *No true life except by death.*—We learn finally that there is no true life except by death. Joseph had to learn many bitter lessons in the dark and slimy pit. He had to learn that good resolutions and high resolves are not sufficient. God requires that you and I should die to ourselves and live unto Him.

References.—XXXVII. 19.—H. J. Wilmot-Buxton, *Sunday Lessons*, vol. i. p. 249. XXXVII. 23-36.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—Genesis*, p. 240. XXXVII. 26.—A. G. Mortimer, *The Church's Lessons*, vol. ii. p. 269. XXXVII. 28.—J. Banstead, *Practical Sermons*, vol. i. p. 32. XXXIX. 2.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxvii. No. 1610. M. Biggs, *Practical Sermons on Old Testament Subjects*, p. 74. XXXIX. 8, 9.—J. T. Bramston, *Sermons to Boys*, p. 109.

Genesis xxxix 9.

'How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?' So said Joseph, alone with Potiphar's wife? The unhappy woman had been enticing Joseph, then about twenty-seven years old, to gross and grievous sin. Sin had mastered her; she was the insane slave of its power. Now, she in turn craved, by a sort of dreadful 'law of sin,' to drag down another soul with her in the pit.

Joseph was not a glorified spirit. He was a young mortal man, subject to 'like passions' with ours. The fiery arrows of the words, acts, looks of the temptress were aimed upon no automaton, or statue, but upon a being full of the perils of our nature in its prime. Not only so; this young man, this young Oriental man, was placed in circumstances exquisitely hard for virtue and easy for moral relaxation. Outwardly, there was no call upon him such as the words *noblesse oblige* imply; he was but a purchased slave. And he was in a country, Egypt, peculiarly infected by moral pollution; he had breathed for years the air of its opinion and practice around him. His home in Canaan was no perfect home, yet it had the breath of the Lord and the Promise in it. But now he was—a young man—away from home, awfully away, helplessly separated from the helps of home, including the moral influence of a father who had 'seen God face to face,' poor as his use of that blessing had been. He had been carried off from home by an act of atrocious injustice and cruelty, enough to embitter Joseph's spirit for all time. Awful is the tempter's power when he comes with some seduction, and finds the spirit in rebellion under some real wrong, angry with man, and fretting against Him who has permitted the wrong to be done.

I can hardly imagine a position more terribly difficult than that of Joseph, as regarded the open avenues for the temptation. And now, in all its force, it came.

I. In this case, unlike Abraham's, the temptation is put before us as an enticement from the powers of darkness. But in Abraham's case we saw how the enemy must have used *the test* as *a lure*. So here we may be confident that Joseph's eternal Master and Friend used *the lure* as *a test* in faithfulness and love. He took the occasion to give Joseph just that victory which is won by tested faith alone. The young man put the sin away at once, in the name and in the power of God. He was instantly conscious of two things; that sin was sin, and that God was near. His moral standard was true. Egypt might condone what it pleased; for him, this act was a 'great wickedness'. And the essence of it was that it was 'against God'. He said nothing of Potiphar's wrath. The all-possessing thought was God. Jacob was far away; but God was there. And how *could* he 'sin against God'?

II. Joseph's temptation and his victory over it are both richly typical. His temptation was of a kind about which it is best to say and to write very little, unless under the sternest compulsion of manifest duty. But the kind is a kind awfully present to innumerable lives; the besetments of impurity in one form or another, where may they not be? 'The corruption that is in the world through lust' is a deep cancer, and a deadly one. Too many a human life has felt it first in quite young years. And how persistent it can be, long after the prime is over! So Joseph's awful trial stands for trials past all counting. And thus there comes through it, at once, at least this message, that the Word of God 'knows all about' these fierce assaults. And in that one simple reflection lies a help and hope very precious to tempted hearts.

III. Joseph's secret of victory we have noticed already. Briefly, and in its essence, it was 'the practice of the presence of God'. We read nothing, all through Joseph's life, of his inner spiritual experience. But this one sentence, spoken in the hour of temptation, is eloquent to tell us what it must have been. He must have 'walked with God' in close and watchful intercourse. Perhaps that awful hour in the dry pit at Dothan was his great crisis of discovery of the supreme reality of God for his soul. But however, 'God *was* in all his thoughts'; aye, in the Egyptian house, in the daily task, and so in the fierce temptation. The enemy assailed him with desperate force. But it was in vain. The chamber was not 'empty, swept and garnished'. God was at home within.—Bishop H. C. G. Moule.

THE VICTORY OF CONSCIENCE AND FAITH OVER IMPULSE AND OPPORTUNITY

'How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?'—Genesis xxxix. 9.

All of us may be benefited by seeing how other men have acted under given circumstances. Perhaps the most instructive and helpful biography ever penned, next to that of the only perfect one, is the life of the patriarch Jacob's favourite son; a type in many ways of Christ.

I. Think of the circumstances which might have made it easy for him to succumb to the temptation so powerfully described in this chapter.

(*a*) He was young. This fact alone in the estimate of worldly minds is often enough to condone the gravest offences. Youth has its disadvantages, want of experience, etc., but it has also an unspeakable advantage over sinful advanced life in that it is free from the domination and tyranny of inveterate evil habit.

(*b*) He was away from home. How often do young men think that absence from home gives them license to do as they think fit. It was not so with Joseph. He forgot not the lessons he had received under his father's tent nor the God before whom his father had taught him to bow.

(*c*) Joseph might have pleaded that the consequences of his sin would be favour and advancement, while the consequences of his resistance would be, in all likelihood, irretrievable disgrace.

II. Consider the way in which Joseph, instead of yielding to the pressure of these circumstances, met and overcame the temptation which assailed him. How did he fortify himself against the enticement to evil?

(*a*) By calling things by their right names. He had not so lived as to bedim or disturb his spiritual vision; and so he blurted out the truth at once, and called the act to which he was invited "This great wickedness".

(*b*) By remembering that all wrong-doing is sin against God. It may be sin against self also but it most assuredly is sin against God. The faith which utters itself in these words was the source at once of the insight which enabled Joseph to perceive the true nature of the temptation, and of the strength in which he was able to overcome it.—J. R. Bailey, *The Contemporary Pulpit*, vol. v. p. 160.

References.—XXXIX. 9.—G. W. Brameld, *Practical Sermons*, p. 330. C. Kingsley, *Gospel of the Pentateuch*, p. 103. J. Clifford, *Daily Strength for Daily Living*, p. 57. XXXIX. 12.—Spurgeon, *Morning by Morning*, p. 207. XXXIX. 20.—G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 369.

THE GIFT OF INFLUENCE

'The keeper of the prison committed to Joseph's hand all the prisoners that were in the prison; and whatsoever they did there, he was the doer of it.'—Genesis xxxix. 22.

Joseph, as depicted in the beautiful Biblical narrative, was a born leader. His sweet and gracious nature, with its brightness and alertness, gave him easy access to men's hearts. Then he was of a gentle and affectionate disposition, which delighted in giving people pleasure and in serving them. He was a man of principle, too, conscientious, trustworthy, willing to suffer rather than commit a base or dishonourable act; and in the long-run character counts for much and makes men instinctively trust the man of tried probity. His supreme qualification was that he had an inner life of simple faith, which kept him from personal anxiety about his own future and left him free to think of others. There was in him in addition the unusual combination of the imaginative and the practical. The born leader of men must have something of both qualities, the power of the dreamer of appealing to sentiment and creating enthusiasm, bringing a glimpse of the ideal to his more prosaic followers; and at the same time he must prove his capacity and create confidence in his practical wisdom. Joseph showed he possessed both sets of qualities in all the varied situations in which he was placed. The young slave, who rose to be overseer in the house of his master, when he sank to be a prisoner impressed all there with his character and his capacity, so that the keeper of the prison trusted him, and all the inmates readily assented to his personal superiority, till he took his natural place as leader so that 'whatsoever the prisoners did there, he was the doer of it'. The prisoner became the real governor.

I. This is the way all leadership works. It is the power to do this which constitutes leadership. This peculiar magnetic power of a great leader makes his followers associate themselves utterly with his fortunes, so that his triumphs become theirs, and his ambitions write themselves on their minds. In truth the world waits for leaders in every branch of thought and activity, waits for men whom it can follow with a whole heart, whether or not we believe with Carlyle that universal history, the history of what man has accomplished in this world, is at bottom the history of the great men who have worked here. Even for practical success in every great enterprise there is a clamant need of leadership. The best designs and the best organisations will come to little without some inspiring head. Every great work needs a controlling brain and heart, a centre for affection and devotion. If this be amissing, even though all else be there, the best results are impossible. The history of the world may not be what it has been called, merely the biography of great men; but at any rate the history of the world would be different if the influence of even a few of its great men had been left out. Sometimes a whole epoch has been dominated by one man, who has made history because he was able to move men by the impulse of his mind and soul. It is a foolish way to treat history as if it were in a vacuum, the whirl of impersonal forces without father or mother or any definite human connexion. To treat the world of man without reference to the power of personal influence is to make it inexplicable. Joseph was the key of whatsoever the prisoners did; for he was the doer of it. The lines the Reformation took cannot be understood unless you understand something of Luther.

II. After all the subtle, magnetic force of a great man is only a common fact of life and experience, seen on a larger scale than usual. It is, or may be, the gift of all in some measure; and is not merely the privilege of the few. There is none who may not share in the burden and the glory of the Kingdom of Heaven. The patience of the sufferer, the faith of the lowly, the prayers of the saints, the love of loving hearts, the ministry of kindly hands, are as incense swung from the censers of the angels. If you consecrate yourself to God you will get your place and wield your influence. What higher work is there than to help another to a clearer vision of truth, or to a nobler sense of duty, to encourage good and inspire to high ends?—Hugh Black, *University Sermons*, p. 55.

References.—XXXIX. XL.—F. W. Robertson, *Notes on Genesis*, p. 140. XL. 1-15.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—Genesis*, p. 248. XLI. 4.—Spurgeon, *Morning by Morning*, p. 185. XLI. 9.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xii. No. 680.

JOSEPH THE OPTIMIST

'Now therefore let Pharaoh look out a man discreet and wise, and set him over the land of Egypt.'—Genesis xli. 33.

Neither the personality nor the public position of Joseph accounts for his effect on posterity. His peculiarity is not that he rises to a pinnacle of earthly splendour. It is that his splendour has come out of his dungeon.

I. The portrait of Joseph is a philosophical picture—the earliest attempt to delineate a theory of the universe in the form of the narrative. Joseph is made the spokesman of the new evangel. He comes before us as the advocate for optimism.

II. In the life of Joseph there are three periods:—

(*a*) A child of his father's old age, he has two qualities by heredity and one by education. From his grandfather Abraham he has received the spirit of optimism, from his father Jacob the spirit of ambition, but from his mode of education the spirit of selfishness. The infirmity of this boy Joseph is just his want of encumbrances. He has never had to ask for anything twice.

(*b*) The second part is one of enforced service. He is stolen from home, sold as a slave, and transferred by them to an Egyptian soldier. Suspected innocently of grave offences, he is immured in a dungeon. He begins to interpret the dreams of his fellow-prisoners and reveals his poetic genius as he never has revealed it before.

(*c*) The boy of the desert, the youth of the dungeon has become the adviser of royalty. The enemies of his boyhood, these brothers whom he had wronged and his aged father are there. The old patriarchal life is there. But they are all changed. The father has given up his unjust partiality, the brothers have given up their jealousy, and Joseph has given up his selfishness, his dreams are now humanitarian.

III. There is only one feature of this portrait which has been alleged to be an artistic blemish, a blemish in its picture of optimism. It has been said, Why did Joseph let his father believe him to be dead for so many years? Had not he been unjust, selfish, monopolizing, eager to grasp more than his share. How could he better make reparation than by effacing himself, allowing his name to be blotted out from the living members of that circle whose harmony he had done so much to disturb, and whose unity he had helped to destroy.

IV. Even the closing scene of all, the hour of his death, is grandly consistent with the ideal of the picture. Why is it that the writer to the Hebrews has fixed upon this final hour of Joseph as the typical hour of his life? It is because, to be optimistic in that valley is optimism indeed, because the man who can there keep the light in his soul has proved that his faith is supreme.—G. Matheson, *The Representative Men of the Bible*, p. 174.

'Pharaoh put his ring upon Joseph's hand.'—Genesis xli. 38-49.

Many specimens of these old Egyptian signet rings have been found. A writer states that one of the largest he ever saw was in the possession of a French gentleman at Cairo. It was a massive ring, containing some £20 worth of gold. On one face of the stone was the name of a king, successor to the Pharaoh of our chapter, on the other side was the engraving of a lion with the legend, 'Lord of strength'.

REFERENCES.—XLI. 38-48.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—Genesis*, p. 253. XLI. 51.—*Expositor* (3rd Series), vol. iv. p. 401. XLII. 1-2.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. v. No. 234; *ibid.* vol. xl. No. 2379. XLII. 6.—R. Hiley, *A Year's Sermons*, vol. i. p. 152. XLII. 8.—Spurgeon, *Evening by Evening*, p. 4. XLII. 9.—F. D. Maurice, *The Patriarchs and Lawgivers of the Old Testament*, p. 118.

THE FEAR OF GOD

'I fear God.'—GENESIS XLII. 18.

No one could say this with more confidence than Joseph, all whose actions were evidently inspired and governed by genuine piety. He seems to have used this language as a pledge of honourable and just dealing with those who were completely within his power.

I. What does the Fear of God Involve?

(*a*) *A conviction of God's existence.*—Without this man is little better than the brutes that perish, to whom an unseen and Superior Being remains unknown, through the limitation of their faculties. It is the prerogative of man to know that God is, and that He is omnipresent and omniscient.

(*b*) *A reverential regard for God's law.*—The Supreme is not only a Creator; He is also a Ruler, who ordains laws and ordinances for the regulation of the life of His intelligent and voluntary subjects. The mind of man can not only comprehend such laws; it can appreciate their moral authority, admire their justice and wisdom, and treat them with loyal respect.

(*c*) *A sense of amenability to God's authority.*—This may take various forms, but from true piety it is never absent. The godly man fears to offend a Governor so great, so righteous, and so interested in the obedience of His people.

II. Is the Fear of God Compatible with the Relation of the Christian to his Saviour?—The ancient Hebrews cherished toward Jehovah a reverence and awe which gave an especial gravity and solemnity to their religion and their worship. The revelation of the law amid the thunders of Sinai was fitted to form in the Jewish mind an association between religion and trembling awe. But 'grace and truth came by Jesus Christ'; and we are told that 'perfect love casteth out fear'. The solution of this difficulty is to be found in the progressive nature alike of revelation and of experience. There were reasons why the earlier revelation should be especially of a God of righteousness, why the latter revelation should be of a God of love. And the penitent sinner, whose religious feelings are first aroused by fear of justly deserved punishment, advances through the teaching of the 'spirit of adoption' to an intimacy of spiritual fellowship with His Father in heaven which softens fear into reverence and awe into a chastened love. Thus the Christian never ceases to say, 'I fear God'; though the expression from his lips has a somewhat altered shade of meaning.

III. Are Important Social Ends Answered by the Prevalence among Men of the Fear of God?—Yes, for it is—

(*a*) *A corrective to the undue fear of man.*

(*b*) *A preventive from the tendency to follow out every natural impulse.*

(*c*) *A strengthening of the bonds of mutual confidence in society.*—Where the members of a community are understood to be under the influence of this spiritual and religious motive, there will be less of suspicion and distrust, and more of harmony and fellowship and true love.

THE POWER OF CONSCIENCE

'And they said one to another, We are verily guilty concerning our brother.'—GENESIS XLII. 21.

THE history of Joseph is well known, but let us briefly recount it up to the point when the brethren break out in the words of the text. It is here that the strange part of the story begins.

What was it that made these men, just at this moment, when they saw one of their number bound before their eyes to be retained as a hostage, utter these strange words of self-accusation?

I. It was the Power of Conscience.—But observe that conscience was stirred by memory.

(*a*) *Was there anything in the tone of Joseph's voice* which brought back to their minds the thought of the brother whom they had so many years ago so wrongfully treated? It is a well-known fact that the voice changes less than anything that belongs to us, and when recognition by form and features fails after years of absence, some well-known and well-remembered tones will start again forgotten links of memory.

(*b*) *Was it in the action of blindfolding,* which reminded them of that scene so many long and forgotten years ago?

(*c*) *Or did they think of what would be the grief of the old man at home* when he found another son lost, and did this call to their minds the outburst of grief when Joseph was thought to be no more? In any case, it illustrates the fact that *conscience is stirred by memory.*

II. The Power of Conscience to Punish.—How many times had that scene of anguish, when they were about to cast Joseph into the pit, caused them misery, and how they now recall it! '*We saw* the anguish of his soul and would not hear; therefore is this distress come upon us.' The face of Joseph is before them as perfectly as if the deed had only happened yesterday. See the story of Herod Antipas, the murderer of John the Baptist, in the Gospels.

(*a*) *Conscience is the witness in our hearts of a moral ruler.*

(*b*) *Conscience is the witness to us of a day of account.*

REFERENCES.—XLII. 21.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xlii. No. 2497. XLII. 21-22.—J. J. Blunt, *Plain Sermons* (2nd Series), p. 236. XLII. 22.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xiv. No. 840.

GENESIS XLII. 36.

'A GOD of infinite perfections has the whole of our life in His hands, sees the end from the begin-

ning, knows how to adjust the strain of trouble to our powers of endurance, sends appropriate little mitigations of one kind or another, like temporary cordials; and by a long and wonderful series of interventions, succours, and secret workings, Jacob, who at one time said, 'All these things are against me,' finds himself housed in Goshen, in the land of light.'—James Smetham, *Letters*, p. 174.

A SEA OF TROUBLES

'All these things are against me.'—Genesis xlii. 36.

I. There are times when everything seems to be against us. It is clear that such a time had come to Jacob. He was old—life's fire was damped—and the land was famine-stricken and his sons were lost. Jacob had reached one of those bitter times when everything seemed to be against him. It is not the way of the messengers of evil to come at respectable and ordered distances. Sometimes the hand of one has barely ceased to knock when the feet of another are hurrying to the threshold. If this view of the coming of troubles be a true one, and not a rare or exceptional experience, there is one proof of it that we shall be sure to find. We shall find it expressed and crystallized in proverbs, for a proverb is an epitome of life; and a proverb will only live in people's tongue if it interpret with some measure of truth a people's heart. Well then, have we not one proverb that says, 'Troubles never come singly'? Have we not another that says, 'It never rains but it pours'. These proverbs have lived because men feel that they ring true. They might be written across this hour in Jacob's life, and they might form the motto of hours in your life and mine. May I not say that in the life of Jesus, too, we find traces of this unequal pressure? There were days for Him when every voice made music; there were hours when everything seemed to be against Him. Had it been otherwise the Bible dared not have written that He was tempted in all points like as we are. So to our Lord there came the hour of darkness when sorrows were massed and gathered as to a common centre, and pierced not by one shaft but by a score. He died as a sacrifice upon the cross.

II. Things that seem against us may not be really so. God wraps His blessings up in strange disguises and we rarely have faith to see into their heart. Many a thing that we should call a curse, in the language of heaven may be called a blessing; and many a thing we welcome as a blessing, in the language of heaven may be called a curse. I would suggest, then, in all life's darker seasons a wise and reverent suspense of judgment. It takes the totality to understand the parts, and we shall not see the whole until the morning.

III. The things that seem against us, then, may not be really so; then lastly, whether they are or not we may still triumph. If God be for us who can be against us—all things are working for our good. So may a man whose faith is firm and steadfast wrestle on towards heaven 'gainst storm and wind and tide till the light affliction which endureth for a moment, is changed into the glory of the dawn.—G. H. Morrison, *The Unlighted Lustre*, p. 207.

References.—XLII. 36.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xiv. No. 837. J. H. Newman, *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, p. 113. XLII.—F. W. Robertson, *Notes on Genesis*, p. 152. XLIII. 1.—H. J. Wilmot-Buxton, *Sunday Lessons*, vol. i. p. 262.

'Carry down the man a present.'—Genesis xliii. 2.

What a deeply interesting life was that of Jacob the supplanter! It is a life full of incident. And in that life the story of Joseph is perhaps the most illuminative. The dreaming days are over. The house of Potiphar, with its subtle temptation, and the prison with its dark despair are for ever gone, and Joseph sits a ruler, the ruler of Egypt. Famine drives his brothers, at their father's request, to seek his face, known only to them as the great Egyptian governor. They bow themselves before the brother whom they had wronged and he recognizes them. They knew him not, but he knew them, and was moved towards them. He would have them all before him, and in the presence of them all he desired to make himself known to them. But Benjamin, the son of his own mother, was not with them. He must be brought, and so they are sent back for him, with the instruction that they should see his face no more unless he were with them. When the brothers begin preparations for their return to Egypt, having obtained a very reluctant permission for Benjamin to accompany them, Jacob suggests that in addition to taking double money they 'should carry down the man a present' to propitiate him, and thereby gain his favour. That was the old Jacob of a former day who would rely upon his own resources, his own cunning, his own artfulness.

I. Notice, then, this characteristic relapse. It is generally the presence of untoward circumstances which causes this relapse. We are thrown back upon our own resources, as it were, and the first question we ask is this, 'What shall we do'? And the answer is almost invariably a relapse to a former type, to the embracing of a former stratagem. We have all yet to learn the philosophy of inactivity. 'What shall we do' seems to be the first question uppermost in all minds when confronted with difficulty and danger. When in the straight betwixt two, in the difficult place, contending with circumstances and events over which we have no control, for the existence of which we cannot be responsible, our salvation rests in the Divine revealing, and not in our own plans and schemes. 'Carry down the man a present' if you like, but remember it will have no effect upon the issue of the day.

II. Having regard then to this important truth that God determines the issue and that none of our plans and schemes are at all necessary, that God is first and must always be first, it may become a gracious and courteous act to 'carry down the man a present'. It may be well for us to consider this. A little sympathy, a little attention, a little considera-

tion, these are the things which sweeten life for us all. God is so often wounded in the house of His friends by the utter neglect of those little presents, the little courtesies, the little tokens of love. Every man, woman, and child has something they can give. Society is enriched or impoverished by the individual gifts or negligences of its members. The home is made happy, or dull and miserable, upon the same principle. Give! Don't think so much about what you can get, but more about what you can give. Remember that your salvation is the free gift of God, 'Without money and without price'.—J. Gay, *Common Truths from Queer Texts*, p. 137.

References.—XLIII. 27.—S. Baring-Gould, *Village Preaching for a Year*, vol. i. p. 350. XLIII. 30, 31.—C. J. Vaughan, *Lessons of Life and Godliness*, p. 98. XLIII.—F. W. Robertson, *Notes on Genesis*, p. 156.

TEMPERAMENT AND GRACE

'Reuben, thou art my first-born . . . unstable as water, thou shalt not excel.'—Genesis xliv. 3, 4.

A man's reputation after death is a very haphazard thing. History is full of minor characters of whom after ages have formed a very definite, but possibly wholly wrong idea, based on some single and perhaps insignificant incident in their career, or a chance remark upon them. The same thing may even happen in lifetime: sometimes a man or woman carries about through mature years a wholly false character, founded on some irrelevant thing they did or said in childhood, and which is the only thing their circle of friends remember them by. One wonders, is this the case of Reuben, son of Jacob, who has carried down the ages the burden of a name for 'instability'.

I. But first, are we sure what his father meant by 'unstable as water'? I fancy most of us think he referred to the weak and yielding nature of that element. We are wrong. He meant 'boiling over like water'. He was thinking of a caldron placed on a fire of desert thorns. The blaze of the quick fuel heats the pot and suddenly the water bubbles up; as suddenly the treacherous fuel gives out, and the boiling water drops again, flat, silent, chill. What Jacob meant to say of Reuben by this gipsy metaphor was that he was a spirit which boiled up readily and as readily grew cold. We may safely take it that in Reuben we have the type of what we call the impulsive man, with the merits and the defects of that temperament.

II. It has struck me that there is a Reuben also in the New Testament. This New Testament Reuben is not a shepherd but a fisherman, but he is generous, warm-hearted, strong in impulse, weak in constancy, he boils up and he falls cold. Peter is Reuben in temperament: yet Reuben was a moral failure, 'he could not excel,' while Peter was a saint and did excel.

III. The moral I desire to fix on the Old Testament story is that whatever be our temperament, too fast like Reuben's, or too slow like some others, Christ can so remake us that we shall not be failures in life. I do not mean that Christ alters our temperaments. He did not alter Peter's. The dissimilation at Antioch, the tradition of Peter's flight from persecution at Rome and his return to die, tell us that he was in natural make the same man. But the power of Christ recovered him as surely as he fell.—J. H. Skrine, *The Heart's Counsel*, p. 85.

References.—XLIV.—F. W. Robertson, *Notes on Genesis*, p. 161. XLV. 1-5.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xliii. No. 2516. XLV. 1-15.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—Genesis*, p. 260. XLV. 3.—R. C. Trench, *Sermons New and Old*, p. 37. G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 370. H. Melvill, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 1488, p. 41. XLV. 3-5.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. viii. No. 449.

Genesis xlv. 4.

'The true tears are those which are called forth by the *beauty* of poetry; there must be as much admiration in them as sorrow. They are the tears which come to our eyes . . . when Joseph cries out, "I am Joseph, your brother, whom ye sold into Egypt". Who does not feel that the man who wrote that was no shallow rhetorician, but a born man of genius, with the true instinct for what is really admirable?'—M. Arnold, in his *Essay on Tarbert*.

References.—XLV. 4.—S. Baring-Gould, *Village Preaching for a Year*, vol. ii. p. 78.

Genesis xlv. 5.

'The case of Themistocles was almost like that of Joseph; on being banished into Egypt he also grew in favour with the king, and told his wife "he had been undone, unless he had been undone". For God esteems it one of His glories that He brings good out of evil; and therefore it were but reason we should trust God to goven His own world as He pleases; and that we should patiently wait till the change cometh, or the reason be discovered.'—Jeremy Taylor, *Holy Living*.

References.—XLV. 5.—S. Baring-Gould, *Village Preaching for a year*, vol. ii. p. 81. XLV. 8.—R. S. Duff, *Christian World Pulpit*, 1890, p. 378. E. Blencowe, *Plain Sermons* (2nd Series), p. 179. XLV. 14.—J. Vaughan, *Sermons* (9th Series), p. 77. XLV. 19, 20.—J. A. Aston, *Early Witness to Gospel Truth*, pp. 161, 175. XLV. 21.—W. F. Shaw, *Sermon Sketches*, p. 47. XLV. 24.—C. Bosanquet, *Tender Grass for the Lambs*, p. 33. XLV. 25-28.—J. Bowstead, *Practical Sermons*, vol. i. p. 61. XLV. 28.—H. Melvill, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 1489, p. 65. XLV. 28.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xlii. No. 2470. XLV.—F. W. Robertson, *Notes on Genesis*, p. 165. XLVI. 1-4.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxxv. No. 2116. XLVI. 2.—A. F. Barfield, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxii. p. 12. XLVI. 3, 4.—Spurgeon, *Evening by Evening*, p. 133. XLVI. 3, 9.—G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 279. XLVII. 1-12.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—Genesis*, p. 272.

JACOB'S RETROSPECT OF LIFE

'And Joseph brought in Jacob his father, and set him before Pharaoh: and Jacob blessed Pharaoh. And Pharaoh said unto Jacob, How old art thou? And Jacob said unto Pharaoh, The days of the years of my pilgrimage are an hundred and thirty years: few and evil have the days of the years of my life been, and have not attained unto the days of the years of the life of my fathers in the days of their pilgrimage.'—Genesis xlvii. 7-9.

I. Jacob had lived a long life as we should count it; one of half the length is as much as most men are

able to look forward to. And he had lived a holy life; the one great sin of his youth had been punished by a long and hard discipline that had not been in vain. The father whom he had deceived had blessed him again without deceit; and the God of Bethel had been with him still ever since the hour of his first covenant with him. How could he complain of so long a life, so long a pilgrimage, that is, a journey away from home, as being one of too few days. Can the days of pilgrimage be too few? Is it not the object to reach home as soon as the pilgrim can? Or if few why were they evil? Step after step, year after year had brought him nearer to the City which hath foundations, whose Builder and Maker is God. Or if evil he means, not days of sin but days of suffering only—much as he had suffered, was it not more than made up to him by blessings? Surely Jacob, when he had seen all his sons in peace together, had lived long enough and happily enough. Enough by our standard of judging, but not by his. There is no impatience in his words; but there is a holy discontent a lofty dissatisfaction with self. Not to be satisfied with the happiness or the holiness he had, with the work that he had done for God, so long as there was greater holiness attained, or more work elsewhere; while he was not the best, to count nothing that he had good—such was the temper of Jacob, such of the apostle, and such of every true Israelite.

II. Let this be our temper too. We have, I trust, had our measures of God's grace, and done some sort of service to Him in the year that has just gone by. And yet, were not its three hundred and sixty-five days, its fifty-two Sundays, too few for us? With all the grace, all the happiness that God may have given to any of, were not those few days evil? Have our days attained to the days of Him, our Father and Redeemer, in the days of His pilgrimage? If not, let us be no more content than Jacob was with what our life has been. He who, as at this time, was brought under God's old law fulfilled the whole perfectly: if we with all the grace given us in the Gospel have our years stained with sin, what can we say but what Jacob said? Let us not be satisfied with less—with less than the fulfilment of all righteousness, as Jesus fulfilled it. Until we have done this, let us think nothing done; while there is only a single sin on our conscience, however truly repented, however fully pardoned, let us confess the days of our years to be few and evil, and ourselves to be unprofitable servants.

III. And yet while we despise ourselves do not lose hope. Looking to Jesus we are humbled; but also looking to Jesus we are saved. Made like Him by the keeping of His commandments, however imperfectly, made one with Him by His own grace and love, we trust at last to be found in Him, righteous in His righteousness, though our own be nothing, when the few and evil days and years are past, and our pilgrimage finds its end in Mount Zion. —W. H. Simcox, *The Cessation of Prophecy*, p. 80.

References.—XLVII. 8.—G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 280. XLVII. 8, 9.—J. J. Blunt, *Plain Sermons* (3rd Series), p. 164.

THE GREATNESS AND LITTLENESS OF HUMAN LIFE

'The days of the years of my pilgrimage are an hundred and thirty years: few and evil have the days of the years of my life been, and have not attained unto the days of the years of the life of my fathers in the days of their pilgrimage.'—Genesis xlvii. 9.

The sense of the nothingness of life, impressed on us by the very fact that it comes to an end, is much deepened when we contrast it with the capabilities of us who live it. Had Jacob lived Methuselah's age he would have called it short. This is what we all feel, though at first sight it seems a contradiction, that even though the days as they go be slow, and be laden with many events, or with sorrows or dreariness, lengthening them out and making them tedious, yet the year passes quick though the hours tarry, and time bygone is as a dream, though we thought it would never go while it was going, and the reason seems to be this; that, when we contemplate human life in itself, in however small a portion of it, we see implied in it the presence of a soul, the energy of a spiritual existence, of an accountable being; consciousness tells us this concerning it every moment. But when we look back on it in memory we view it but externally, as a mere lapse of time, as a mere earthly history. And the longest duration of this external world is as dust and weighs nothing against one moment's life of the world within. Thus we are ever expecting great things from life, from our internal consciousness every moment of our having souls; and we are ever being disappointed on considering what we have gained from time past or can hope from time to come. And life is ever promising and never fulfilling; and hence, however long it be, our days are few and evil.

Men there are who, in a single moment of their lives, have shown a superhuman height and majesty of mind which it would take ages for them to employ on its proper objects, and, as it were, to exhaust; and who by such passing flashes, like rays of the sun, and the darting of lightning, give token of their immortality, give token to us that they are but angels in disguise, the elect of God sealed for eternal life, and destined to judge the world and to reign with Christ for ever. Yet they are suddenly taken away, and we have hardly recognized them when we lose them. Can we believe that they are not removed for higher things elsewhere?

Why should we rest in this world when it is the token and promise of another? Why should we be content with its surface instead of appropriating what is stored beneath it? To those who live by faith everything they see speaks of that future world; the very glories of nature, the sun, moon, and stars, and the richness and the beauty of the earth, are as types and figures witnessing and teaching the invisible things of God. All that we see is destined one day to burst

forth into a heavenly bloom, and to be transfigured into immortal glory. Heaven at present is out of sight, but in due time, as snow melts and discovers what it lay upon, so will this visible creation fade away before those greater splendours which are behind it, and on which at present it depends. In that day shadows will retire, and the substance show itself.—J. H. Newman.

References.—XLVII. 9.—H. Woodcock, *Sermon Outlines*, p. 101. J. H. Newman, *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, vol. iv. p. 214. A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—Genesis*, p. 279. XLVIII. 1-7.—H. W. Beecher, *Sermons*, 1870, p. 217. XLVIII. 3.—J. Oates, *The Sorrow of God*, p. 81. XLVIII. 15, 16.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxxiii. No. 1972. F. W. Robertson, *Notes on Genesis*, p. 170. H. Melvill, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 2261. A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—Genesis*, p. 279. XLVIII. 19.—B. R. Wilson, *A Lent in London*, p. 81. XLVIII. 21.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxvii. No. 1630. XLIX. 3, 4.—J. C. M. Bellew, *Five Occasional Sermons*, p. 19.

'Unstable as water, thou shalt not excel.'—Genesis xlix. 4.

The verse which Ruskin once, in a mood of depression, thought was most suitable for his own epitaph.

'The public men of the times which followed the Restoration were by no means deficient in courage or ability; and some kinds of talent appear to have been developed amongst them to a remarkable degree. . . . Their power of reading things of high import, in signs which to others were invisible or unintelligible, resembled magic. But the curse of Reuben was upon them all: "Unstable as water, thou shalt not excel".' Macaulay's *Essay on Sir William Temple.*

REUBEN

'Unstable as water, thou shalt not excel.'—Genesis xlix. 4.

St. John of the Cross remarks on this text: 'The Patriarch Jacob compared his son Reuben to unstable water, because in certain sins he had given rein to his appetite, and he said, *"Effusus es sicut aqua, non crescas"*; unstable as water, thou shalt not excel. It is as if he had said, because in thy appetites thou art unstable as water, thou shalt not excel in virtue. As hot water, when it is not covered, easily loses its heat, and as aromatic spices when they are exposed to the air gradually lose the fragrance and strength of their smell, so the soul which is not concentrated on the love of God alone loses warmth and vigour in virtue.'—*Subida del Monte Carmelo,* Book I. Chapter X.

References.—XLIX. 4.—M. Anderson, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 1572, p. 209. J. Vaughan, *Children's Sermons*, 1875, p. 252. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. iii. No. 158.

SIMEON AND LEVI: BAD BROTHERS

'Simeon and Levi are brethren.'—Genesis xlix. 5.

I. Simeon and Levi Constituted an Unholy Brotherhood.—Evidently Jacob does not refer simply to physical brotherhood. A deeper community, a more real brotherhood is here asseverated; when Jacob says 'Simeon and Levi are brethren,' he means that they are brethren in disposition. What was their common disposition? We shall see somewhat of detail presently, meanwhile remember that they were passionate, headstrong, cruel, deceitful, revengeful, uncontrolled.

II. Simeon and Levi had Unhallowed Belongings.

(*a*) They had sinful homes. Their habitations would not bear inspection. Many 'instruments' were necessary in their habitations, but what business had they with 'instruments of cruelty' there? I am afraid there are very questionable instruments in some habitations. Is there not a book or two which ought no longer to defile your library? Is there no picture which should be banished? There are homes which need a periodical moral cleaning.

(*b*) 'Weapons of violence are their swords' is the R. V. reading. So Simeon and Levi are charged with having perverted instrumentalities. Their swords were legitimate weapons. The original intention of the sword was defence or at most righteous aggression. Simeon and Levi used their swords to perpetrate a wrong on others, not to save themselves from wrong. They transformed a legitimate weapon into a weapon of violence.

III. Simeon and Levi's Evil case drew from their Father a Godly and Reasonable Prayer.—'O my soul,' cries Jacob, 'come not thou into their secret, unto their assembly, mine honour, be not thou united: for in their anger they slew a man, and in their self-will they digged down a wall.' Reviewing the sinful courses of these two sons the dying father prays. Jacob prays concerning his soul. Jacob gives up a lofty conception of the soul when he terms it 'his honour'. It is a wonderful thing that in these early days of the world a man had such a vision of the worth of the soul.

IV. Jacob uttered a Righteous Imprecation upon Simeon and Levi's Sin.—'Cursed be their anger for it was fierce; and their wrath for it was cruel.' Their father did not curse them, but their sin. Jacob does not imprecate all anger but such as is 'fierce' and 'cruel'. Fierceness and cruelty are very remote from Christianity.

V. A Just Judgment was Pronounced upon Simeon and Levi.—'I will divide them in Jacob and scatter them in Israel,' exclaims the departing patriarch. Simeon and Levi were not to attain to political consequence, nor did their tribes or descendants. Divided and scattered! That was the righteous judgment of this evil brotherhood.—Dinsdale T. Young, *Neglected People of the Bible*, p. 41.

References.—XLIX. 8-12.—J. Monro-Gibson, *The Age Before Moses*, p. 219. XLIX. 10.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xx. No. 1157. C. Stanford, *The Symbols of Christ*, p. 35.

'Issachar is a strong ass couching down between two burdens.'—Genesis xlix. 14.

'When I look at the great middle class of this country, and see all that it has done, and see the political position in which it has been to some extent content to rest, I cannot help saying that it reminds me very much of the language which the ancient Hebrew patriarch addressed to one of his sons. He

said: "Issachar is a strong ass couching down between two burdens".'—JOHN BRIGHT at Manchester, 1866.

REFERENCES.—XLIX. 15.—A. Mursell, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxiv. XLIX. 18.—J. Vaughan, *Fifty Sermons* (9th Series), p. 101. M. Rainsford, *The Fulness of God*, p. 17.

CHRISTIAN FRUITFULNESS

'Joseph is a fruitful bough, even a fruitful bough by the well; whose branches run over the wall.'—GENESIS XLIX. 22.

I. THE Christian in his union with Christ is as a bough. The words of our Lord Jesus which we read just now are these, 'I am the vine; ye are the branches'—ye are the boughs. (*a*) This suggests to us first of all the reality which exists between Christ and His people. You cannot tear the branch from the tree without injuring the tree as much as you injure the branch; they are part and parcel each of the other. So you cannot touch our union with Christ but you hurt both Him and us. (*b*) But this suggests not only the reality of our union with Christ, but the absoluteness of our dependence upon Christ. What can the branch do without the tree? How can it exist at all but as it is sustained by the tree? Just so is our union with Christ. 'Without Me,' he says, 'ye can do nothing.' Just as the bough cannot live without the tree so we cannot exist without Christ.

II. In the outcome of the union with Christ the Christian is as a fruitful bough. If you go into the woods now you will see trees pretty much of a muchness, and the branches on the trees are very much alike. But wait you a month or two, while the spring buds begin to appear, and you will find that, while all the rest of the tree is covered with beautiful foliage, here and there will be obtruding themselves from among the rest mere black sticks, which have no vital union with the tree, though they keep up their respectable appearance as far they can as branches, and will presently be lopped off by the woodman and taken away to be burned. There are lots of people in our churches just like that. All through the winter time they pass muster very well as members. As long as there is no revival they manage to go in and out among the rest, and look very much like them; but let the time of the singing birds come, let the time when the noise of the turtle is heard in the land come, when Zion begins to awake from the dust and shake fiercely from the bands of her neck—when the sun begins to shine and revigorates the dying Church, and ye will soon find who they are who live and who they are who have died.

III. In the secret of his spiritual support the Christian is as a fruitful bough by a well. That figure suggests some very precious truths to us; I see in the well—what? That by which the tree lives, certainly, and therefore I see in it all the fullness of the Deity. I see in the tree—what? That through which the branch lives. I see the love of Christ, the one mediator between God and man. I see therefore that every branch in the tree, having direct intercourse with the deep well through the tree, must live as long as the tree itself lasts.

In the higher attainments of the Christian life the Christian is a fruitful bough by a well, 'whose branches run over the wall'. What wall? There is a wall which divides the Church from the world to-day. Would you be like your Master? He is called the Branch. There was a time when from the highest glory He looked down upon this poor world of ours—looked over the heaven's wall and saw us in our low estate. From yonder heaven he shook the fruits of redemption down, which we have been gathering up, and the Christian has not done his duty until he has let his branches run over the wall of the Church.—W. H. BURTON, *The Penny Pulpit*, No. xiii.

REFERENCES.—XLIX. 22.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxxv. No. 2113. XLIX. 23, 24.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—Genesis*, p. 286. Bishop Bickersteth, *Sermons*, p. 202. A. Maclaren, *Week-day Evening Addresses*, p. 72. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. i. No. 17. XLIX. 24.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—Genesis*, p. 295; *ibid. Morning by Morning*, p. 53. A. Maclaren, *Week-day Evening Addresses*, p. 81. XLIX. 25.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xliii. No. 2531. XLIX. 29.—H. N. Powers, *American Pulpit of To-day*, vol. iii. p. 104. XLIX. 33.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xiii. No. 783. XLIX.—F. W. Robertson, *Notes on Genesis*, p. 175. L.—12, 13.—F. W. Robertson, *Notes on Genesis*, p. 187. L. 14-26.—A Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—Genesis*, p. 305. L. 15-21.—A. Maclaren, *Sermons* (4th Series), p. 176. L. 19, 21.—J. Bowstead, *Practical Sermons*, vol. i. p. 48. L. 24-26.—F. W. Robertson, *Notes on Genesis*, p. 191. W. Bull, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxi. p. 371.

JOSEPH'S FAITH

'Joseph took an oath of the children of Israel, saying, God will surely visit you, and ye shall carry up my bones from hence.'—GENESIS L. 25.

TAKING this incident, with the New Testament commentary upon it, it leads us to a truth which we often lose sight of, but which is indispensable if we would understand the relations of the earlier and the later days.

I. Faith is always the same though knowledge varies. There is a vast difference between a man's creed and a man's faith. The one may vary, does vary within very wide limits; the other remains the same. It is difficult to decide how much Joseph's gospel contained. Even taking the widest possible view of the patriarchal creed, what a crude outline it looks beside ours! Can there be anything in common between us? Yes, as I said, faith is one thing, creed is another. Joseph and his ancestors were joined to God by the very same bond that unites us to Him. There has never been but one path of life: 'They trusted God and were lightened, and their faces were not ashamed'. In that old covenant the one thing needful was trust in the living Jehovah. In the new the one thing needful is the very same emotion, directed to the very same Lord manifested now and incarnate in the Divine Son, our Saviour.

II. Faith has its noblest office in detaching from the present. All his life long from the day of his captivity Joseph was an Egyptian in outward seeming. He filled his place at Pharaoh's court, but his dying words open a window in his soul, and betray

how little he had felt that he belonged to the order of things in the midst of which he had been content to live. Dying, he said, 'Carry my bones up from hence'. Therefore we may be sure that, living, the hope of the inheritance must have been buried in his heart as a hidden light and made him an alien everywhere but on its blessed soil.

And faith will always produce just such effects. If the unseen is ever to rule in men's lives, it must become not only an object for certain knowledge, but also for ardent wishes. It must cease to be doubtful, and must seem infinitely desirable.

III. Faith makes men energetic in the duties of the present. Take this story of Joseph as giving us a true view of the effect on present action of faith in, and longing for, God's future.

He was, as I said, a true Hebrew all his days. But that did not make him run away from Pharaoh's service. He lived by hope, and that made him the better worker in the passing moment, and kept him tugging away all his life at the oar.

IV. The one thing which saves this life from being contemptible is the thought of another. It is the horizon that gives dignity to the foreground. A picture without sky has no glory. This present, unless we see gleaming beyond it the eternal calm of the heavens, above the tossing tree-tops with withering leaves, and the smoky chimneys, is a poor thing for our eyes to gaze at, or our hearts to love, or our hands to toil on. But when we see that all paths lead to heaven, and that our eternity is affected by our acts in time, then it is blessed to gaze, it is possible to love the earthly shadows of the uncreated beauty, it is worth while to work.—A. MACLAREN, *Sermons Preached in Manchester*, p. 130.

REFERENCES.—L. 25.—A. Maclaren, *Exposition of Holy Scripture—Genesis*, p. 311. L. 25.—A. Maclaren, *Sermons Preached in Manchester*, p. 130. L. 26.—G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 370. A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—Genesis*, p. 328.

EXODUS

EXODUS

CONSIDER whether any *Rune* in the wildest imagination of Mythologist ever did such wonders as, on the actual firm Earth, some Books have done! What built St. Paul's Cathedral? Look at the heart of the matter, it was that divine Hebrew BOOK—the word partly of the man Moses, an outlaw tending his Midianitish herds, four thousand years ago, in the wilderness of Sinai! It is the strangest of things, yet nothing is truer.—CARLYLE, *Heroes*, v.

REFERENCES.—I. 1-14.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture, the Books of Exodus*, etc. p. 1. I. 6-7.—*Ibid.* p. 5.

'Now there arose up a new king over Egypt, which knew not Joseph.'—EXODUS I. 8.

IT is a rare thing to find posterity heirs of their father's love. How should men's favour be but like themselves, variable and inconstant! There is no certainty but in the favour of God, in whom can be no change, whose love is entailed upon a thousand generations.—BISHOP HALL.

'Come, let us deal wisely with them.'—EXODUS I. 10.

CRIMES and criminals are swept away by time, nature finds an antidote for their poisons, and they and their ill consequences alike are blotted out and perish. If we do not forgive the villain at least we cease to hate him, as it grows more clear to us that he injures none so deeply as himself. But the *θηριώδης κακία*, the enormous wickedness by which humanity itself has been outraged and disgraced, we cannot forgive; we cannot cease to hate that; the years roll away, but the tints of it remain on the page of history, deep and horrible as the day on which they were entered there.—FROUDE, *Short Studies*, I. pp. 468-469.

REFERENCE.—I. 10-12.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xvii. No. 997.

'But the more they afflicted them, the more they multiplied and grew.'—EXODUS I. 12.

I HAVE observed, the more the Lord's people are afflicted, and persecuted, the more they grow; and the Gospel never thrives better than when it is persecuted.—FRASER OF BREA.

'And Pharaoh charged all his people, saying, Every son that is born ye shall cast into the river.'—EXODUS I. 22.

BY the decree of Pharaoh, Moses is dead as soon as he is born; by the decree of God, Moses is brought up in Pharaoh's house. In spite of his own decree Pharaoh nurses, feeds, educates Moses; and Moses, on behalf of God, uses against Pharaoh all that he derives from Pharaoh. God is wiser than Pharaoh. The devil is old, but God is older. The devil is God's lowest drudge, and servant of servants, who knows not the wonderful fabric which will result from his cross-working.—DR. PULSFORD, *Quiet Hours*, p. 13.

REFERENCES.—I. 22.—J. Parker, *Wednesday Evenings at Cavendish Chapel*, p. 77. II. 1-10.—B. D. Johns, *Pulpit Notes*, p. 22. J. Parker, *Wednesday Evenings at Cavendish Chapel*, p. 77. A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—The Book of Exodus*, etc., p. 12. II. 2.—H. J. Wilmot-Buxton, *Holy-Tide Teaching*, p. 15. A. Murray, *The Children for Christ*, p. 70. II. 3.—C. Leach, *Mothers of the Bible*, p. 27. E. Temayne Dunstan, *Christ in the Common-place*, p. 41.

'And his sister stood afar off, to wit what would be done to him.'—EXODUS II. 4.

MOSES never had a stronger prediction about him, no not when all his Israelites were pitched about his tent in the wilderness, than now when he lay sprawling alone upon the waves; no water, no Egyptian can hurt him. Neither friend nor brother dare own him, and now God challenges his custody. When we seem most neglected and forlorn in ourselves, then is God most present, most vigilant.—BISHOP HALL.

'And she had compassion on him, and said, This is one of the Hebrews' children.'—EXODUS II. 6.

SEE here the merciful daughter of a cruel father. It is an uncharitable and injurious ground to judge of the child's disposition by the parents. How well doth pity beseem great personages!—BISHOP HALL.

IT is true that, amidst the clash of arms, the noblest forms of character may be reared, and the highest acts of duty done; that these great and precious results may be due to war as their cause; and that one high form of sentiment in particular, the love of country, receives a powerful and general stimulus from the bloody strife. But this is as if the furious cruelty of Pharaoh made place for the benign virtue of his daughter.—MORLEY'S *Life of Gladstone*, vol. III. p. 547.

REFERENCES.—II. 6.—*Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lix., p. 198. II. 9.—C. Bickersteth, *The Shunamite*, p. 12. J. Darlington, *A Sunday School Anniversary Sermon*, 1895. H. J. Wilmot-Buxton, *Sunday Sermonettes for a Year*, p. 18. H. J. Van Dyke, *Outlines of Sermons on the Old Testament*, p. 24. F. W. Farrar, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xliv. 1893, p. 1. S. Baring-Gould, *Village Preaching for a Year*, vol. ii. p. 274. C. Jerdan, *Pastures of Tender Grass*, p. 1. II. 10.— C. H. Parkhurst, *A Little Lower than the Angels*, p. 230.

'And he spied an Egyptian smiting an Hebrew, one of his brethren, . . . and he slew the Egyptian.'—EXODUS II. 11-12.

WE are only human in so far as we are sensitive, and our honour is precisely in proportion to our passion.—RUSKIN, *Sesame and Lilies*.

I DON'T want to decry a just indignation; on the contrary, I should like it to be more thorough and

general. A wise man, more than two thousand years ago, when he was asked what would most tend to lessen injustice in the world, said, 'That every bystander should feel as indignant at a wrong as if he himself were the sufferer'. Let us cherish such indignation. But the long-growing evils of a great nation are a tangled business, asking for a good deal more than indignation in order to be got rid of. Indignation is a fine war-horse, but the war-horse must be ridden by a man; it must be ridden by rationality, skill, and courage, armed with the right weapon, and taking definite aim.—George Eliot in *Felix Holt's Address to Working-Men.*

When another's face is buffeted, perhaps a little of the lion will become us best. That we are to suffer others to be injured, and stand by, is not conceivable and surely not desirable. Revenge, says Bacon, is a kind of wild justice; its judgments at least are delivered by an insane judge; and in our own quarrel we can see nothing truly and do nothing wisely. But in the quarrel of our neighbour, let us be more bold.—R. L. Stevenson in *A Christmas Sermon.*

Reference.—II. 11.—C. Brown, *The Birth of a Nation*, p. 95.

UNOBSERVED SINS

'And he (Moses) looked this way and that way, and when he saw that there was no man, he slew the Egyptian.'—Exodus II. 12.

I. To think oneself unobserved often makes way for sin. Moses was unwatched and unobserved; and it was the thought of being unobserved that tempted Moses to his homicide.

There is a somewhat similar scene in the New Testament in the story of the denial of Simon Peter. What made it so easy for Peter to fall that night was the thought that there was nobody to see. There are some natures which are intensely sensitive to the reproaching or upbraiding look of human eyes. There are multitudes to whom the smile of heaven means little, but who would not forfeit for worlds the smile of men. There are many whom the fear of God cannot restrain who are yet restrained by the fear of human censure. And sin, taking occasion by that law, whispers to men that they are unobserved, and so makes it easier to transgress.

1. We see it, for instance, in men who go abroad, whether to travel or to settle down. It is a matter of common notoriety how often men are different when abroad. That is not the highest type of character. In the highest character there is always a fine permanence. The man who is rooted in the life of God will show himself the same in every land.

2. I think we are face to face with this peril in the seclusion and secrecy of home. There are men with whose conduct the world can find no fault, but whose behaviour at home is quite contemptible. The peril of home for a certain type of character is just the peril of being unobserved.

3. In our modern civilization this is one of the dangers of our cities. It is because men and women think themselves unseen there that the way of degradation is so easy.

II. Unobserved sins may have far-reaching consequences. Moses saw no man—his sin was unobserved—yet his sin profoundly modified his future.

Our hidden sins tell upon what we are, and what we are is the secret of our influence. It is the life that is lived beyond the gaze of men that determines a man's value at the last. There are eyes that go to and fro throughout the earth. In the loneliness of the crowd is One who sees, and our glad assurance is, He sees to save.—G. H. Morrison, *The Wings of the Morning*, p. 288.

Reference.—II. 12.—C. Jerdan, *Pastures of Tender Grass*, p. 213.

'Behold, two men of the Hebrews strove together.'—Exodus II. 13.

If there had been but any dram of good nature in these Hebrews, they had relented: now it is strange to see that, being so universally vexed with their common adversary, they should yet vex one another. One would have thought that a common opposition should have united them more; yet now private grudges do thus dangerously divide them. Blows enow were not dealt by the Egyptians, their own must add to the violence.—Bishop Hall.

We see Moses when he saw the Israelite and the Egyptian fight; he did not say, *Why strive ye?* but drew his sword and slew the Egyptian: but when he saw the two Israelites fight, he said, *You are brethren, why strive you?* If the point of doctrine be an Egyptian one, it must be slain by the sword of the spirit, and not reconciled; but if it be an Israelite, though in the wrong, then, *why strive ye?* We see of the fundamental points, our Saviour formeth the league thus, *He that is not with us is against us;* but of points not fundamental, *He that is not against us is for us.* . . . So as it is a thing of great use well to define what, and of what latitude, those points are which do make men merely aliens and discorporate from the Church of God.—Bacon, *Advancement of Learning*, pt. 2. xxv. 9.

'And he said, Who made thee a prince and judge over us?'—Exodus II. 14.

Compare the somewhat bitter application of this incident by Cromwell, during the Little Parliament of 1653 (letter clxxxix. in Carlyle's edition): 'Truly I never more needed all helps from my Christian Friends than now! Fain would I have my service accepted of the Saints, if the Lord will;—but it is not so. Being of different judgments, and those of each sort seeking most to propagate their aim, that spirit of kindness that is [in me] to them all is hardly accepted of any. I hope I can say it. My life has been a willing sacrifice—and I hope—for them *all.* Yet it much falls out as when the two Hebrews were rebuked; you know upon whom they turned their displeasure! But the Lord is wise; and will, I trust, make manifest that I am no enemy.'

'Thou killedst the Egyptian.'

What if he did? What if unjustly? What was this to the Hebrew? Another man's sin is no excuse for ours.—Bishop Hall.

Reference.—II. 15.—T. G. Selby, *The God of the Patriarchs*, p. 163.

'And the shepherds drove them away; but Moses stood up and helped them.'—Exodus II. 17.

In Egypt he delivers the oppressed Israelite; in Midian the wronged daughter of Jethro. A good man will be doing good, wheresoever he is; his trade is a compound of charity and justice . . . no adversity can make a good man neglect good duties.—Bishop Hall.

Given a noble man, I think your Lordship may expect by and by a polite man.—Carlyle, *Latter-day Pamphlets* (v.).

In his essay on Mazzini, F. W. H. Myers observes that 'in men who have risen to wide-reaching power we generally observe an early preponderance of one of two instincts—the instinct of rule and order, or the instinct of sympathy'. The latter he illustrates from the great Italian's life, as follows: 'Mazzini as a child was very delicate. When he was about six years old he was taken for his first walk. For the first time he saw a beggar, a venerable old man. He stood transfixed, then broke from his mother, threw his arms round the beggar's neck, and kissed him, crying, "Give him something, mother, give him something". "Love him well, lady," said the aged man: "he is one who will love the people."'

'And he gave Moses Zipporah his daughter.'—Exodus II. 21.

If his espousals remind us for the moment of the wooing of Isaac and Jacob, what we may call the romantic element disappears like a bubble, and we hurry on to that narrative of the origin and growth of the Law which throws everything personal into the shade. . . . The wife, the children of the hero, fade into the background; it is 'this people' which forms the exclusive object of every yearning in his heart.

'And the children of Israel sighed by reason of the bondage, and they cried, and their cry came up unto God by reason of the bondage.'—Exodus II. 23.

'These poor persecuted Scottish Covenanters,' said I to my inquiring Frenchman, in such stinted French as stood at command, '*ils s'en appelaient à*'—'*à la Postérité,*' interrupted he, helping me out.—'*Ah, Monsieur, non, mille fois non!* They appealed to the Eternal God; not to posterity at all! *C'était différent.*'—Carlyle in *Past and Present.*

References.—II. 23-25.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xlv. No. 2631. III. 1.—E. E. Cleal, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxviii. 1905, p. 44. III. 1-14.—C. Stanford, *Symbols of Christ*, p. 61. W. A. Gray, *The Shadow of the Hand*, p. 153.

'And the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush: and he looked, and behold, the bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed.'—Exodus III. 2.

It is the office and function of the imagination to renew life in lights and sounds and emotions that are outworn and familiar. It calls the soul back once more under the dead ribs of nature, and makes the meanest bush burn again, as it did to Moses, with the visible presence of God.—J. Russell Lowell.

References.—III. 2.—A. M. Mackay, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xliv. 1893, p. 20. G. F. Browne, *ibid.* vol. liv. 1898, p. 76. P. McAdam Muir, *ibid.* vol. lviii. 1900, p. 246. E. E. Cleal, *ibid.* vol. lxvi. 1904, p. 267; see also *ibid.* vol. lxviii. 1905, p. 44. A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture, the Books of Exodus*, etc., p. 19. R. J. Campbell, *Sermons Addressed to Individuals*, p. 207. J. M. Neale, *Sermons For Some Feast Days in the Christian Year*, p. 83; see also *Sermons Preached in Sackville College Chapel*, vol. iv. p. 251. III. 2, 3.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons For Some Feast Days in the Christian Year*, p. 74. A. G. Mortimer, *The Church's Lessons for the Christian Year*, Part II. p. 299.

'And Moses said, I will now turn aside and see this great sight.'—Exodus III. 3.

It is good to come to the place of God's presence, howsoever; God may perhaps speak to thy heart, though thou come but for novelty. Even those who have come upon curiosity have been oft taken.—Bishop Hall.

See also Keble's lines on the Fifth Sunday in Lent.

What we mean by wondering is not only that we are startled or stunned—that I should call the merely passive element of wonder. . . . We wonder at the riddles of nature, whether animate or inanimate, with a firm conviction that there is a solution to them all, even though we ourselves may not be able to find it. Wonder, no doubt, arises from ignorance, but from a peculiar kind of ignorance, from what might be called a fertile ignorance.—Max Müller.

What must sound reason pronounce of a mind which, in the train of a million thoughts, has wandered to all things under the sun, to all the permanent objects or vanishing appearances in the creation, but never fixed its thought on the supreme reality; never approached like Moses 'to see this great sight'?—John Foster.

BURNING BUT NOT BURNT

'And Moses said, I will now turn aside, and see this great sight, why the bush is not burnt.'—Exodus III. 3.

The story of Moses is the story, at first, of failure. Two great streams of influences moulded his life: one drawn from the Egyptian surroundings of his early days, the other from his mother's teaching. On the one side he had the speechless-eyed deities of Egypt looking for ever into his face; on the other he had his belief in the governing providence of God. He looked to find amongst his own people aspirations after better things, and responsiveness to his own spirit; he met only with coldness, and refusal to follow. Then came his exile in Midian—an exile from all his early dreams and hopes, from the position he had in Egypt, from the future which flowed before him.

I. The Vision and its Results.—The vision was the revelation that restored him to faith and energy. The revelation was threefold. It was a revelation (*a*) of permanence, (*b*) of purity, (*c*) of personal power.

(*a*) *A revelation of permanence*, for the bush was not consumed; it held its own life amidst the devouring flame.

(*b*) *A revelation of purity*, for before he could enter into the deep meaning of that vision, a Voice had bidden him 'put his shoes from off his feet, for the place on which he stood was holy'.

(*c*) *A revelation of personal power and love*, for out of the distance, out of the background of the vision, giving it its heart and life, came the voice of Him who proclaimed Himself through all the changes and vicissitudes of the life of Israel as the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob.

II. A Vision for all Time.—The revelation was not for Moses alone. Note:—

(*a*) *There is in every common bush the light of God*, and only those see it who draw off their shoes.

(*b*) *We forget to turn aside* to see the great sights about us.

(*c*) *If we give our hearts leisure* and earnestly seek to meet with God, God will meet with us.

THE NEGATIVE SIDE

'I will turn aside, and see . . . why not.'—Exodus iii. 3.

I have broken up the text in this way that we may see more vividly the special point and largest meaning. Many men turn aside to see why things are; here is a man who turns aside to see why things are not. God disturbs our little law of continuity—as if we knew anything about continuity! We were born yesterday, and are struggling to-day, and to-morrow will be forgotten, and we shape our mouths to the utterance of this great word continuity! We spoil ourselves by using long words instead of short ones.

'I will turn aside, and see why not.' If you saw a river flowing up a hill, perhaps you would turn aside and see why it does not, like all other rivers, flow downhill. If you saw an eagle building its nest in the middle of the Atlantic, perhaps even you and I might be wakened out of our vulgar narrowness and startled by the ministry of surprise. God has a great surprise ministry.

I. I will turn aside, and see why the wicked are not consumed, and I find an answer in the fact that God's mercy endureth for ever, of His love there is no end, and that men may be in reality better than they themselves suppose. Not what we see in ourselves, but what God sees in us is the real standard of judgment. We are never so near the realization of the great blessing as when we see nothing in ourselves to deserve it.

II. I will turn aside, and see and inquire why the departed ones do not speak to us and tell us about the other and upper side of things. Who shall say that the departed never speak to us? What is speaking? Which is the true ear, the ear of the body or the ear of the soul? What are these unexplained noises? What are these sudden utterances of the summer wind? Who can interpret this gospel of fragrance, this apocalypse of blossom, this mystery of resurrection? Who knows what voices sweep through the soul, and what tender fingers touch the heart-strings of the life? Who is it that whispers things to the heart? Who is it that said, Be brave, take up your work, never stand still till the Master appear? Who is it, was it, how could it be? I will turn aside, and see this great sight, and I will believe that more is spoken to us than the ear of the body can hear.

III. What a rebuke this is as a text to all our little notions about cause and effect! The Lord is always surprising people by unexpected revelations; the Lord is always perplexing the mind by tearing human calculations to rags; again and again through Pentecostal winds there roars this glorious gospel, The Lord reigneth. Personality is greater than law; consciousness is the true continuity; God is the Master, and if He pleases to turn the sun into darkness He will do it, aye, and the moon into blood, and she shall be melted as into a crimson flame.—Joseph Parker, *City Temple Pulpit*, vol. i. p. 239.

References.—III. 3.—W. H. Hutchings, *Sermon Sketches*, p. 94. W. Boyd Carpenter, *The Burning Bush*, p. 1.

'God called unto him out of the midst of the bush.'—Exodus iii. 4.

'I think, sir,' says Dinah Morris in *Adam Bede* (ch. viii.), 'when God makes His presence felt through us, we are like the burning bush: Moses never took any heed what sort of bush it was—he only saw the brightness of the Lord.'

The more the microscope searches out the molecular structure of matter, the thinner does its object become, till we feel as if the veil were not being so much withdrawn as being worn away by the keen scrutiny, or rent in twain, until at last we come to the true Shekinah, and may discern through it, if our shoes are off, the words I am, burning, but not consumed.—Dr. John Brown on *Art and Science*.

References.—III. 4.—S. Wilberforce, *Sermons Preached on Various Occasions*, p. 37.

HOLY GROUND

'The place whereon thou standest is holy ground.'—Exodus iii. 5.

The biography of great men is not confined to public events. It relates the incidents which are private, and describes the experiences which are spiritual and account for visible results. Thus it was with Moses; we must be with him in the wilderness in order that we may understand his conduct at the court of Pharaoh and at the head of the host of Israel.

I. True Sanctity Confined to No Place.—To Moses the desert was a temple, and the acacia thorn a shrine. A spot before indistinguishable from any other in that waste, where the flocks found their pasture or the wild beast his lair, became henceforth holy in the memory of this servant of the Lord.

II. The Presence of the Lord Imparts True Holiness.—It needs not that princes should lavish their wealth, that architects should embody the conceptions of their genius, that priests should celebrate

magnificent rites, that psalms should echo and incense float through aisle and dome, in order that a place should become consecrated and sacred to the service of the Eternal. Where God meets with any soul of man, reveals the majesty of His attributes, the righteousness of His law, the tenderness of His love, there is a holy place.

III. A Divinely Consecrated Service.—True holiness is not so much in the place as in the heart. A man's mission in the world is determined by the counsels and commands received by him in solitude and silence. The holy ground of communion from which God's servants start imparts its holiness to the long path of their pilgrimage, to the varied scenes of their ministry. Moses could never forget the day of Divine fellowship and revelation from which dated his conscious devotion, his holy service to Israel and to God. In how many great men's lives do we trace this same connexion between holy communion and holy ministry! Work acceptable to God and beneficial to men would not have been achieved had not the power to perform it sprung from the holy point of contact where the Creator and the created meet.

IV. We may Make a Holy Place.—There is no spot which may not become the point of contact between the human spirit and the Divine. In the lonely desert or the crowded city, in the peaceful home or the consecrated church, the Divine presence may be realized and the Divine blessing may be obtained. Earth may be filled with holy places and life with holy service.

'Put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground.'—EXODUS III. 5.

WE must not only have our hearts bubbling over with thanksgiving and joy in our Father's presence; we must also take off our shoes from our feet, because we are on holy ground. There is a danger in the emotions being too much aroused unless the prayer be truly one of real adoration.—FATHER DOLLING in *The Pilot* (4 May, 1901).

ALL concentrates; let us not rave; let us sit at home with the cause. Let us strive and astonish the intruding rabble of men and books and institutions, by a simple declaration of the Divine fact. Bid the invaders take the shoes from off their feet, for God is here within. Let our simplicity judge them, and our docility to our own law demonstrate the poverty of nature and fortune beside our native riches.—EMERSON on *Self-Reliance*.

THE CALL TO REVERENCE

'Draw not nigh hither: put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground.'—EXODUS III. 5.

GOD demanded all the outward forms of a rigid reverence as the first step in that fellowship with Himself to which He was about to summon Moses and the nation Moses was destined to lead and to mould.

I. The fact that the name Jehovah is revealed in immediate connexion with this incident seems to warrant us in reading some reference in this symbol to *God's essential and unsustained existence*. Self-origination, unwasting spontaneity, self-sufficing, absolute, and eternal life, that can only be known by contrast to the finite life of the creature—these are the meanings of the striking object-lesson.

And the vision perhaps indirectly intimates that *God's mysterious love, like His life, was self-derived, inexhaustible, above all outward conditions*. The flame of its unearthly beauty was maintained by an infinite spontaneity of its own. It did not depend for its strength or fervour upon the things it clasped in the embrace of its fidelity and tenderness.

The vision, with its solemn lessons, had probably *a most vital bearing upon the future character and history of Moses*. It was no unimportant step in training him to that spiritual aptitude for seeing the things of God which made him the foremost of the prophets. Do not think of reverence as one of the second-rate sentiments of the soul, to which no great promises are made. This sense of awe was the threshold to those apocalyptic experiences which brought such privilege and enrichment to his after life.

II. When the New Testament is compared with the Old, it may seem to some minds that *the grace of reverence has passed more or less into the background*. But if we look beneath the surface a little we shall find that the New Testament is just as emphatic in its presentation of this obligation as the Old.

Reverence is the comely sheltering sheath within which all the vital New Testament virtues are nurtured. Only the lower orders of plants produce their seeds upon the surface of the leaf without the protection of floral envelopes and seed vessels. The religious faith is of the rudest and most elementary type, and will bear only ignoble fruit, where faith is without this protecting sheath of reverence for its delicate growths.

FAITH without reverence is a pyramid resting upon its apex.

There can be no OBEDIENCE that is entirely sincere in its qualities without reverence.

There can be no RESIGNATION to the Divine will apart from habitual tempers of reverence and godly fear.

Irreverence implies partial ignorance of God, and where there is partial ignorance of God the possession of eternal life cannot be rich, free, firmly assured.—T. G. SELBY, *The Lesson of a Dilemma*, p. 123.

REFERENCES.—III. 5.—W. J. Butler, *Sermons for Working Men, the Oxford Sermon Library*, vol. ii. p. 190. R. D. B. Rawnsley, *Plain Preaching to Poor People*, 3rd edition, p. 1. J. Fraser, *Parochial and other Sermons*, p. 248. C. J. Vaughan, *Lessons of Life and Godliness*, Sermon viii. III. 5, 6.—W. R. Shepherd, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxxiii. 1908, p. 267. III. 6.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xlv. No. 2633. G. S. Barrett, *Outlines of Sermons on the Old Testament*, p. 25.

G. B. Pusey, *Selections*, p. 207. III. 6, 7, 9-14.—J. Clifford, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lix. 1901, p. 352. III. 7, 8.—R. W. Hiley, *A Year's Sermons*, vol. i. p. 165. III. 7, 8, 10, 12.—C. Brown, *The Birth of a Nation*, p. 107.

'And I am come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land unto a good land and a large.'—Exodus iii. 8.

If it please heaven, we shall all yet make our *Exodus* from Houndsditch, and bid the sordid continents, of once rich apparel now grown poisonous *Ole'-Clo'*, a mild farewell! Exodus into wider horizons, into God's daylight once more; where eternal skies, measuring *more* than three ells, shall again overarch us; and men, immeasurably richer for having dwelt among the Hebrews, shall pursue their *human* pilgrimage, St. Ignatius and much other saintship, and superstitious terror and lumber, lying safe behind us, like the nightmares of a sleep that is past.—Carlyle, *Latter-day Pamphlets*, No. viii.

References.—III. 9, 10.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xlv. No. 2631.

'Come now therefore, and I will send thee unto Pharaoh, that thou mayest bring forth My people the children of Israel out of Egypt.'—Exodus iii. 10.

'Among our aristocracy,' writes Carlyle in his essay on 'Corn-law Rhymes,' 'there are men, we trust there are many men, who feel that they also are workmen, born to toil, ever in their great Taskmaster's eye, faithfully with heart and head, for those who with heart and hand do, under the same great Taskmaster, toil for them;—who have even this noblest and hardest work set before them; to deliver out of that Egyptian bondage to Wretchedness and Ignorance and Sin, the hardhanded millions.'

There are many persons, doubtless, who feel the wants and miseries of their fellow-men tenderly if not deeply; but this feeling is not of the kind to induce them to exert themselves out of their own small circle. They have little faith in their individual exertions doing aught towards a remedy for any of the great disorders of the world.—Sir Arthur Helps.

In strictness, the vital refinements are the moral and intellectual steps. The appearance of the Hebrew Moses, of the Indian Buddh—in Greece, of the Seven Wise Masters, of the acute and upright Socrates, and of the Stoic Zeno,—in Judea, the advent of Jesus,—and in modern Christendom, of the realists Huss, Savonarola, and Luther, are causal facts which carry forward races to new convictions and elevate the rule of life.—Emerson on *Civilization*.

'Come now therefore.'

Great men, like great periods, are explosive materials in which an immense force is accumulated; it is always pre-requisite for such men, historically and physiologically, that for a long period there has been a collecting, a heaping up, an economizing, and a hoarding with respect to them,—that for a long time no explosion has taken place.—Nietzsche in *The Twilight of the Idols*.

References.—III. 10.—E. L. Hull, *Sermons Preached at King's Lynn* (3rd Series), p. 81. III. 10, 11.—C. M. Short, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xl. 1891, p. 21. III. 10, 20.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—Exodus*, etc., p. 26.

'And Moses said, Who am I, that I should go unto Pharaoh.'—Exodus iii. 11.

'For one thing,' says Carlyle in his fourth lecture on *Heroes*, 'I will remark that this part of Prophet to his Nation was not of his seeking; Knox had lived forty years quietly obscure, before he became conspicuous. . . . He was with the small body of Reformers who were standing siege in St. Andrews Castle—when one day in this chapel, the preacher, after finishing his exhortation to those fighters in the forlorn hope, said suddenly, that there ought to be other speakers, that all men who had a priest's heart and gift in them ought now to speak;—which gifts and heart one of their own number, John Knox the name of him, had. . . . Poor Knox could say no word;—burst into a flood of tears, and ran out. It is worth remembering, that scene. He was in grievous trouble for some days. He felt what a small faculty was his for this great work. He felt what a baptism he was called to be baptized withal.'

At the opening of his Ministry at Collace, Dr. A. A. Bonar notes in his diary: 'I have been thinking of the case of Moses. He trembled and resisted before being sent, but from the moment that he was chosen we never hear of alarm or fear arising.'

Reference.—III. 11-13.—G. Hanson, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. liii. 1898, p. 101.

'Certainly I will be with thee.'—Exodus iii. 12.

He was not a name, then; not a tradition, not a dream of the past. He lived now as He lived then; He who had been with men in past ages, was actually with him at that hour.—F. D. Maurice.

Compare Knox's urgent letter from Dieppe to his irresolute Scotch friends, in 1557: 'The invisible and invincible power of God sustaineth and preserveth according to His promise, all such as with simplicity do obey Him. No less cause have ye to enter in your former enterprise than Moses had to go to the presence of Pharaoh; for your subjects, yea, your brethren are oppressed; their bodies and souls holden in bondage; and God speaketh to your conscience that ye ought to hazard your own lives, be it against kings or emperors, for their deliverance.'

References.—III. 12.—H. J. Wilmot-Buxton, *Sunday Lessons for Daily Life*, p. 276. III. 13.—R. J. Campbell, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxiv. 1903, p. 177. J. Parker, *Wednesday Evenings at Cavendish Chapel*, p. 105. III. 13 14.—J. Wordsworth, *The One Religion, Bampton Lectures*, 1881, p. 33.

'And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM.'—Exodus iii. 14.

'Virtue is the adherence in action to the nature of things,' says Emerson in his essay on *Spiritual Laws*, 'and the nature of things makes it prevalent. It consists in a perpetual substitution of being for seeming,

and with sublime propriety God is described as saying I AM.'

'I HAVE been struck lately,' wrote Erskine of Linlathen to Maurice, 'by the communication which God made to Moses at the Burning Bush. "I AM"—the personal presence and address of God. No new truth concerning the character of God is given; but Moses had met God Himself, and was then strengthened to meet Pharaoh. There is one immense interval between "He" and "I"—between hearing about God and hearing God. What an interval!'

GOD hath not made a creature that can comprehend Him; it is a privilege of His own nature: 'I am that I am' was His own definition to Moses; and it was a short one to confound mortality, that durst question God, or ask Him what He was. Indeed, He only is; all others have and shall be.—SIR THOMAS BROWNE, *Religio Medici*, pt. i. sec. 2.

REFERENCES.—III. 14, 15.—J. Leckie, *Sermons Preached at Ibrox*, p. 35. Cox, "The Tetragrammaton," *Expositor* (2nd Series), i. p. 12. Sherlock, *Christian World Pulpit*, xx. p. 44. Harris, *Christian World Pulpit*, xvi. p. 272. Kingsley, *Gospel of the Pentateuch*, Sermon ix. Parker, *People's Bible*, ii. p. 32. Roberts, *Homiletic Magazine*, viii. p. 211. Stanley, *Jewish Church*, i. p. 94. T. Arnold, *Sermons on Interpretation*, p. 209.

'The Lord God of your fathers, the God of Abraham . . . hath sent Me unto You.'—EXODUS III. 15.

'NEITHER Moses, nor the Prophets, nor Christ Himself, nor even Mohammed,' says Max Müller in the second volume of his Gifford Lectures, 'had to introduce a new God. Their God was always called the God of Abraham, even when freed from all that was local and narrow in the faith of that patriarch.'

REFERENCES.—III. 15.—C. A. Berry, *Vision and Duty*, p. 1.

'The king of Egypt will not let you go, no, not by a mighty hand. And I will stretch out My hand and smite Egypt.'—EXODUS III 19-20.

WHAT appears to one side a singular proof of the special interposition of Providence, is used on the other side, and necessarily with equal force, to show that Christianity itself is no special interposition of Providence at all, but the natural result of the historical events by which it was ushered into the world. The Duke of Weimar spoke more safely when he said of the tyranny of the first Napoleon in Germany, 'It is unjust, and therefore it cannot last'. He would have spoken more safely still if he had said, 'Last or not last, it is unjust, and being unjust, it carries its own sentence in its heart, and will prove the weakest in the sum of things'.—GOLDWIN SMITH, *Lectures on the Study of History*, pp. 68-69.

WHEN I first heard that Buonaparte had declared that the interests of small states must always succumb to great ones, I said, 'Thank God! he has sealed his fate: from this moment his fall is certain'.—COLERIDGE.

REFERENCES.—IV. 1.—T. G. Selby, *The God of the Patriarchs*, p. 163. IV. 1-10.—G. Hanson, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. liii. 1897, p. 101.

THE ROD THAT IS IN THINE HAND

'What is that in thine hand? And he said, A rod. . . . Thou shalt take this rod in thine hand, wherewith thou shalt do signs.'—EXODUS IV. 2, 17.

I. GOD often does His greatest works by the humblest means. The great forces of nature are not in the earthquake which tumbles cities into ruins. This power passes in a moment; the soft silent light, the warm summer rain, the stars whose voice is not heard—these are the majestic mighty forces which fill the earth with riches, and control the worlds which constitute the wide universe of God.

II. So in Providence. The founders of Christianity were fishermen. Christ Himself the Carpenter, the Nazarene, despised and crucified, was the wisdom and the power of God. For did He not say—'I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto Me'? So in the text, 'What is that in thine hand? A rod'—the emblem, the tool of his daily work. With this Moses was to do mighty deeds. Rabbinical tradition has it that Moses was an excellent shepherd. He followed a lamb across the wilderness, plucked it with his rod from a precipice amid the rocks, carried it in his bosom, whereupon God said—'Let us make this Moses the shepherd of Israel'. He a stranger, a fugitive, a humble shepherd, becomes the lawgiver, the leader, the deliverer of his people.

III. The lesson of the text is plain. God still meets every man and asks the old question—'What is that in thine hand?' Is it the tool of an ordinary trade? With that God will be served. The artisan where he is, in his humble workshop, by using the 'rod which is in his hand,' the merchant in his business, are in the place where they are now; all are called upon to do service. Few have rank, or wealth, or power, or eloquence. Let those illustrious few use their ten talents, but let us, the obscure millions, use the simple duties of life—'the rod that is in our hand'. Not extraordinary works, but ordinary works well done, were demanded by the Master.—J. CAMERON LEES, *British Weekly Pulpit*, vol. II. p. 509.

REFERENCE.—IV. 5.—*Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxvi. 1904, p. 171.

'These two signs.'—EXODUS IV. 9.

'LOOK into the fourth chapter of Exodus,' Erskine of Linlathen wrote to Lady Elgin, 'and read there the account of the two first signs of which there is any record: Moses' hand becoming leprous and then being cleansed, and his rod becoming a serpent and then returning into the form of a rod. In these two signs we have the history and the prophecy of the world: 1st, human flesh to be sown in corruption, and to be raised in incorruption—that is, the fall and the glorious restoration of man's nature; 2nd, the serpent gaining a terrible dominion over man, and then being overcome by man's hand. The prophetic part of these facts is that which I believe constitutes

the true character of a sign, and that part is the cleansing of the flesh and the paralysing of the serpent. . . . The fulfilment in reality of these two signs will be the realizing of the twenty-fourth and eighth psalms.'

'And Moses said unto the Lord, O my Lord, I am not eloquent.'—Exodus iv. 10.

I blush to-day, and greatly fear to expose my unskilfulness, because, not being eloquent, I cannot express myself with clearness and brevity, nor even as the spirit moves, and the mind and endowed understanding point out.—St. Patrick.

'Is not Aaron the Levite thy brother? I know that he can speak well.'—Exodus iv. 14.

When a great sentiment, as religion or liberty, makes itself deeply felt in any age or country, then great orators appear. As the Andes and Alleghanies indicate the line of the fissure in the crust of the earth along which they were lifted, so the great ideas that suddenly expand at some moment the mind of mankind indicate themselves by orators.—Emerson on *Eloquence*.

'And also, behold, he cometh forth to meet thee.'—Exodus iv. 14.

There is something in life which is not love, but which plays as great a part almost—sympathy, quick response—I scarcely know what name to give it; at any moment, in the hour of need perhaps, a door opens, and some one comes into the room. It may be a commonplace man in a shabby coat, a placid lady in a smart bonnet; does nothing tell us that this is one of the friends to be, whose hands are to help us over the stony places, whose kindly voices will sound to us hereafter voices out of the infinite?—Miss Thackeray in *Old Kensington*.

References.—IV. 15.—R. E. Hutton, *The Crown of Christ*, vol. ii. p. 497. IV. 22, 23.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxiv. No. 1440. IV. 23.—J. Parker, *British Weekly Pulpit*, vol. ii. p. 542.

'Then Zipporah . . . said, Surely a bloody husband art thou to me.'—Exodus iv. 25.

The silken texture of the marriage tie bears a daily strain of wrong and insult to which no other human relation can be subjected without lesion. Two people, by no means reckless of each other's rights and feelings but even tender of them for the most part, may tear at one another's heart-strings in this sacred bond with perfect impunity; though, if they were any other two, they would not speak or look at each other after the outrages they exchange.—W. D. Howells.

He had need to be more than a man, that hath a Zipporah in his bosom, and would have true zeal in his heart.—Bishop Hall.

You would think, when the child was born, there would be an end to trouble; and yet it is only the beginning of fresh anxieties. . . . Falling in love and winning love are often difficult tasks to overbearing and rebellious spirits; but to keep in love is also a business of some importance, to which both man and wife must bring kindness and goodwill.—R. L. Stevenson, *El Dorado*.

References.—IV. 26.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons for some Feast Days in the Christian Year*, p. 18.

'And the people believed.'—Exodus iv. 31.

Logic makes but a sorry rhetoric with the multitude; first shoot round corners, and you may not despair of converting by a syllogism. . . . So well has this been understood practically in all ages of the world, that no religion yet has been a religion of physics or of philosophy. It has ever been synonymous with revelation. It never has been a deduction from what we know; it has ever been an assertion of what we are to believe. It has never lived in a conclusion; it has ever been a message, a history, or a vision. No legislator or priest ever dreamed of educating our moral nature by science or by argument. Moses was instructed not to reason from the creation but to work miracles.—Newman, *Grammar of Assent*, pp. 94-96.

'Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, Let My people go.'—Exodus v. 1.

Compare these sentences from Mrs. H. B. Stowe's appeal to the women of England in 1862: 'The writer of this has been present at a solemn religious festival in the national capital, given at the home of a portion of those fugitive slaves who have fled to our lines for protection—who, under the shadow of our flag, find sympathy and succour. The national day of thanksgiving was there kept by over a thousand redeemed slaves, and for whom Christian charity had spread an ample repast. Our sisters, we wish *you* could have witnessed the scene. We wish you could have heard the prayer of the blind old negro, called among his fellows John the Baptist, when in touching broken English he poured forth his thanksgiving. We wish you could have heard the sound of that strange rhythmical chant which is now forbidden to be sung on Southern plantations—the psalm of this modern Exodus—which combines the barbaric fire of the Marseillaise with the religious fervour of the old Hebrew prophet:—

> Oh, go down, Moses,
> Way down into Egypt's land!
> Tell King Pharaoh
> To let my people go!
> Stand away dere,
> Stand away dere,
> And let my people go!

In his *Letters* (pp. 42-43) Dr. John Ker observes that 'the whole history of this time seems to me one of the most remarkable since the Exodus—the freeing of as many captives, and the leading a larger nation, white and black, and a whole continent that is to be, out into a higher life—for think what would have become of America had this plague-spot spread! It is the more remarkable that, though there was an Egypt, and slaves and a Red Sea, there was no Moses nor Aaron, for honest Abraham Lincoln will stand neither for prophet nor for priest. There was only God, and the rod in His own hand—the Northern people, sometimes a serpent, sometimes a piece of

wood, used for the most part unconsciously, as one can see. But God is very manifest, and it gives one great comfort to see moral order still working, and a governor among the nations.'

'And Pharaoh said, Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice?'—Exodus v. 2.

'He had come,' says Maurice, 'to regard *himself* as the Lord, his will as the will which all things were to obey. . . . He had lost the sense of a righteous government and order in the world; he had come to believe in tricks and lies; he had come to think men were the mere creatures of natural agencies.'

Note (as Wilkie tells us always to do) the hands in Charles I.'s portrait—a complete revelation of the man: the one clutching almost convulsively his baton in affectation of power; the other poor hand hanging weak and helpless.—Westcott.

References.—V. 14-19.—L. M. Watt, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxviii. 1905, p. 349.

'Ye are idle, ye are idle: therefore ye say, Let us go and do sacrifice to the Lord.'—Exodus v. 17.

Moses talks of sacrifice, Pharaoh talks of work. Anything seems due work to a carnal mind, saving God's service; nothing superfluous but religious duties.—Bishop Hall.

MISTAKEN VIEWS OF RELIGION

'But he said, Ye are idle, ye are idle: therefore ye say, Let us go and do sacrifice to the Lord.'—Exodus v. 17.

That was Pharaoh's rough-and-ready and foolish estimate of religious aspiration and service. In this matter Pharaoh lives to-day. There are many people who cannot understand the utility of religion, they think religious people are always going to church, and no good comes of it. We must put up with these things; we have to bear many reproaches, and this we may well add to the number without really increasing the weight or the keenness of the injustice.

Sometimes great men are mistaken, and sometimes they are unwise, and at no time do they really comprehend, if they be outside of it themselves, the true religious instinct and the true meaning of deep religious worship, ceremony, and service. The spiritual has always had to contend with the material; the praying man has always been an obnoxious problem to the man who never prays.

I. This opens up the whole subject of work and its meaning, spiritual worship and its signification, heart-sacrifice and its story in red reeking blood. Who is the worker—the architect or the bricklayer? I never hear of the architects meeting in council for the purpose of limiting their hours or increasing their bank holidays. The bricklayer is the worker; so it seems; in a certain aspect he is the worker; but how could he move without the architect? The architect cannot do without the builder any more than the builder can do without the architect; they are workers together; and this is the true idea of society, each man having his own talent, making his own contribution, working under his own individual sense of responsibility, and all men catching the spirit of comradeship and of union and co-operation, united in the uprearing of a great cathedral, a poem in wood and stone, a house of the living God.

II. Insincere religion is idle. People who go to church when they do not want to go—that is idleness, and that idleness will soon sour and deepen into blasphemy. Going because I suppose we shall be expected to go—that is idleness and weariness.

III. Let us not care what Pharaoh says, but examine our own hearts. The name typified by Pharaoh has given me an opportunity of cross-examining myself, and I will say, Pharaoh, thou thinkest I am idle, and therefore I want to be religious; I wonder if Pharaoh is right; he is a very astute man, he has great councillors about him, he has a great country to administer, and there is a light in those eyes sometimes that suggests that he can see a long way into a motive. I never thought this would come to pass, that Pharaoh would say to me that I am an idle hound, because I want to go and serve the Lord. Is Pharaoh right? It is lawful to learn from the enemy, and if Pharaoh has fixed his eye upon the blemish in my life, if he does see the hollowness of my heart, well, I will think over what the king says. We may learn some things from heathenism. But if I can, by the grace of God, assure myself that by the Holy Spirit I am really sincere in wanting to go to this sermon, this sacrament, this prayer; if I know through and through, really, that I do want to go and serve God, the gates of hell shall not prevail against me.—Joseph Parker, *City Temple Pulpit*, vol. iii. p. 142.

'There shall no straw be given you, yet shall ye deliver the tale of bricks.'—Exodus v. 18.

Is it not the height of vanity, the height of selfishness to demand affection? How can any one say, 'I am a great and noble creature: come and worship me, pour yourself out before me: I deserve it all'. Surely, looked at in that way, it seems the height of blasphemy to demand it. And is it not the highest pitch of selfishness to require that a perpetual stream of the same intensity should be continued whatever occupations may distract you, whatever new interests may fill your mind—still the most subtle, the most evanescent, the most inscrutable outcome of the human soul is to be exacted from you as by a rigorous taskmaster: you must make your tale of bricks with or without straw, it matters little.—Dr. Mandell Creighton, *Life and Letters*, vol. i. p. 117.

Describing in *The Soul* (part 2) the vain effort after self-amendment made by sensitive hearts, F. W. Newman observes: 'The conscience taxes them with a thousand sins before unsuspected. The evil thus gets worse; the worshipper is less and less able to look boldly up into the Pure, All-seeing Eye: and he perhaps keeps working at his heart to infuse spiritual affections by some direct process under the guidance of the will. It cannot be done. He quickens his conscience thus, but he does not strengthen his soul;

hence he is perpetually undertaking tasks beyond his strength,—making bricks without straw; a very Egyptian slavery.'

REFERENCE.—VI. 1.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxiv. No. 1440.

THE NAMES OF GOD

'And God spake unto Moses, and said unto him, I am the Lord: and I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, by the name of God Almighty, but by My name JEHOVAH was I not known to them.'—EXODUS VI. 2, 3.

IF we read into the first of these two verses 'Jehovah' for 'Lord,' we shall get the exact balance and contrast of what was here said to Moses. A name is just the utterance of character. That is its first and proper meaning. It is the putting out of a character in a human word, and that is just what God meant when He gave Himself these various names. They were intended to be such utterances as men and women could easily understand and apply by understanding them to their varied experience. The text gives us two revealings of names from God, and God Himself is careful to tell Moses that there was a progression from the one to the other, that the first was the preliminary of the second, and the second was raised, as it were, on the meaning of the first. Now the conditions of the people to whom the name was given determined these various self-revealings.

I. The Progressive Revealing of the Names of God.—In general the occasions of revealing different names of God correspond in the history of Israel to special epochs in that history, or, in the broader area of the human race, they correspond with great needs of that race, and gradually, by the successive names, God tried to show mankind what He really was. All the revealings of the name of God in the Bible have crowned and culminated in one name that you find in the New Testament from the lips of Christ, the name that carried to Him most of the meaning of the Godhead and the name that He meant should carry most of the meaning of the Godhead to you, for in His last prayer to the Father He speaks in this wise: 'O, righteous Father, the world hath not known Thee, but I have known Thee,' and that name of 'Righteous Father' is the last utterance of the Godhead as to what God is and as to how you are to name God to your own hearts and consciences. Now all down the Bible it would be an easy matter to trace historically this development of the name of God, and you must not wonder that at the beginning the name was a very primitive one, carrying rather ideas of power and might and august majesty than tenderness and gentleness and love, for the full revealing of God at the first would have been utterly useless, and indeed impossible. God has always revealed the knowledge of Himself and all other knowledge in one way. It has been through consecrated souls and gifted minds who, as a rule, in religious revelation, have not been the official representatives of religion, have not been the priests, have not been the leaders of the religious life of their time, and have not been popular, as a rule, certainly have not had a large popular following. Abraham, Moses, as in my text, all the Hebrew prophets, the Apostles of the Lord, and Christ Himself, they were all antagonists of the official religion of their times, and God passed by officialism, and chose out lowly hearts and gracious minds, and through them revealed the sequence of the names of God from lower to higher and from simple to more wondrous. And God acts on the same principle in His revealing to souls. That has been God's way, a progressive revealing of His name.

II. The Meaning of the Names.—Apply it to what you have in my text. Here you have two names, 'God Almighty' and 'Jehovah'. Now the first one, 'God Almighty,' is said here to be suitable to Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, but not suitable to the slaves in Egypt that Moses was to enfranchise. The other name was fit for them, namely, that great name of 'Jehovah, the Lord'. This second is an advance on the first. An inferior idea of God was given to the great saints; a superior idea of God was given to the slaves in Egypt. What do these two names mean? The first means simply 'divine almightiness,' the idea of organized power, God Almighty; the second one is an altogether more involved name, and in general you may understand it in this way. It means 'The Unchanging, the Eternal, Trustworthy One'. The name Jehovah carries in it the idea of a covenant-keeping God. By the first, the idea of power, almightiness, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were specially blessed and strengthened, and it was just what they wanted, it was just the name suitable to their condition. Round the other name of the trustworthy, covenant-keeping God, a nation of slaves was rallied and concentrated and led on to liberty and national life. Men in sorrow need more of God, the revealing of more of God's tenderness, than men in prosperity and health and strength and happiness.

III. The Greater the Need the Greater the Revelation.—The deeper the sorrow, the more the unfolding of the heart of God. The more poignant the grief, the more tender the revelation of the name of God. And that has always been God's way. The deeper the sin, the more bitter the sorrow of man, the more tenderly God has revealed Himself. The thought ought to nerve us to know that God has given us that last name because the needs of an age like this are greater than the needs of an age like that of Abraham; more of His love has been revealed to this age than to the Apostles' age.

REFERENCES.—VI. 3.—J. H. Rushbrooke, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxxi. 1907, p. 69. VI. 6-8.—H. W. Webb-Peploe, *The Life of Privilege*, p. 44.

'They hearkened not unto Moses for anguish of spirit, and for cruel bondage.'—EXODUS VI. 9.

IT is possible to be so disheartened by earth as to be deadened towards heaven.—C. G. ROSSETTI.

THE HEART'S OBSTRUCTION TO THE HEARER

'They hearkened not unto Moses for anguish of spirit, and for cruel bondage.'—EXODUS VI. 9.

I. IT is not always the fault of a *preacher* that his message does not go home. 'They hearkened not unto Moses for anguish of spirit, and for cruel bondage.' There never was a better preacher, there never was a more joyous message; but there was a weight at the heart of the hearer. There was a stone at the door of the sepulchre which prevented the voice from penetrating inside.

II. Observe, there were two impediments in the heart—a positive and a negative barrier—a sense of anguish and a sense of bondage. These often exist separately. There are some who are the victims of a definite sorrow; they have a special cause of grief which blocks the door of the heart and will let no message of comfort enter in. There are others, again, who, without being able to point to a special sorrow, are simply conscious of a chain about the spirit; they have an oppression all round, a nameless weight which will not let them soar. I know not which is more deterrent to a message—the anguish or the bondage—the poignant grief in a single spot or the dull pain all over. Either is incompatible with the hearing of a Sermon on the Mount.

III. How, then, shall I lift the stone from the door of the sepulchre, that the angel of peace may enter in! Can I say it is summer when it is winter! No, my Father, Thou wouldst not have me say that. But Thou wouldst have me forget, not *the* winter, but *my* winter. Thou wouldst have me remember that there are thousands like me, thousands feeling the same anguish, thousands bearing the same bondage. Thou wouldst not have me ignore the night, but Thou wouldst have me remember that I watch not there *alone*. Is Peter weighted in the Garden; Thou wouldst have him call to mind that James and John are also there. Thou wouldst have him watch for one hour by the burden of James and John. Thou wouldst have him bury his own beneath the soil till he has returned from his mission of sympathy. Then after the night watches Thou wouldst have him go back to disinter his burden. Thou wouldst have him turn up the soil to uncover the spot of the burial. He will cry, 'My burden has been stolen in the night; the place where I laid it is vacant; I left it here, and it is here no more; come, see the place where my grief lay!' So, my Father, shall he find rest—rest in Thy love.—G. MATHESON, *Messages of Hope*, p. 46.

REFERENCES.—VI. 9.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxxiv. No. 2026.

'Aaron thy brother shall be thy prophet. Thou shalt speak all that I command thee; and Aaron thy brother shall speak unto Pharaoh.'—EXODUS VII. 1-2.

THE literature of France has been to ours what Aaron was to Moses, the expositor of great truths which would else have perished for want of a voice to utter them with distinctness. The relation which existed between Mr. Bentham and M. Dumont is an exact illustration of the intellectual relation in which the two countries stand to each other. The great discoveries in physics, in metaphysics, in political science, are ours. But scarcely any foreign nation except France has received them from us by direct communication. Isolated by our situation, isolated by our manners, we found truth, but we did not impart it. France has been the interpreter between England and mankind.—MACAULAY on *Walpole's Letters*.

REFERENCES.—VII. 3, 4.—E. L. Hull, *Sermons Preached at King's Lynn* (3rd Series), p. 94.

'Then Pharaoh also called the wise men and the sorcerers: now the magicians of Egypt, they also did in like manner with their enchantments.'—EXODUS VII. 11.

WE cannot close such a review of our five writers without melancholy reflections. That cause which will raise all its zealous friends to a sublime eminence on the last and most solemn day the world has yet to behold, and will make them great for ever, presented its claims full in sight of each of these authors in his time. The very lowest of these claims could not be less than a conscientious solicitude to beware of everything that could in any point injure the sacred cause. This claim has been slighted by so many as have lent attraction to an order of moral sentiments greatly discordant with its principles. And so, many are gone into eternity under the charge of having employed their genius, as the magicians employed their enchantments against Moses, to counteract the Saviour of the World.—JOHN FOSTER on *The Aversion of Men of Taste to Evangelical Religion* (ix.).

'Aaron's rod swallowed up their rods.'—EXODUS VII. 12.

LOVE, a myrtle wand, is transformed by the Aaron touch of jealousy into a serpent so vast as to swallow up every other stinging awe, and makes us mourn the exchange.—COLERIDGE.

REFERENCE.—VII. 12.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. ix. No. 521.

'Thus saith the Lord, Let My people go that they may serve Me.'—EXODUS VIII. 1.

AND so the world went its way, controlled by no dread of retribution; and on the tomb frescoes you can see legions of slaves under the lash dragging from the quarries the blocks of granite which were to form the eternal monuments of the Pharaoh's tyranny; and you read in the earliest authentic history that when there was a fear that the slave-races should multiply so fast as to be dangerous their babies were flung to the crocodiles.

One of these slave-races rose at last in revolt. Noticeably it did not rise against oppression as such, or directly in consequence of oppression. We hear of no massacre of slave-drivers, no burning of towns or villages, none of the usual accompaniments of peasant insurrections. If Egypt was plagued, it was not by mutinous mobs or incendiaries. Half a million men simply rose up and declared that they could endure no longer the mendacity, the hypocrisy, the vile and incredible rubbish which was offered to them in the sacred name of religion. 'Let us go,' they said,

'into the wilderness, go out of these soft water-meadows and cornfields, forsake our leeks and our flesh-pots, and take in exchange a life of hardship and wandering, that we may worship the God of our fathers.' Their leader had been trained in the wisdom of the Egyptians, and among the rocks of Sinai had learnt that it was wind and vanity. The half-obscured traditions of his ancestors awoke to life again, and were rekindled by him in his people. They would bear with lies no longer. They shook the dust of Egypt from their feet, and the prate and falsehood of it from their souls, and they withdrew with all belonging to them, into the Arabian desert, that they might no longer serve cats and dogs and bulls and beetles, but the Eternal Spirit Who had been pleased to make His existence known to them. They sung no pæans of liberty. They were delivered from the house of bondage, but it was the bondage of mendacity, and they left it only to assume another service. The Eternal had taken pity on them. In revealing His true nature to them, He had taken them for His children. They were not their own, but His, and they laid their lives under commandments which were as close a copy as, with the knowledge which they possessed, they could make, to the moral laws of the Maker of the Universe.—FROUDE, *Short Studies*, vol. II.

REFERENCE.—VIII. 1.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. vi. No. 322.

'But when Pharaoh saw that there was respite, he hardened his heart.'—EXODUS VIII. 15.

I EXPECTED every wave would have swallowed us up, and that every time the ship fell down, as I thought, in the trough or hollow of the sea, we should never rise more; and in this agony of mind I made many vows and resolutions, that if it would please God here to spare my life this one voyage, if ever I got once my foot upon dry land again, I would go directly home to my father, and never set it into a ship again while I lived. . . . These wise and sober thoughts continued all the while the storm continued, and indeed some time after; but the next day the wind was abated and the sea calmer, and I began to be a little inured to it. . . . In a word, as the sea was returned to its smoothness of surface and settled calmness by the abatement of that storm, so the hurry of my thoughts being over, my fears and apprehensions of being swallowed up by the sea being forgotten, and the current of my former desires returned, I entirely forgot the vows and promises that I made in my distress.—DEFOE, *Robinson Crusoe* (chap. I.).

REFERENCES.—VIII. 25.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxxi. No. 1830. VIII. 28.—*Ibid.*, vol. xxxi. No. 1830. IX. 1.—Stopford A. Brooke, *The Old Testament and Modern Life*, p. 129. See also *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xlv. 1894, p. 214. IX. 7.—J. J. Tetley, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lx. 1901, p. 94.

THE LONGSUFFERING OF GOD

(For Holy Week)

'Thus saith the Lord God of the Hebrews, Let My people go that they may serve Me.'—EXODUS IX. 13.

How solemn is the week—the Holy Week—upon which we have entered. The Church brings before our minds to-day some wonderful teaching concerning our own spiritual life. The record of God's dealings with Pharaoh will afford us sufficient material for our meditation.

I. The Longsuffering of God towards Sinners.—Pharaoh had been insolent and blasphemous, cruel and vindictive, pitiless and false. Yet God had spared him. So longsuffering was He, that He even now addressed to him fresh warnings and gave him fresh signs of His power, thus by His goodness leading men to repentance.

II. The Power of God to Break the Will of the most Determined Sinner.—First He sends slight afflictions, then more serious ones; finally, if the stubborn will still refuses to bend, He visits the offender with 'all His plagues'.

III. The Fact that all Resistance of God's Will by Sinners Tends to Increase, and is Designed to Increase, His Glory.—'The fierceness of man turns to God's praise.' Men see God's hand in the overthrow of His enemies, and His glory is thereby increased. The message sent by God to Pharaoh adds that the result was designed.

REFERENCES.—IX. 13-19.—Heber, 'God's Dealings with Pharaoh,' *Sermons Preached in England*, p. 146. Simeon, *Works*, i. p 352. Arthur Roberts, *Sermons on the Histories of Scripture*, p. 257. Isaac Williams, 'Pharaoh,' *Characters of Old Testament*. Kingsley, 'The Plagues of Egypt,' *Gospel of the Pentateuch*, Sermon x. Kingsley, 'The God of the Old Testament is the God of the New,' *Gospel of the Pentateuch*, Sermon xi. Stanley's *Jewish Church*, i. p. 100. etc. Geikie, *Hours with the Bible*, ii. p. 147. Kitto, *Daily Bible Illustrations*, i. p. 56, *Biblical Things*, etc., par. 745; and see Parker, *People's Bible*, ii.; p. 312. Maurice, *Patriarchs and Law Givers*, Sermon ix. Jacox, *Secular Annotations*, etc., i. p. 125. IX. 17.—C. Kingsley, *Sermons on National Subjects*, p. 325. IX. 27.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. iii. No. 113.

'And when Pharaoh saw that the rain and the hail and the thunder were ceased, he sinned yet more.'—EXODUS IX. 34.

GOD hath no sooner done thundering, than he hath done fearing. All this while you never find him careful to prevent any one evil, but desirous still to shift it off, when he feels it; never holds constant to any good motion; never prays for himself, but carelessly wills Moses and Aaron to pray for him; never yields God, his whole demand but higgleth and dodgeth like some hard chapmen that would get a release with the cheapest.—BISHOP HALL.

PHARAOH

'And the heart of Pharaoh was hardened, neither would he let the children of Israel go.'—EXODUS IX. 35.

I. The Lord Hardened Pharaoh's Heart.—This has been taken by some to mean that Pharaoh was not a free agent; so that the rejection of God's demands was not really the act of Pharaoh's free will, but was caused by God's compulsion. But if this were the case, how could God punish Pharaoh for doing what he could not help doing?

1. Our moral sense of justice is implanted in us by God Himself. It is, therefore, impossible to conceive of God's violating that sense.

2. In examining carefully the narrative we find that God is not said to have hardened Pharaoh's heart until after the sixth plague, when Pharaoh's heart had become hardened by his own free action. In other words, the first six plagues were *disciplinary*, and only the last four were *penal*.

Disciplinary suffering is that which has for its end the good of the sufferer.

Penal suffering is that which has for its chief end the good of others.

II. In what Way did God Harden Pharaoh's Heart?—Plainly, by the judgments and punishments which He inflicted on him. And in this there is no evidence that God treated Pharaoh otherwise than He treats all men who sin against Him.

If a man hardens his heart against God's calls to repentance, whether sent by preaching or by trial and punishment into his own life, the result is that his heart becomes hardened; and since God sent those trials, He may be said to have hardened the man's heart by sending them, although His purpose was to lead the sinner to penitence. And after such an one has become finally impenitent, God may still send judgments which will be entirely penal, and for the purpose of vindicating God's justice when the man's penitence is no longer possible.—A. G. Mortimer, *The Church's Lessons for the Christian Year*, part ii. p. 311.

References.—IX. 35.—'Plain Sermons' by contributors to the *Tracts for the Times*, vol. vi. p. 49. X. 1-20.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xliii. No. 2503. X. 3.—*Ibid.*, vol. xliii. No. 2503.

'And Pharaoh's servants said unto him, How long shall this man be a snare unto us? Let the men go . . . knowest thou not yet that Egypt is destroyed?'—Exodus x. 7.

If there be any one truth which the deductions of reason alone, independent of history, would lead us to anticipate, and which again history alone would establish independently of antecedent reasoning, it is this: that a whole class of men placed permanently under the ascendancy of another as subjects, without the rights of citizens, must be a source, at the best, of weakness, and generally of danger to the State. They cannot well be expected, and have rarely been found, to evince much hearty patriotic feeling towards a community in which their neighbours looked down on them as an inferior and permanently degraded species. While kept in brutish ignorance, poverty, and weakness, they are likely to feel—like the ass in the fable—indifferent whose panniers they bear. If they increase in power, wealth, and mental development, they are likely to be ever on the watch for an opportunity of shaking off a degrading yoke. . . . Indeed almost every page of history teaches the same lesson, and proclaims in every different form, 'How long shall these men be a snare to us? Let the people go, that they may serve their God: knowest thou not yet that Egypt is destroyed?'—Archbishop Whately.

In a letter, written during 1840, to awaken the upper orders of Britain to the social evils which the Chartist movement sprang from, Dr. Arnold of Rugby wrote: 'My fear with regard to every remedy that involves any sacrifices to the upper classes, is, that the public mind is not yet enough aware of the magnitude of the evil to submit to them. "Knowest thou not yet that Egypt is destroyed?" was the question put to Pharaoh by his counsellors; for unless he did know it, they were aware that he would not let Israel go from serving them.'

The question with me is, not whether you have a right to render your people miserable; but whether it is not your interest to make them happy. It is not what a lawyer tells me I *may* do; but what humanity, reason, and justice tell me I ought to do. —Burke, *Speech on Conciliation with America.*

References.—X. 8.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxxi. No. 1830. X. 8, 9.—J. Oswald Dykes, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xlv. 1894, p. 261. X. 11.—H. J. Wilmot-Buxton, *Sunday Lessons for Daily Life*, p. 291.

PHARAOH'S 'I HAVE SINNED'

'Then Pharaoh called for Moses and Aaron in haste; and he said, I have sinned against the Lord your God, and against you.'—Exodus x. 16.

What was Pharaoh's 'I have sinned?' Where did it tend?

I. It was a Mere Hasty Impulse.—'Then Pharaoh called for Moses and Aaron *in haste;* and he said, I have sinned against the Lord your God, and against you.' There was no thought in it; no careful dealing with his own soul; no depth. Real repentance is never like that. It may express itself quickly. It may come suddenly to a crisis. But that which leaps to the surface is the result of much that has been going on long before in secret.

II. The Moving Principle was Nothing but Fear.—He was agitated—greatly agitated—only agitated. He said it the first time under 'the hail'; the second, under 'the locust'. Property was going; the land was being devastated; his empire was impoverished; and he exclaimed, 'I have sinned'. He simply desired to avert a punishment that was throwing a black shadow over him! Now, fear may be, and probably it must be, a part of real repentance. But I doubt whether there was ever a real repentance that was promoted by fear only. This is the reason why so few—so very few—sick-bed repentances ever stand. They were dedicated by fear only. When the Holy Ghost gives repentance, He inspires fear; and He also adds, what, if we may not yet call it love, yet has certainly some soft feeling—some desire towards God Himself. If you have fear, do not wish it away. But ask God to mingle something with your fear—some other view of God, which, coming in tenderly, and mellowingly, may melt fear, and make repentance.

III. Pharaoh's Thoughts were Directed far too much to Man.—It was not the 'Against Thee, Thee only, I have sinned'. He never went straight to God. Observe what he said: 'I have sinned against the Lord your God, and against you. Now, there-

fore, forgive'—Moses and Aaron—'forgive, I pray thee, my sin only this once, and intreat the Lord your God, that He may take away from me this death only'. The more God is immediate to you, there will be repentance. The more you go to Him without any intervention whatsoever—feeling: 'It is *God* I have grieved, it is *God* must forgive; it is *God only* who can give me what I want; it is *God only* who can speak peace'—the more genuine your sorrow will be; and the more surely it will be accepted.

References.—X. 16.—J. Vaughan, *Sermons Preached in Christ Church, Brighton* (7th Series), p. 71. X. 20.—J. Owen, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xli. 1892, p. 166.

'But all the children of Israel had light in their dwellings.'—Exodus x. 23.

If all Egypt had been light, the Israelites would not have had the less; but to enjoy that light alone, while their neighbours lived in thick darkness, must make them more sensible of their privilege. Distinguishing mercy affects more than any mercy.—Baxter, *Saints' Rest*, chap. iii.

'In the great majority of things,' said John Foster, 'habit is a greater plague than ever afflicted Egypt; in religious character it is eminently a felicity.'

References.—X. 24.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxxi. No. 1830. X. 26.—*Ibid.* vol. vi. No. 309. *Ibid.* vol. xxxi. No. 1830. XI. 1-10.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—Exodus*, etc., p. 33.

DIFFERENCES IN CHARACTER

'That ye may know how that the Lord doth put a difference between the Egyptians and Israel.'—Exodus xi. 7.

That there are diversities in human character and conduct, in human fortune and destiny, no one questions. The atheist sees in such diversities the result of circumstances and, since in his view there is no controlling mind in the universe, of inexplicable caprice. The Christian, on the contrary, believes that in these diversities there exists, though it is not alway discoverable, the operation of Divine wisdom, and even of Divine benevolence. The providence of God and the moral nature of man are sufficient, if both were fully understood, to account for all.

I. What is Implied in this Difference?—1. *Divine wisdom.*—What is inexplicable is not arbitrary, but is the outworking of a wisdom beyond the human. Why the Almighty chose Israel to be the depository of a revealed truth, and left Egypt to work its own way unaided save by the light of nature, we cannot tell. But so it was; and Israel was informed by Jehovah that this election was owing to no native moral excellence in the object of Divine choice.

2. *Difference in religious position.*—There was, however, in the case before us, a difference in the religious position of the two nations. The Egyptians were idolaters; the Hebrews, with all their ignorance, carnality, and obstinacy, were worshippers of Jehovah. Israel was thus called to a higher platform of probation. Apostasy in Israel was a fouler sin than polytheism in Egypt. Life is not always according to privilege, and higher privilege often, alas! becomes the occasion of sorer condemnation. Yet to be trained in a Christian land and in the knowledge of the Christian faith is in itself a 'difference' for which it behoves us to offer daily thanks.

3. *Difference in the Purposes of God.*—There was a difference in the purpose which God had in view regarding the two peoples. It would be childish to suppose that the providence of God had no appointed place for Egypt in the world's great plan, but it would be unreasonable as well as unbelieving to fail to recognize in Israel's vocation the counsels of the Omniscient Ruler. Alike for individuals and for communities there is appointed by God's wisdom a special work. One man, one nation, cannot step into another's place.

II. What Results from this Difference?—1. *A difference in Divine treatment.*—Jehovah treated the Egyptians in one way, the Israelites in another. The Scripture narrative points out the hand of God in this. It is well and wise when the ways of Providence perplex us to say, 'It is the Lord.'

2. *A difference in human responsibility.*—There are degrees in men's knowledge of the Lord's will, and there are corresponding degrees in the measure of accountability.

3. *A difference in the ultimate issues of probation.*—There is no reason to believe in a dead level of uniformity among spiritual beings in the future any more than in the present.

References.—XI. 7.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. vi. No. 305.

'And the Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart.'—Exodus xi. 10.

Æschylus recognizes in certain forms of mental blindness a Divine influence. There is a malady of the mind, a heaven-sent hurt, which drives the sinner to destruction. This infatuation or Atê is a clouding both of heart and of intellect; it is also both the penalty and the parent of crime. But only when a man has wilfully set his face towards evil, when, like Xerxes in the *Persae*, or Ajax in the play of Sophocles, he has striven to rise above human limits, or like Creon in the *Antigone* has been guilty of obdurate impiety, is a moral darkening inflicted on him in anger. Here Æschylus and Sophocles agree. As we read in the Old Testament that 'the Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart,' so in Æschylus, 'when a man is hasting to his ruin, the god helps him on'. It is the dark converse of 'God helps those who help themselves'. —Prof. Butcher, *Aspects of the Greek Genius*, p. 115 f.

References.—XII.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xix. No. 1092. C. Kingsley, *Sermons on National Subjects*, p. 337. XII.—Rutherford Waddell, *Behold the Lamb of God*, p. 41. XII. 1, 2.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxviii. No. 1637. XII. 1-14.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—Exodus*, p. 38. XII. 1-20.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xlvii. No. 2727. XII. 1-27.—*Ibid.* vol. lii. No. 3013. XII. 1-29.—T. A. Gurney, *The Living Lord and the Opened Grave*, p. 57. XII. 3, 4.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. li. No. 2937. XII. 3, 23.—A. Murray, *The Children for Christ*, p. 77.

'With bitter herbs they shall eat it.'—Exodus xii. 8.

Christianity, considered as a moral system, is made up of two elements, beauty and severity; whenever either is indulged to the loss or disparagement of the other, evil ensues. . . . Even the Jews, to whom this earth was especially given, and who might be supposed to be at liberty without offence to satiate themselves in its gifts, were not allowed to enjoy it without restraint. Even the Paschal Lamb, their great typical feast, was eaten 'with bitter herbs'.—Newman, *Sermons on Subjects of the Day*, pp. 120-121.

References.—XII. 8.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xlvii. No. 2727. XII. 13.—*Ibid.* vol. v. No. 228; *ibid.* vol. xxi. No. 1251; see also *Twelve Sermons on the Atonement*, p. 25. XII. 14.—H. J. Wilmot-Buxton, *Sunday Lessons for Daily Life*, p. 317. XII.—21-22.—J. McNeill, *Regent Square Pulpit*, vol. ii. p. 33. XII. 21-27.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxxiii. No. 1988; see also *Twelve Sermons to Young Men*, p. 252.

'Your children shall say unto you, What mean ye by this service?'—Exodus xii. 26.

'What then,' asks the author of *Let Youth But Know* (p. 50), 'is the fundamental task of a liberal education? What should be its constant endeavour? Surely to awaken and to keep ever alert the faculty of *wonder* in the human soul. To take life as a matter of course—whether painful or pleasurable—that is the true spiritual death. From the body of that death it is the task of education to deliver us.'

THE MEANING OF THE OBSERVANCE OF EASTER

'And it shall come to pass, when your children shall say unto you, What mean ye by this service? That ye shall say, It is the sacrifice of the Lord's Passover, who passed over the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt, when He smote the Egyptian.'—Exodus xii. 26, 27.

Take the first things commemorated by the Jewish Passover, and see how they are fulfilled in the Christian's Easter.

I. The Passover told, first, of the deliverance from the misery of Egyptian bondage; and Easter tells of man's deliverance from a bondage worse than that of Egypt—the bondage of sin.

II. The Passover commemorated the means by which the Israelites were delivered—the death of the first-born, the substituted blood of the lamb. And this is what Good Friday and Easter preaches to the Christian—the love of God, Who spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all—the power of Christ's resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, by which we are freed from the bonds of our sins, and are raised with Him.

III. The Jews were reminded by the Passover that the Agent of their deliverance was none other than Jehovah Himself, Who overthrew their enemies and brought them safely through the Red Sea. And we are reminded that the Agent of our sanctification is the Holy Ghost, by whose special grace preventing us all good desires are poured into our hearts, and by whose operation in the sacraments both actual and sanctifying grace are conveyed to our souls.

IV. We observe that in the feast of the Passover was fulfilled God's command, 'This day shall be unto you for a memorial; and ye shall keep it a feast to the Lord throughout your generations; ye shall keep it a feast by an ordinance for ever'.

The Passover, like other Jewish rites, has been abrogated; or, rather, has been taken up into and fulfilled in its highest sense in the sacrifice of the altar, whereby, according to our Lord's holy institution, we 'continue a perpetual memory of that His precious death until His coming again'.—A. G. Mortimer, *The Church's Lessons for the Christian Year*, part ii. p. 336.

References.—XII. 26.—Henry Alford, *Quebec Chapel Sermons*, vol. i. p. 17. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxxviii. No. 2268. XII. 26, 27.—R. E. Hutton, *The Crown of Christ*, vol. ii. p. 343. A. Murray, *The Children for Christ*, p. 84.

'And it came to pass, that at midnight the Lord smote all the first-born in the land of Egypt . . . there was not a house where there was not one dead.'—Exodus xii. 29-30.

Speaking in favour of peace with Russia, John Bright once employed this passage most effectively in the House of Commons. 'I do not suppose,' he said, 'that your troops are to be beaten in actual conflict with the foe, or that they will be driven into the sea; but I am certain that many homes in England in which there now exists a fond hope that the distant one may return—many such homes may be rendered desolate when the next mail shall arrive. The Angel of Death has been abroad throughout the land; you may almost hear the beating of his wings. There is no one, as when the first-born were slain of old, to sprinkle with blood the lintel and the two side-posts of our doors, that he may spare and pass on; he takes his victims from the castle of the noble, the mansion of the wealthy, and the cottage of the poor and lowly, and it is on behalf of all these classes that I make this solemn appeal.'

References.—XII. 29.—T. A. Gurney, *The Living Lord and the Opened Grave*, p. 57. XII. 30.—A. Ainger, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lix. 1901, p. 91.

'And the people took their dough before it was leavened, their kneading troughs being bound up in their clothes upon their shoulders.'—Exodus xii. 34.

No one doctrine can be named which starts complete at first, and gains nothing afterwards from the investigations of faith and the attacks of heresy. The Church went forth from the old world in haste, as the Israelites from Egypt 'with their dough before it was leavened, their kneading troughs being bound up in their clothes upon their shoulders'.—Newman, *Development of Christian Doctrine* (chap. ii. 1).

'And the children of Israel borrowed of the Egyptians jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and raiment.'—Exodus xii. 35.

Writing, in his *Letters* (p. 42), of one practical problem which emerged at the time of the slave emancipation in America, Dr. John Ker observes: 'While the slave owes nothing to the *system* except to run away from it, there may have been, and I believe were, masters who held up the chains they could not break, and made the system, in fact, not slavery, and a

runaway slave might owe such a master something in honour. The Israelites borrowed—*asked*—jewels from the Egyptians—their kept back wages, I suppose—but then we live under a more generous economy.'

'And a mixed multitude went up also with them.'—Exodus xii. 38.

Aberrations there must ever be, whatever the doctrine is, while the human heart is sensitive, capricious, and wayward. A mixed multitude went out of Egypt with the Israelites. There will ever be a number of persons professing the opinions of a movement party, who talk loudly and strangely, do odd or fierce things, display themselves unnecessarily, and disgust other people; persons too young to be wise, too generous to be cautious, too warm to be sober, or too intellectual to be humble. Such persons will be very apt to attach themselves to particular persons, to use particular names, to say things merely because others do, and to act in a party-spirited way.—Newman, *Apologia pro Vita Sua*, p. 99.

THE MESSAGE OF THE BOOK OF EXODUS

'All the hosts of the Lord went out from the land of Egypt.'—Exodus xii. 41.

The story of Exodus is the story of a Divine deliverance.

I. This story of deliverance is in its first stage a *story of an awakening*. When God came to Israel in Egypt he found her in bondage. She was the slave of Pharaoh, fulfilling his purpose and doing his work. But Pharaoh had no right to Israel's services—Israel belonged to God. What she needed was awakening to a sense of her true dignity and her high destiny. Now this awakening God brought about in a twofold way:—

1. By increasing the severity of the oppression until it became unbearable. Then the children of Israel sighed by reason of their bondage, and they cried, and their cry came up unto God by reason of the bondage.

2. And then, just as this national conscience was awaking, God sent Moses to nurse it into vigorous life.

II. The awakening past, the story begins.

A story of struggle. When Israel awoke to desire deliverance and to work for it, there began one of the greatest struggles in the world's history. Israel never knew how strong the arm of Pharaoh was until she tried to shake herself loose from it—just as no man knows what a grip sin has on him until he strives to be free from it; but the moment Israel awoke it began. God then fought for Israel, as He always fights for the soul who is seeking to be His.

So the story of struggle becomes a *story of deliverance*. In this story of deliverance two things are specially emphasized: (1) that from beginning to end *the deliverance was the work of God*; (2) that *this deliverance was a deliverance through blood-shedding*. All the might of the first nine plagues did not avail. It required the knife that shed the blood of the Paschal Lamb to sever the cords that kept the Israelites slaves.

III. Having recorded the Deliverance, the book takes a step forward and becomes a *story of Guidance and Instruction*. With this story the greater part of the book is filled. From the Red Sea Israel is led to Sinai. Instruction is the necessary sequence of deliverance. So Israel is brought to Sinai to receive it. There God gives a law, obedience to which will furnish the fullest expression for a godly life.

But after the laws for the regulation of life have been given there follow laws for the regulation of worship. It is important then for us to note this: While our whole life is to be a *life of worship*, recognition of this must not prevent our engaging in special *acts of worship*. But when we worship God, God desires that in our worship we should accept His guidance. Therefore after the laws for the regulation of life come the directions for the making of the Tabernacle. And then the current of the book is for the time changed to remind us that, in the life of the saved, there is always the possibility of backsliding. The book of Exodus would be distinctly less valuable, and its picture of the spiritual life distinctly less complete, had it not contained the story of the Golden Calf.

The last six chapters of the book are devoted to a record of how Moses, in implicit obedience to the orders he had received, made the Tabernacle.

And how does the story close? 'So Moses finished the work . . . and the glory of the Lord filled the Tabernacle.' That was the supreme reward of Israel's obedience. By her obedience she became a people among whom God dwelt. The Lord her God was in the midst of her, blessing her, saving her, guiding her in all her journeys, until he led her right into the promised land.—G. H. C. Macgregor, *Messages of the Old Testament*, p. 17.

Reference.—XII. 41.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. ii. No. 55.

'It is a night to be much observed unto the Lord for bringing them out from the land of Egypt.'—Exodus xii. 42.

The lesson taught to Pharaoh and to Israel on that awful, that joyous night of deliverance, is still a living lesson; not one jot of its force is abated. God neither slumbers nor sleeps. He watches ever. Not one slip passes unrecorded in the heavenly volume. . . . This is the first lesson taught by our watch-night—the lesson of the sleepless justice of God, which brings home at last the sin to the guilty, and which remembers pitifully, lovingly, every suffering soul that sin has wronged.—Morris Joseph, *The Ideal in Judaism*, p. 65.

References.—XII. 42.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xix. No. 1092. XII. 48.—W. Binnie, *Sermons*, p. 72. XIII. 1, 13-15.—A. Murray, *The Children for Christ*, p. 92. XIII. 8.—C. S. Robinson, *Simon Peter*, p. 63. XIII. 9.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—Exodus*, etc., p. 46.

'When thy son asketh thee in time to come, saying, What is this? thou shalt answer him.'—Exodus xiii. 14.

Compare Mr. A. R. Wallace's remark on Darwin in whose character, he observed, 'the restless curiosity of the child to know the "what for?" the "why?"

and the "how?" of everything seems never to have abated its force'.

References.—XIII. 14-17—F. D. Maurice, *The Doctrine of Sacrifice*, p. 49.

NEAR-CUTS NOT GOD'S

'God led them not through the way of the land of the Philistines although that was near.'—Exodus xiii. 17.

I. That, then, was one feature of God's guidance. It shunned the near road, and it took the roundabout; and if you have been living with the open eye, and watching the method of the Divine in things, you have seen much that is analogous to this.

1. Think of the discovery of nature's secrets: of coal, of iron, of steam, of electricity. A single whisper from God would have communicated everything, and put mankind in possession of the secrets. But God never led us that way, though that way was near.

2. Or rising upward, think of the coming of Jesus. I detect the same leadership of God in that. Surely, in response to the world's need, He might have come a thousand years before! But God had no near way to Bethlehem. He led the world about, and through the desert, before He brought it to the King at Nazareth. We see now that there was a fullness of the time. There was kindness and education on the road.

3. There is one other region where a similar guidance of God is very evident. I refer to the evangelizing of the world. Slowly, by a man here, and by a woman there, and the men not saints, but of like passions with ourselves—and by unceasing labour, and by unrecorded sacrifice, the world is being led to know of Jesus.

II. I have noticed that most of the high and generous souls—the gallant spirits of the two covenants, let me say—have been tempted with the temptation to take the near-cut, and in the power of God have conquered it.

1. Take Abraham, for instance. Tempted by the near road, he refused it. He felt by faith that God's ways were roundabout.

2. Or think of David. When at last, after Mount Gilboa, he came to his throne by the way that God appointed, I warrant you he felt God's ways were best.

3. Or think with all reverence of Jesus Christ, tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin. Why did He come to earth to live and die for us, but that the kingdoms of this world might become His. And the devil taketh Him up into an exceeding high mountain, and showeth Him all the kingdoms of the world, and saith to Him: 'All these things will I give Thee, if Thou wilt fall down and worship me'. It was the old temptation. I speak with utmost reverence—it was Jesus being tempted by near ways. And when I think of the long road of Jesus, round by the villages, and through the Garden, and on the Cross, and into the grave, I feel, if I never felt it in my life before, that near-cuts are not God's.—G. H. Morrison, *Sun-Rise*, p. 64.

References.—XIII. 17, 18.—J. Day Thompson, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. liv. 1898, p. 134.

'THE BONES OF JOSEPH:' A PATHETIC INSPIRATION

'And Moses took the bones of Joseph with him.'—Exodus xiii. 19.

I. We cannot Dissociate Ourselves from the Past.—In all our exoduses we carry 'the bones of Joseph' with us. We cannot ignore the past. As Dr. Punshon expresses it, 'Part of the past to all the present cleaves'.

There is an historic past from which we desire never to be severed. We are its heirs.

There is a past we long to be dissociated from: the evil of history.

Then the personal past follows us. There is an individual past from which we would on no account be divided. But our past of personal evil shadows us.

Seeing we all have a painful past—all, at least whose consciences are awakened—what is our wisdom? Ever have recourse to Him Who can expunge the guilt of the past. Ever make the most of the present. Soon our present will be our past.

II. Mortality marks the Noblest.—The brand of mortality is on us all. It were madness to forget this lesson of the 'hallowed burden' Israel bore.

III. The Great and Good Departed should not be Forgotten.—It is abundantly to the credit of Moses that in the hour of triumphant exodus, with all the responsibility of leadership upon him, he did not forget the director of the Egyptian empire to whom Israel owed so much. Contemplate the departed saints and emulate their faith.

IV. We should Fulfil the Injunctions of the Sainted Ones.—'Moses took the bones of Joseph with him.' This strange act had been directly enjoined by Joseph. The laying of that behest upon Israel was an illustration of Joseph's wonderful faith as well as of his ingrained love of his people.

V. The Past gives Inspiration for Future Experiences.—We need, amid the routine of duties, all manner of inspiration, and here is one type. Remember the past. Recollect what, by God's grace, others have been and done. God did not fail our fathers, and they did not fail God.

'The past inspires us for *trials and sorrows*. What God has done for tired and suffering saints in ages gone, He will do again. The history of the Church, and the biographies of Christians, are replete with inspiration for the chequered experiences of the unknown to-morrow.

VI. 'Moses took the Bones of Joseph with him.'—*But it is not enough to have the hero's bones.* Moses did not take Joseph's bones alone. He had Joseph's faith, Joseph's calibre of soul, Joseph's spirit, Joseph's heroism; all this, and yet more abundantly.

There is really danger lest, instead of using the splendid past, we abuse it. What an irony to have Joseph's bones with you, but not his spirit in you! This is a danger alike of Churches and of individuals. The noblest memorial of a hero is the reproduction of his heroism.

VII. The Good Succession does not Perish.—Joseph is dead, but Moses lives to be Israel's Liberator and Leader.

VIII. We may Inspire Future Generations.—They who lead a Joseph-like life shall have a Joseph-like influence upon others.

IX. 'Moses took the Bones of Joseph with him.'—*Yet God's Presence is the Essential Presence.*

The sombre presence of the dead was not the supreme presence among the Israelites as they marched to the bounds of Canaan. Hear the words of the twenty-first verse—'And the Lord went before them'. Without that august Presence it is vain to have 'the bones of Joseph'. He is everything.—Dinsdale T. Young, *Unfamiliar Texts*, p. 102.

'And the Lord went before them by day in a pillar of a cloud, to lead them the way; and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light; to go by day and night.'—Exodus xiii. 21.

In his *Autobiographic Sketches* De Quincey applies this figure to his sister Elizabeth. 'For thou, dear, noble Elizabeth, around whose ample brow, as often as thy sweet countenance rises upon the darkness, I fancy a *tiara* of light or a gleaming *aureola* in token of thy premature intellectual grandeur—thou whose head, for its superb developments, was the astonishment of science—thou who wert summoned away from our nursery; and the night which for me gathered upon that event ran after my steps far into life; and perhaps at this day I resemble little for good or for ill that which else I should have been. Pillar of fire that didst go before me to guide and to quicken—pillar of darkness, when thy countenance was turned away to God, that didst too truly reveal to my dawning fears the secret shadow of death!'

To increase the reverence for Human Intellect or God's Light, and the detestation of Human Stupidity or the Devil's Darkness, what method is there? No method—except even this, that we should each of us pray for it. . . . Such reverence, I do hope, and even discover and observe, is silently yet extensively going on among us even in these sad years. In which small salutary fact there burns for us, in this black coil of universal baseness fast becoming universal wretchedness, an inextinguishable hope; far-off but sure, a Divine 'pillar of fire by night'. Courage, courage.—Carlyle, *Latter-day Pamphlets*, iii.

'Cromwell and his officers,' says Carlyle once again in the sixth lecture on *Heroes*, 'armed soldiers of Christ, as they felt themselves to be; a little band of Christian Brothers, who had drawn the sword against a great black devouring world not Christian but Mammonish, devilish—they cried to God in their strait, in their extreme need, not to forsake the cause that was His. The light which now rose upon them,—how could a human soul, by any means at all, get better light? Was not the purpose so formed like to be precisely the best, wisest, the one to be followed without hesitation any more? To them it was as the shining of Heaven's own splendour, in the waste-howling darkness; the Pillar of Fire by night, that was to guide them in their desolate, perilous way. *Was* it not such? Can a man's soul, to this hour, get guidance by any other method than intrinsically by that same—devout prostration of the earnest, struggling soul before the Highest, the Giver of all Light; be such *prayer* a spoken, articulate, or be it a voiceless, inarticulate one? There is no other method.'

Again, in his essay on *The Life and Writings of Werner*, he observes: 'The subject of Religion, in one shape or another, nay of propagating it in new purity by teaching and preaching, had nowise vanished from his meditation. On the contrary, we can perceive that it still formed the master-principle of his soul, "the pillar of cloud by day, and the pillar of fire by night," which guided him, so far as he had any guidance, in the pathless desert of his now solitary, barren and cheerless existence.'

In his *Loss and Gain* (Vol. II. chap. ix.) Newman depicts an undergraduate's religion as follows: 'Charles' characteristic, perhaps more than anything else, was an habitual sense of the Divine Presence—a sense which, of course, did not ensure uninterrupted conformity of thought and deed to itself, but still there it was; the pillar of the cloud before him and guiding him. He felt himself to be God's creature, and responsible to Him; God's possession, not his own.'

The access to the Scriptures was no more the actual *cause* of Luther's spiritual revolution than were the pillar of cloud and the pillar of fire the cause of the departure of Israel from Egypt. But for the Scriptures, indeed, Luther and his followers might have perished in the desert of fanaticism after their exodus from Rome. But the pillar and cloud which guided the Reformer's steps were not made visible until the sands of the untravelled waste were already flying around their path, and the brick-kilns of their task-masters were lost behind them in the distance.—R. H. Hutton, *Theological Essays*, p. 396.

THE PROPHETIC ELEMENT

'And the Lord went before them by day in a pillar of a cloud, to lead them the way; and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light; that they might go by day and by night.'—Exodus xiii. 21.

Here we see in a figure the fact that God goes before the race; anticipating, providing, adjusting, so that in due season He may bring us into the Canaan of His accomplished purpose. The most cursory view of the world and history impresses one with the feeling that all things have been thought out beforehand; and closer examination, revealing how the sense of the future dominates the present, confirms us in the belief of a supernatural, prescient government that controls individual life and universal movement to some ulterior perfection. This special aspect we desire now to consider.

I. The Divine Preparation of the Earth as the Scene for Human Life and Discipline furnishes an

instructive illustration of our text. Ages before man's advent on this planet we behold the Divine hand fashioning it for his habitation. The darkness that 'rested upon the face of the waters' was the hiding of the creative Spirit whilst He resolved the rude elements into order and beauty. Think of the cloud of the carboniferous era eclipsing the sun and wrapping everything in awful shadow! Yet the fire and darkness of geologic ages were pillars of the Lord heralding a new earth.

What a firm ground of confidence we find here touching the abiding welfare of the race! Pessimistic spirits are fond of propounding sceptical conundrums respecting the future. What will posterity do when the forests are depleted? what when the coal measures fail? what when population outstrips the means of subsistence? How truly absurd these apprehensions are! As the need arises, our scientists open to us storehouses which have been sealed from the foundation of the world. They are ever discovering new elements, lights, forces, fruits, which our fathers knew not. The 'faithful Creator' has in reserve a thousand secret magazines which He will discover as the race reaches its successive stages of development. Nature abounds with signs that God has passed this way before, that He has anticipated us with the blessings of His goodness, and means to see His children through.

II. The Government of the Race supplies another illustration of the Divine prescience. The future constitutes the main thought of revelation; and it everywhere teaches that the government of the world at any given point is regulated by a concern for the future, for a distant future. The whole of revelation is pervaded by the thought of the future; and so far it is in correspondence with the accredited science of the age. 'The Lord went before them in a cloud.' His purpose is always beyond the present; and the present is shaped and disciplined with a view to that ultimate design which shall justify the whole process. In the history of Israel, we venture to think, we have an illustration on a small scale of God's larger method of government. 'Thou broughtest a vine out of Egypt: Thou preparedst room before it.' Palestine was prepared for Israel. 'He sent a man before them, even Joseph, who was sold for a servant.' Joseph set in motion a train of events which prepared Israel to take possession of Palestine. Is not this process of adjustment and progress ever going on in the wide world and in the sweep of the ages? Surely God is preparing waste lands as theatres of new empire, in due season to be occupied by elect nations. We cannot contemplate vast regions of the earth now opening up, climes rich with possibilities, without anticipating the period when they will be inherited by mighty populations yet unborn. They are the waiting Canaans of God's predestined ones. What, then, is our consolation amid the nebulousness and perplexity of human life? That our times are in His hands who knows the future, and whose attribute of prescience ever works on our behalf. Sydney Smith's counsel that we should take 'short views' is excellent; but the justification of the short view is that we hold the hand of One who takes the long view.

III. The Divine Anticipation of our Spiritual Need affords another proof of the prescient element of the world. When the morning stars sang for joy over the new-made and radiant world, they could never have guessed that it was destined to become the stage of tragedy. They would only have prophesied for it golden ages of glory and joy. The event, however, has proved far otherwise. The rosy dawn was followed by a long sad day; let us rather say, by a long dark night. Yet here again God went before the race in the provision of His mercy.

All the scenes and experiences of life are antidated by grace. Nature is full of prevision. 'Spring hides behind autumn's mask;' and as Richard Jefferies puts it, 'The butterflies of next summer are somewhere under the snow'. The future dominates all nature, and the observer marks prophetic signs in every living thing. We have seen that the same is true in the evolution of society; the general life of to-day being determined by considerations transcending the present. And we feel sure that in the education and discipline of His children the future is a factor never lost sight of by the Heavenly Father. 'Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart.'

IV. That Christ has gone before us into the Heavenly Place shall furnish our final illustration. 'A cloud received Him out of their sight.' As in a cloud the Creator went before us, fashioning this world for our indwelling, so in the cloud of the Ascension has the Redeemer gone before us to make ready a new sphere of beauty and delight. 'I go to prepare a place for you,' was His solemn assurance in the parting hour—an assurance that He is fulfilling every day for thousands of His people. 'For Christ entered not into a holy place made with hands, like a pattern to the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear before the face of God for us.' As in the ancient time He prepared Palestine for Israel, so now He prepares the sphere of glory for the saints, and makes the saints meet for their inheritance in light.
—W. L. Watkinson, *The Fatal Barter*, pp. 110-126.

Reference.—XIII. 21.—G. H. Morrison, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxii. 1902, p. 415.

'He took not away the pillar of the cloud by day, nor the pillar of fire by night, from before the people.'—Exodus xiii. 22.

Such was to be our Church, a church not made with hands, catholic, universal, all whose stones should be living stones, its officials the cherubim of Love and Knowledge, its worship wiser and purer action than has before been known to men. To such a Church men do indeed constitute the state, and men indeed we hope form the American Church and State, men so truly human that they could not live while those made in their own likeness were bound down to the condition of brutes. Should such hopes be baffled, should such a Church fall in the building, should such a state

find no realization except to the eye of the poet, God would still be in the world, and surely guide each bird, that can be patient, on the wing to its home at last. But expectations so noble, which find so broad a basis in the past, which link it so harmoniously with the future, cannot lightly be abandoned. The same Power leads by a pillar of cloud as by a pillar of fire—the Power that deemed even Moses worthy only of a distant view of the Promised Land.—Margaret Fuller.

Did you ever think of the spiritual meaning of the pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night, as connected with our knowledge and our ignorance, our light and our darkness, our gladness and our sorrow? The everyday use of this Divine alternation to the wandering children of Israel is plain enough. Darkness is best seen against light, and light against darkness; and its use, in a deeper sense of keeping forever before them the immediate presence of God in the midst of them, is not less plain; but I sometimes think, that we who also are still in the wilderness, and coming up from our Egypt and its flesh-pots, and on our way, let us hope, through God's grace, to the celestial Canaan, may draw from these old-world signs and wonders that, in the midday of knowledge, with daylight all about us, there is, if one could but look for it, that perpetual pillar of cloud—that sacred darkness which haunts all human knowledge, often the most at its highest noon; that 'look that threatens the profane'; that something, and above all that sense of *some one*, that Holy One, who inhabits eternity and its praises, who makes darkness His secret place, His pavilion round about, darkness and thick clouds of the sky.

And again, that in the deepest, thickest night of doubt, of fear, of sorrow, of despair; that then, and all the most then—if we will look in the right *airt*, and with the seeing eye and the understanding heart—there may be seen that pillar of fire, of light and of heat, to guide and quicken and cheer; knowledge and love, that everlasting love which we know to be the Lord's.—Dr. John Brown in *Horæ Subsecivæ*.

Compare also the last paragraph of Huxley's essay on 'Administrative Nihilism' with its account of true education, which, among other benefits, 'promotes morality and refinement, by teaching men to discipline themselves, and by leading them to see that the highest, as it is the only permanent, content is to be attained, not by grovelling in the rank and steaming valleys of sense, but by continual striving towards those high peaks, where, resting in eternal calm, reason discerns the undefined but bright ideal of the highest Good—"a cloud by day, a pillar of fire by night".'

References.—XIV.—T. A. Gurney, *The Living Lord and the Opened Grave*, p. 57. XIV. 2.—H. H. Snell, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxviii. 1905, p. 395. XIV. 3.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxxvii. No. 2188. XIV. 10 and 15.—H. E. Platt, *Church Times*, vol. xliii. 1900, p. 60.

'Stand still and see the salvation of the Lord.'—Exodus xiv. 13.

In explaining (*Apologia*, pp. 262 f.) why he had not come forward in defence of Catholic truth against the scientific heresies of the age, Newman writes: 'It seemed to be specially a time in which Christians had a call to be patient, in which they had no other way of helping those who were alarmed than that of exhorting them to have a little faith and fortitude and to "beware," as the poet says, "of dangerous steps."' In this policy he also felt the Papal authorities would support him. 'And I interpret recent acts of that authority as fulfilling my expectation; I interpret them as tying the hands of a controversialist, such as I should be, and teaching us that true wisdom which Moses inculcated on his people, when the Egyptians were pursuing them, "fear ye not, stand still; the Lord shall fight for you, ye shall hold your peace".'

Faith, whether we receive it in the sense of adherence to resolution, obedience to law, regardfulness of promise, in which from all time it has been the test, as the shield, of the true being and life of man; or in the still higher sense of trustfulness in the presence, kindness, and word of God, in which form it has been exhibited under the Christian dispensation. For, whether in one or other form—whether the faithfulness of men whose path is chosen and portion fixed, in the following and receiving of that portion, as in the Thermopylæ camp; or the happier faithfulness of children in the good giving of their Father, and of subjects in the conduct of their king, as in the 'Stand still and see the salvation of God' of the Red Sea shore, there is rest and peacefulness, the 'standing still' in both, the quietness of action determined, of spirit unalarmed, of expectation unimpatient.—Ruskin, *Modern Painters* (vol. II.).

References.—XIV. 13.—H. H. Snell, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxviii. 1905, p. 395. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. ix. No. 541.

'Speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward.'—Exodus xiv. 15.

The Elizabethan seamen, says Froude in his essay on 'England's Forgotten Worthies,' in all seas and spheres 'are the same indomitable God-fearing men whose life was one great liturgy. "The ice was strong, but God was stronger," says one of Frobisher's men, after grinding a night and a day among the icebergs, not waiting for God to come down and split the ice for them, but toiling through the long hours himself and the rest fending all the vessel with poles and planks, with death glaring at them out of the rocks.'

Dr. W. C. Smith quoted this text at the Jubilee Assembly of the Free Church of Scotland in 1893. He said: 'When Moses first appeared before Pharaoh, all he asked was that the people might be allowed to go a three days' journey into the desert that they might offer to the Lord those sacrifices which it was not lawful to offer in Egypt, where bulls and goats

were not sacrifices but deities. There was no sort of deception in that request. Moses, you may be very certain, honestly meant to return as soon as the religious rites had been performed. But when Israel had left Goshen the very first word that God said to his servant was "Speak to the children of Israel that they go forward". *Nulla vestigia retrorsum.* Their way lay onward and they were to realize the great history and the noble destiny to which they had been appointed.'

References.—XIV. 15.—R. Nicholls, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxxviii. 1890, p. 138. F. W. Farrar, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lix. 1901, p. 1. J. H. Devonport, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxi. 1902, p. 253. W. Ross Taylor, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxvi. 1904, p. 168. H. H. Snell, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxviii. 1905, p. 395. Bishop Creighton, *University and other Sermons*, p. 160. J. Vaughan, *Sermons Preached in Christ Church, Brighton*, (7th Series), p. 15. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. x. No. 548; *ibid.* vol. xlix. No. 2851.

'Lift thou up thy rod, and stretch out thine hand over the sea.
—Exodus xiv. 16.

When Moses held the rod over the Red Sea, he was the sign of man holding up the serpent in triumph to the view of the creation, and in right of his victory exercising dominion, long lost but now recovered. That is still a prophecy. . . . The power by which this is now carrying forward is the spirit of Christ in man's heart. This is the true preparation for the cleansing of the leprosy and the binding of Satan; and the signs are prophetic pictures to animate hope. —Thomas Erskine.

Perhaps it is not improbable that the grand moral improvements of a future age may be accomplished in a manner that shall leave nothing to man but humility and grateful adoration. His pride so obstinately ascribes to himself whatever good is effected on the globe, that perhaps the Deity will evince his own interposition by events as evidently independent of the right of man as the rising of the sun. It may be that some of them may take place in a manner but little connected even with human operation. Or if the activity of men shall be employed as the means of producing all of them, there will probably be as palpable a disproportion between the instrument and the events, as there was between the rod of Moses and the amazing phenomena which followed when it was stretched forth. No Israelite was foolish enough to ascribe to the rod the power that divided the sea; nor will the witnesses of the moral wonders to come attribute them to man.—John Foster, on the *Application of the Epithet Romantic*, v.

References.—XIV. 16.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons Preached in Sackville College Chapel*, vol. iii. p. 320. XIV. 19.—N. M. Wright, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxxii. 1907, p. 57. XIV. 19, 20.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxx. No. 1793. XIV. 19-31.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—Exodus*, etc., p. 52. XIV. 20.—E. E. Cleal, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxiv. 1903, p. 425.

'And the children of Israel went into the midst of the sea.'—Exodus xiv. 22.

The Israelites, marching up to the edge of the Red Sea till the waves parted before their feet, step by step, are often taken as an illustration of what our faith should do—advance to the brink of possibility, and then the seemingly impossible may be found to open.—Dr. John Ker, *Thoughts for Heart and Life*, p. 101.

'And the Lord looked unto the host of the Egyptians through the pillar of fire and of the cloud, and troubled the host of the Egyptians.'—Exodus xiv. 24.

Compare the dialogue between Helstone and Moore in the third chapter of *Shirley*, where in answer to the latter's cynical remark that 'God often defends the powerful,' Helstone cries out: 'What! I suppose the handful of Israelites standing dry-shod on the Asiatic side of the Red Sea, was more powerful than the host of the Egyptians drawn up on the African side? Were they more numerous? Were they better appointed? Were they more mighty, in a word—eh? Don't speak, or you'll tell a lie, Moore; you know you will. They were a poor over-wrought band of bondsmen. Tyrants had oppressed them through four hundred years; a feeble mixture of women and children diluted their thin ranks; their masters, who roared to follow them through the divided flood, were a set of pampered Ethiops, about as strong and brutal as the lions of Libya. They were armed, horsed, and charioted, the poor Hebrew wanderers were afoot; few of them, it is likely, had better weapons than their shepherds' crooks, or their masons' building-tools; their meek and mighty leader himself had only his rod. But bethink you, Robert Moore, right was with them; the God of Battles was on their side. Crime and the lost archangel generalled the ranks of Pharaoh, and which triumphed? We know that well: "The Lord saved Israel that day out of the hand of the Egyptians, and Israel saw the Egyptians dead upon the sea-shore"; yea, "the depths covered them, they sank to the bottom as a stone". The right hand of the Lord became glorious in power; the right hand of the Lord dashed in pieces the enemy!' 'You are all right; only you forget the true parallel: France is Israel, and Napoleon is Moses. Europe, with her old over-gorged empires and rotten dynasties, is corrupt Egypt; gallant France is the Twelve Tribes, and her fresh and vigorous Usurper the Shepherd of Horeb.' 'I scorn to answer you.'

'And the Lord overthrew the Egyptians in the midst of the sea.'—Exodus xiv. 27.

Napoleon, when at Suez, made an attempt to follow the supposed steps of Moses by passing the creek at this point; but it seems, according to the testimony of the people of Suez, that he and his horsemen managed the matter in a way more resembling the failure of the Egyptians than the success of the Israelites. According to the French account, Napoleon got out of the difficulty by that warrior-like presence of mind which served him so well when the fate of nations depended on the decision of a moment; he commanded his horsemen to disperse in all directions, in order to multiply the chances of finding shallow water, and was thus enabled to discover a

line by which he and his people were extricated. The story told by the people of Suez is very different; they declare that Napoleon parted from his horse, got water-logged and nearly drowned, and was only fished out by the aid of the people on shore.—KINGLAKE, *Eothen*, chap. XXII.

'But the children of Israel walked upon dry land in the midst of the sea.'—EXODUS XIV. 29.

THE sack of Jewry after Jewry was the sign of popular triumph during the Barons' War. With its close fell on the Jews the more terrible persecution of the law. . . .At last persecution could do no more, and on the eve of his struggle with Scotland, Edward, eager for popular favour, and himself swayed by the fanaticism of his subjects, ended the long agony of the Jews by their expulsion from the realm. Of the sixteen thousand who preferred exile to apostasy few reached the shores of France. Many were wrecked, others robbed and flung overboard. One shipmaster turned out a crew of wealthy merchants on to a sandbank, and bade them call a new Moses to save them from the sea.—GREEN, *Short History of English People*, pp. 198-199.

REFERENCES.—XIV. 30.—Phillips Brooks, *The Mystery of Iniquity*, p. 55. C. Brown, *The Birth of a Nation*, p. 130.

'And Israel saw that great work which the Lord did upon the Egyptians: and the people feared the Lord.'—EXODUS XIV. 31.

SOME believe the better for seeing Christ's sepulchre; and, when they have seen the Red Sea, doubt not of the miracle. Now contrarily, I bless myself and am thankful that I lived not in the days of miracles; that I never saw Christ nor His disciples. I would not have been one of those Israelites that passed the Red Sea; nor one of Christ's patients, on whom he wrought His wonders; then had my faith been thrust upon me; nor should I enjoy that greater blessing pronounced to all who believe and saw not.—SIR THOMAS BROWNE, *Religio Medici* (pt. i.).

REFERENCES.—XV.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxxix. No. 2301. XV. 1, 2.—*Ibid.* vol. xxxi. No. 1867. XV. 1-21.—*Ibid.* vol. xliv. No. 2569.

'The Lord is my strength and song, and He is become my salvation: He is my God.'—EXODUS XV. 2.

HAPPY the heart that has learned to say *my* God! All religion is contained in that short expression, and all the blessedness that man or angel is capable of.—THOMAS ERSKINE.

'He is my God . . . my father's God.'

COMPARE the early reflection of Dr. John G. Paton, the New Hebrides missionary, as he watched the piety of his old father in the home: 'He walked with God; why may not I?'

LORD, I find my Saviour's genealogy strangely chequered with four remarkable changes in four immediate generations:—

1. Rehoboam begat Abijam: i.e. a bad father begat a bad son.

2. Abijam begat Asa: i.e. a bad father begat a good son.

3. Asa begat Jehoshaphat: i.e. a good father begat a good son.

4. Jehoshaphat begat Joram: i.e. a good father begat a bad son.

I see, Lord, from this that my father's piety cannot be entailed: that is bad news for me. But I see also that actual impiety is not always hereditary: that is good news for my son.—THOMAS FULLER.

REFERENCES.—XV. 2.—R. E. Hutton, *The Crown of Christ*, vol. i. p. 53. XV. 2-13.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—Exodus*, etc., p. 61.

'The Lord is a Man of war.'—EXODUS XV. 3.

IT may help us to understand the scrupulous regard for the rights of the God of War entertained by the Gauls, the Hebrews, and other nations of antiquity, if we look for a moment at the traces of this feeling which manifest themselves among the civilized nations of modern times: I need only allude to the singing of solemn *Te Deums* after victory, or to our praying in this country that our Queen 'may be strengthened to vanquish and overcome all her enemies,' and to our adorning our cathedrals with the tattered flags of the foreigner. That 'the Lord is a Man of war' is a sentiment by no means confined to the song of Moses; it is found to be still a natural one; and I need only remind you of the poet Wordsworth's ode for the English thanksgiving on the morning of the 18th day of January, 1816, and more especially the following lines:—

> The fierce tornado sleeps within thy courts—
> He hears the word—he flies—
> And navies perish in their ports;
> For thou art angry with thine enemies.

RHYS, *Celtic Heathenism*, p. 52.

ANTICIPATIONS OF FAITH

'Thou in Thy mercy hast led forth the people which Thou hast redeemed: Thou hast guided them in Thy strength unto Thy holy habitation,' etc.—EXODUS XV. 13-18.

'THOU in Thy mercy hast led forth the people which Thou hast redeemed.' He had only led them forth a single night's journey, but in that single night's journey they saw the completion of the whole long journey they were to take. In the anticipation of faith victory is already obtained before the war has commenced.

I. When we come to ask ourselves the secret of this triumphant anticipation we shall find that it is all expressed in one single sentence—'Thou hast *redeemed*'. The joyful confidence of the Israelites sprang not merely from the abstract consideration that the God Who had shown Himself so strong to save already, was capable of any further exhibition of strength that might be demanded of Him. Beyond all that there was the consideration that the deliverance of the present was a part of one grand purpose completed already in the mind of God; a purpose which had been indicated to them in the mission of Moses.

II. We too have been the subjects of a great deliverance, a deliverance as supernatural in its character and as astonishing in its conditions as ever was the

deliverance of Israel from Egypt. This deliverance is also the product of redemption. We are saved in order that we may rise to the prize of our high calling, and become inheritors of our true Land of Promise; and the first great deliverance is with us also surely an earnest and a pledge of all that is to follow.

III. Instead of joyous anticipation, how common a thing it is to meet with gloomy forebodings on the part of the newborn children of God, fresh from the cross of Christ, just rising, as we may say, spiritually out of the waters of the Red Sea.

How common a thing it is to meet with young Christians who seem indeed to be on the right side of the Red Sea, but who appear to be more inclined to wring their hands in terror than to 'sound the loud timbrel' in exultation!

And thus our anticipations of coming disaster take all the bloom off our early joy, and mar our triumph before it has well begun. And thus we pave the way for failure; for if we begin by doubting the God who has redeemed us, at the very outset of our Christian life, when the great fact of deliverance lies fresh before our view, how can we expect to trust Him better when the actual struggle has begun? and not to trust Him is to ensure necessary defeat and failure.

Now all this dismal apprehension, this cowardly misgiving, comes of our not sufficiently realizing what it is that is contained in redemption. We do not see that our justification is not only a fact of the present, but a pledge for the future.

We forget that we have passed from nature into grace, and now we have to count upon Divine resources. We forget that Christ is the *First* and the *Last;* that as He is the Alpha, so He is also the Omega, and that He is all the alphabet between the Alpha and Omega.—W. Hay M. H. Aitken, *The Highway of Holiness*, p. 63.

'The people shall hear and be afraid; sorrow shall take hold on the inhabitants of Palestina. Then the dukes of Edom shall be amazed; the mighty men of Moab, trembling shall take hold upon them; all the inhabitants of Canaan shall melt away.'—Exodus xv. 14-15.

Dr. Chalmers used to quote these verses as an illustration of verbal suggestiveness: 'I have often felt, in reading Milton and Thomson, a strong poetical effect in the bare enumeration of different countries, and this strongly enhanced by the statement of some common and prevailing emotion, which passed from one to another.'

Reference.—XV. 17.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—Exodus*, etc., p. 63.

And Miriam the prophetess took a timbrel in her hand; and all the women went out after her with timbrels and with dances.'—Exodus xv. 20.

In the seventh letter of *Time and Tide* Ruskin describes a monotonous, twitching, girl's dance which he once witnessed in the theatre. 'While this was going on, there was a Bible text repeating itself over and over again in my head, whether I would or no,' *viz.*, this verse of Exodus. 'The going forth of the women of Israel after Miriam with timbrels and with dances was, as you doubtless remember, their expression of passionate triumph and thankfulness, after the full accomplishment of their deliverance from the Egyptians. That deliverance had been by the utter death of their enemies, and accompanied by stupendous miracle; no human creature could, in an hour of triumph, be surrounded by circumstances more solemn. Consider only for yourself what that "seeing of the Egyptians dead upon the seashore" meant to every soul that saw it. And then reflect that these intense emotions of mingled horror, triumph and gratitude were expressed, in the visible presence of the Deity, by music and dancing . . . both music and dancing being, among all ancient nations, an appointed and very principal part of the worship of the gods, and that very theatrical entertainment at which I sate thinking on these things for you—that pantomime, which depended throughout for its success on our appeal to the vices of the lower London populace, was, in itself, nothing but a corrupt remnant of the religious ceremonies which guided the most serious faiths of the Greek mind.'

References.—XV. 20.—J. Vickery, *Ideals of Life*, p. 271. J. G. Stevenson, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lvii. 1905, p. 38. XV. 22-26.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxxix. No. 2301.

'And when they came to Marah, they could not drink of the waters of Marah, for they were bitter, and the people murmured against Moses.'—Exodus xv. 23-24.

The enthusiasm with which men of all classes had welcomed William to London at Christmas had greatly abated before the close of February. The new king had, at the very moment at which his fame and fortune reached the highest point, predicted the coming reaction. That reaction might, indeed, have been predicted by a less sagacious observer of human affairs. For it is to be chiefly ascribed to a law as certain as the laws which regulate the succession of the seasons and the course of the trade winds. It is the nature of man to overrate present evil, and to underrate present good; to long for what he has not, and to be dissatisfied with what he has. This propensity, as it appears in individuals, has often been noticed both by laughing and by weeping philosophers. It was a favourite theme of Horace and of Pascal, of Voltaire and of Johnson. To its influence on the fate of great communities may be ascribed most of the revolutions and counter revolutions recorded in history. A hundred generations have passed away since the first great national emancipation of which an account has come down to us. We read in the most ancient of books that a people bowed to the dust under a cruel yoke, scourged to toil by hard taskmasters, not supplied with straw, yet compelled to furnish the daily tale of bricks, became sick of life, and raised such a cry of misery as pierced the heavens. The slaves were wonderfully set free; at the moment of their liberation they raised a song of gratitude and triumph; but in a few hours they began to regret their slavery, and to reproach the leader who had decoyed them away from the savoury fare of the house of bondage to the dreary waste which still

separated them from the land flowing with milk and honey. Since that time the history of every great deliverer has been the history of Moses retold. Down to the present hour rejoicings like those on the shore of the Red Sea have ever been speedily followed by murmurings like those at the Waters of Strife. The most just and salutary revolution must produce much suffering. The most just and salutary revolution cannot produce all the good that had been expected from it by men of uninstructed minds and sanguine tempers. Even the wisest cannot, while it is still recent, weigh quite fairly the evils which it has caused against the evils which it has removed. For the evils which it has caused are felt, and the evils which it has removed are felt no longer.

Thus it was now in England. The public was, as it always is during the cold fits which follow its hot fits, sullen, hard to please, dissatisfied with itself, dissatisfied with those who had lately been its favourites. —Macaulay, *History of England*, chap. xi.

Though every man of us may be a hero for one fatal minute, very few remain so after a day's march even. —George Meredith, *The Ordeal of Richard Feverel*, chap. xxx.

References.—XV. 23.—T. L. Cuyler, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxvii. 1905, p. 62. XV. 23-25.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xvii. No. 987. A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—Exodus*, etc., p. 64. R. Winterbotham, *Sermons and Expositions*, p. 46. XV. 25.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons for the Church Year*, vol. ii. p. 185. T. G. Rooke, *The Church in the Wilderness*, p. 36. F. B. Meyer, *The British Weekly Pulpit*, vol. ii. p. 561. XV. 26.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxviii. No. 1664. XV. 27.—C. Silvester Horne, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxvi. 1904, p. 87. G. Dawson, *Sermons*, p. 19. XVI.—J. McNeill, *British Weekly Pulpit*, vol. ii. p. 489. XVI. 1-5, 11-36.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxxix. No. 2332.

'And the whole congregation of the children of Israel murmured against Moses and Aaron.'—Exodus xvi. 2.

It is 'worthy of remark,' Milton indignantly observes in his *Second Defence*, 'that those who are the most unworthy of liberty are wont to behave most ungratefully towards their deliverers'.

Compare the further application of this passage by Milton in his tract on 'The Ready and Easy Way to Establish a Free Commonwealth, and the Excellence thereof, compared with the Inconveniences and Dangers of Readmitting Kingship in this Nation'. Towards the close of his remonstrance, he writes thus: 'If the people be so affected as to prostitute religion and liberty to the vain and groundless apprehension that nothing but kingship can restore trade . . . and that therefore we must forego and set to sale religion, liberty, honour, safety, all concernments Divine or human, to keep up trading: if, lastly, after all this light among us, the same reason shall pass for current, to put our necks again under kingship, as was made use of by the Jews to return back to Egypt and to the worship of their idol queen, because they falsely imagined that they then lived in more plenty and prosperity; our condition is not sound, but rotten, both in religion and all civil prudence. . . . But I trust I shall have spoken persuasion to abundance of sensible and ingenuous men; to some, perhaps, whom God may raise from these stones to become children of reviving liberty; and may reclaim, though they seem now choosing them a captain back for Egypt, to bethink themselves a little, and consider whence they are rushing; to exhort this torrent also of the people, not to be so impetuous, but to keep their one channel.'

Contrast the character of the Duke of Wellington, as Coleridge in his *Table-Talk* (4 July, 1830) draws it: 'He seems to be unaccustomed to, and to despise, the inconsistencies, the weaknesses, the bursts of heroism followed by prostration and cowardice, which invariably characterize all popular efforts. He forgets that, after all, it is from such efforts that all the great and noble institutions of the world have come.'

'Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you.'—Exodus xvi. 4.

St. John of the Cross notes on this text that the manna was not given to the Israelites until the corn they had brought from Egypt failed. 'This teaches us that we must first renounce all things, for this manna of the angels neither belongs nor is given to the palate which still relishes the food of men.' He quotes the words of Numbers xi. 4, 'Who shall give us flesh to eat?' 'They would not content themselves with that so simple manna, but desired and begged for manna of flesh. And our Lord was displeased because they wished to mix so low and coarse a food with one so high and pure:—a manna which, simple as it was, contains within itself the savour of all foods.'—*Obras*, vol. i. p. 19.

References.—XVI. 4.—J. B. Mozley, *Sermons Parochial and Occasional*, p. 287. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxxix. No. 2332. XVI. 4-12.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—Exodus*, etc., p. 65. XVI. 14, 15.—R. E. Hutton, *The Crown of Christ*, vol. ii. p. 239.

HOLY COMMUNION: THE BREAD OF LIFE

'And when the children of Israel saw it, they said one to another, What is it? for they wist not what it was. And Moses said unto them, It is the bread which the Lord hath given you to eat.'—Exodus xvi. 15.

Our subject is the supply given by God to His people for one of their great needs. In the wilderness, where no food could grow or could be obtained, God gave His people bread from heaven to eat.

I. The Jews expected the Messiah to give them food from heaven. The manna they expected from their second Redeemer may not have been bodily food; it was, according to some interpreters, food for the soul. The second Redeemer brought with Him from heaven heavenly food. But, alas! the Jews did not recognize the heavenly food when it came.

II. We are travelling through the wilderness of our promised land, and that wilderness provides us with nothing which can supply the wants of our being. God gives us day by day our daily bread, but man cannot *live by bread alone*. So God gives

us something more precious, something which can really sustain our life. He gives us that which is no product of earth, the *true bread from heaven—the living bread*—the only bread which can support us in our journeyings—the only food which can deliver us from death, and that food is the Son of God Whom He sent to be the life of the world.

III. And how do we feed upon Him? We can feed upon Him at any time. We do feed upon Him when our faith goes forth from us and takes hold of Him as the source and stay of our life. But undoubtedly there is a special means provided for us by God that we may feed upon Him, namely, the Sacrament of His Body and Blood.

We need faith above all in our Communions. Faith to realize the Presence of the Saviour—faith to feed upon His Body and Blood—faith to assimilate the Divine life which flows to us from Him. Having deep repentance and true faith, we shall necessarily have fervent love, for we shall know and feel the greatness of God's love to us unworthy sinners. Having then all three Christian virtues, we shall nourish our souls to everlasting life by feeding on the manna in Christ's own way. And having the Divine life within us, we shall pass along our desert way, till Jordan being past, we shall no longer need to receive our heavenly gifts through earthly signs. Sacraments will cease when we see our Lord face to face, even as the manna ceased when the Israelites entered Canaan.—F. Watson, *The Christian Life Here and Hereafter*, p. 79.

References.—XVI. 15.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons on the Blessed Sacrament*, p. 24.

'Gather ye of it, every man.'—Exodus xvi. 16.

The same hand that rained manna upon their tents could have rained it into their mouths or laps. God loves we should take pains for our spiritual food. Little would it have availed them, that the manna lay about their tents, if they had not gone forth and gathered it, beaten it, baked it. Let salvation be never so plentiful, if we bring it not home and make it ours by faith, we are no whit the better.—Bishop Hall.

AN OMER FOR EACH MAN

How great a virtue is temperance, how much of moment through the whole life of man! Yet God commits the managing so great a trust, without particular law or prescription, wholly to the demeanour of every grown man, and therefore when He Himself tabled the Jews from heaven, that omer, which was every man's daily portion of manna, is computed to have been more than might have well sufficed the heartiest feeder thrice as many meals. For those actions which enter not into a man, rather than issue out of him, and therefore defile not, God trusts him with the gift of reason to be his own chooser.—Milton, *Areopagitica*.

References.—XVI. 29.—R. F. Horton, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxx. 1906, p. 1. XVI. 35.—C. Perren, *Revival Sermons in Outline*, p. 229. XVII. 1-7.—K. Moody-Stuart, *Light from the Holy Hills*, p. 42.

'And Moses said unto them, Why strive ye with me? Wherefore do ye tempt the Lord?'—Exodus xvii. 2.

In the first expostulation condemning them of injustice—since not he, but the Lord, hath afflicted them; in the second, of presumption; that since it was God that tempted them by want, they should tempt Him by murmuring. In the one He would have them see their wrong; in the other, their danger.—Bishop Hall.

You, therefore, who wish to remain free, either instantly be wise, or, as soon as possible, cease to be fools; if you think slavery an intolerable evil, learn obedience to reason and the government of yourselves; and finally bid adieu to your discussions, your jealousies, your superstitions, your outrages, your rapine, and your lusts.—Milton, *Second Defence*.

'And Moses cried unto the Lord, saying, What shall I do unto this people? they be almost ready to stone me.'—Exodus xvii. 4.

Compare John Foster's remarks to a misanthropist, in the fourth chapter of *A Man's Writing Memoirs of Himself*: 'Frail and changeable in virtue, you *might* perhaps have been good under a series of auspicious circumstances; but the glory had been to be victoriously good against malignant ones. Moses lost none of his generous concern for a people on whom *you* would have invoked the waters of Noah or the fires of Sodom to return; and that Greater than Moses, who endured from men such a matchless excess of injustice, while for their sake alone He sojourned and suffered on earth, was not alienated to misanthropy in his life or at His death.

'This people.'—Exodus xvii. 4.

The glory of all heroes and patriots grows pale before that of Moses; others deliver, he creates a nation. With him, 'this people' is, for the first time, recognized as a unity, the chaos of warring tribes is subdued into a cosmos, and the unity of a family expanded into the unity of a possible nation. —Miss Wedgwood, *Message of Israel*, p. 44.

Look almost where you will in the wide field of history, you find religion, whenever it works freely and mightily, either giving birth to and sustaining states, or else raising them up to a second life after their destruction. It is a great state-builder in the hands of Moses and Ulfilas, Gregory and Nicholas.—Sir John Seeley, *Natural Religion*, pp. 188 f.

He did not, like the Egyptians, fashion his works of art out of bricks and granite. He erected human pyramids, he carved out human obelisks, he took a poor shepherd tribe, and from it he created a people fit to defy the centuries, a great, a holy, an eternal people, a people of God! With greater justice than the Roman poet might this artist, this son of Amram and Jochebed, boast that he had erected a monument which should outlive all the creations of brass.—Heine.

THE LESSON OF MASSAH AND MERIBAH

'He called the name of the place Massah, and Meribah, because of the striving of the children of Israel, and because they tempted the Lord, saying, Is the Lord among us, or not?'—Exodus xvii. 7.

I. Few incidents during the wanderings in the wilderness made a deeper impression upon the Jews than the striking of the rock by Moses, and the supply of water from it which followed, if, at least, we may judge from the number of references to it in their national literature.

But if, on the one hand, the incident thus stood out brightly as a signal manifestation of God's power and love, there was a darker side to it as well, for on the other hand, it was a no less striking and mournful example of the faithlessness and unbelief of God's people, and as such also it made a deep impression. So in that Psalm which the Christian Church has taken for daily use in her morning service there is a reference which the English reader is apt to miss, for when in the *Venite* the appeal is made, 'To-day if ye will hear His voice,' etc., there is in the original a definite and clear allusion to that which happened 'at Meribah, in the day of Massah'; and these names, which were given to the spot in commemoration of the incident, stood forth to all time as a memorial of Israel's ingratitude, for Meribah means strife and Massah temptation. It was indeed a tempting of God. After so many manifestations of His power and goodness towards them they were still unable to trust Him for an instant.

II. When Israel is said to have 'tempted Jehovah,' it means that they acted as if doubting whether His promise was true, or whether He was really faithful to the character in which He had so often revealed Himself as a present God, able and ready to supply their every need. It indicated on their part a temper of distrust, a readiness to fall into a panic, to doubt God, and so to forsake Him at the first difficulty; and for this it is that it is so often alluded to in the subsequent history as a warning and example to all time.

III. Can we say that we of to-day have no need to lay to heart the warning which is writ so large on the face of the story, and that the temper shown by Israel has no counterpart among us now? The doubt which Israel felt of God's power and presence, because of an unexpected difficulty and a new problem, seems to me typical of that timid, faithless attitude which comes over so many when the advance of knowledge and discovery raises some difficulty with regard to the Christian faith.—Bishop Gibson, *Messages from the Old Testament*, p. 29.

References.—XVII. 8.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xii. No. 712. XVII. 8, 9.—*Ibid.* vol. xxxvii. No. 2233. XVII. 8-11.—R. E. Hutton, *The Crown of Christ*, vol. ii. p. 509. XVII. 9.—*Ibid.* vol. iii. No. 112.

'Choose us out men, and go out, fight with Amalek.'—Exodus xvii. 9.

Then only can we pray with hope, when we have done our best. In vain shall Moses be upon the hill, if Joshua be not in the valley. Prayer without means is a mockery of God.—Bishop Hall.

'And it came to pass, when Moses held up his hand, that Israel prevailed.'—Exodus xvii. 11.

Moses, when the battle was raging, held up his arms to heaven, with the rod of God in his hand; and thus Israel overcame Amalek. Hence a notion got abroad through the world that in times of difficulty or danger the mightiest weapon a man can make use of is prayer. But Moses' arms grew heavy; and he was forced to call in Aaron and Hur to hold them up. In like manner do we all too readily weary of prayer, and feel it become a burthen, and let our hands drop; and then Amalek prevails. . . . As our flesh is so weak, that our prayers soon drop and become faint, unless they are upheld, Christ and the Holy Spirit vouchsafe to uphold our prayers, and to breathe the power of faith into them, so that they may mount heavenward, and to bear them up to the very Throne of Grace.—Julius Hare in *Guesses at Truth*.

References.—XVII. 11.—A. F. Winnington Ingram, *Under the Dome*, p. 75. H.I.M. William II. of Germany, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lix. 1901, p. 49.

'And Aaron and Hur stayed up his hands.'—Exodus xvii. 12.

Aaron was brother to Moses: there cannot be a more brotherly office than to help one another in our prayers, and to excite our mutual devotions. No Christian may think it enough to pray alone. He is no true Israelite that will not be ready to lift up the weary hands of God's saints.—Bishop Hall.

We do not find that Joshua's hands were heavy in fighting, but Moses' hands were heavy in praying. The more spiritual any service is, the more apt we are to fail and flag in it.—Matthew Henry.

References.—XVII. 12.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons Preached in a Religious House*, vol. i. p. 34. XVII. 13.—T. Champness, *New Coins from Old Gold*, p. 66. XVII. 15.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—Exodus*, etc., p. 72. Prof. Findlay, *British Weekly Pulpit*, vol. ii. p. 285. T. G. Rooke, *The Church in the Wilderness*, p. 53. XVIII. 3, 4.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—Exodus*, etc., p. 80. XVIII. 7.—D. Strong, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xlii. 1892, p. 166.

'In the thing wherein they dealt proudly He was above them.'—Exodus xviii. 11.

You cannot do wrong without suffering wrong. 'No man ever had a point of pride that was not injurious to him,' said Burke. . . . Treat men as pawns and ninepins, and you shall suffer as well as they.—Emerson on *Compensation*.

'This thing is too heavy for thee: thou art not able to perform it alone.'—Exodus xviii. 18.

'Manning,' says Mr. Purcell in his *Life* of the great Cardinal (ii. p. 505), 'never understood early or late the wisdom of co-operation; never valued the virtue of competition. His idea was the concentration of authority; one mind to conceive, one hand to execute. This narrowness of mind was his chief intellectual defect. It led by degrees to the isolation of his life.'

'Thou shalt provide out of all the people able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness.'—EXODUS XVIII. 21.

OUR Bishops in St. George's Company will be constituted in order founded on that appointed by the first Bishop of Israel, namely, that their Primate, or Supreme Watchman, shall appoint under him 'out of all the people able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness, and place such over them to be rulers (or, at the least, observers) of thousands, rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens'. . . . Of course for such work, I must be able to find what Jethro of Midian assumes could be found at once in Israel, these 'men of truth, hating covetousness,' and all my friends laugh me to scorn for thinking to find any such. Naturally, in a Christian country, it will be difficult enough; but I know there are still that kind of people among Midianites, Caffres, Red Indians, and the destitute afflicted, and tormented, in dens and caves of the earth, where God has kept them safe from missionaries:—and, as I above said, even out of the rotten mob of money-begotten traitors calling itself a 'people' in England, I do believe I shall be able to extricate, by slow degrees, some faithful and true persons, hating covetousness, and fearing God.

And you will please to observe that this hate and fear are flat opposites one to the other; so that if a man fear or reverence God, he must hate covetousness; and if he fear or reverence covetousness, he must hate God; and there is no intermediate way whatsoever.—RUSKIN, *Fors Clavigera*, Letter lxii.

'Able men, such as fear God.'

THE Italians have an ungracious proverb: *Tanto buon che val niente: so good that he is good for nothing.* And one of the Doctors of Italy, Nicholas Macchiavel, had the confidence to put in writing, almost in plaine Termes: *that the Christian Faith had given up Good Men in prey to those that are tyrannical and unjust.* Which he spake because indeed there never was Law or Sect or Opinion did so much magnifie Goodnesse as the Christian religion doth. Therefore to avoid the Scandall and the Danger both, it is good to take knowledge of the Errours of a Habit so excellent. Seeke the good of other men, but be not in bondage to their Faces or Fancies; for that is but Facilitie or Softnesse; which taketh our honest Minde Prisoner.—BACON, *Essays* ('of Goodnesse').

ONE has nothing to fear from those who fear God.—EUGÉNIE DE GUÉRIN.

REFERENCES.—XVIII. 21.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—Exodus*, etc., p. 88. C. Silvester Horne, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xli. 1892, p. 403. XVIII. 24.—M. Eastwood, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xliv. 1893, p. 22.

'Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto Myself. Now therefore, if ye will obey My voice indeed, and keep My covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto Me.'—EXODUS XIX. 4-5.

A GREAT deliverance, whether of a man or of a society, is a great claim on the life that is saved. The Israelites carried with them a grand inheritance of holiness and truth. They were saved because of it. As a nation they betrayed it.—EDWARD THRING.

REFERENCES.—XIX. 5, 6.—Bishop Gibson, *The Old Testament in the New*, p. 31. XIX. 6.—Bishop Diggle, *Sermons for Daily Life*, p. 100.

'And the Lord said unto Moses, Go unto the people, and sanctify them to-day and to-morrow.'—EXODUS XIX. 10.

AFTER the deification of the emperors we are told that it was considered impious so much as to use any coarse expression in the presence of their images. To Marius the whole of life seemed full of sacred presences demanding of him a similar collectedness.—PATER, *Marius the Epicurean*, i. p. 24.

'The Lord will come down in the sight of all the people upon Mount Sinai.'—EXODUS XIX. 11.

LADY BEAUMONT told me that when she was a child, previously to her saying her prayers, she endeavoured to think of a mountain or great river, or something great, in order to raise up her soul and kindle it.—COLERIDGE, *Anima Poetæ*, p. 56.

'There were thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the mount.'—EXODUS XIX. 16.

RITUALS, Liturgies, Credos, Sinai Thunder: I know more or less the history of these; the rise, progress, decline and fall of these. Can thunder from all the thirty-two azimuths, repeated daily for centuries of years, make God's laws more godlike to me? Brother, No. Perhaps I am grown to be a man now; and do not heed the thunder and the terror any longer! Perhaps I am above being frightened; perhaps it is not Fear, but Reverence alone, that shall now lead me.—CARLYLE, *Past and Present.*

REFERENCE.—XIX. 20.—K. Moody-Stuart, *Light from the Holy Hills*, p. 35.

'And God spake all these words.'—EXODUS XX. 1.

'WE have had thirty years of unexampled clerical activity among us,' said Froude to the St. Andrews' students in 1869. 'Churches have been doubled; theological books, magazines, reviews, newspapers have been passed out by the hundreds of thousands; while by the side of it there has sprung up an equally astonishing development of moral dishonesty. . . . We have false weights, false measures, cheating and shoddy everywhere. Yet the clergy have seen all this grow up in absolute indifference; and the great question which at this moment is agitating the Church of England is the colour of the ecclesiastical petticoats. Many a hundred sermons have I heard in England, many a dissertation on the mysteries of the faith, on the divine mission of the clergy, on apostolical succession, on bishops, and justification, and the theory of good works, and verbal inspiration, and the efficacy of the sacrament; but never, during these thirty wonderful years, never one that I can recollect on common honesty, or these primitive commandments, Thou shalt not lie, and Thou shalt not steal.'

The teaching of art is the suggestion—far more convincing than assertion—of an ethical science, the germs of which are to the mass of mankind incommunicable; and the broad daylight of this teaching can be diffused only by those who live in and absorb the direct splendour of an unknown, and, to the generality, an unknowable sun. The mere ignoring of morality, which is what the more respectable of modern artists profess, will not lift them into the region of such teachers; much less will the denial of morality do so, as some modern artists seem to think. The Decalogue is not art, but it is the guide-post which points direct to where the source of art springs; and it is now, as in the days when Numa and Moses made their laws:—he is profane who presents to the gods the fruit of an unpruned vine; that is, sensitive worship before the sensitive soul has been sanctified by habitual confession of and obedience to the rational; and still worse than he who offers the Muses the 'false fire' of his gross senses, is he who heats the flesh-pots of Egypt with flames from the altar, and renders emotions, which were intended to make the mortal immortal, themselves the means and the subjects of corruption. Of all kinds of corruption, says St. Francis of Sales, the most malodorous is rotten lilies. —Coventry Patmore, *Religio Poetæ*, pp. 88, 89.

There is no strange self-deceit more deeply and obstinately fixed in men's hearts than this: that those whom God favours may take liberties that others may not; that religious men may venture more safely to transgress than others; that good men may allow themselves to do wrong things. There is no more certain fact in the range of human experience than that with strong and earnest religious feeling there may be a feeble and imperfect hold on the moral law, often a very loose sense of justice, truth, purity. . . . All history is full of warnings: of great religious characters spoiled or distorted, of great religious efforts hopelessly marred and degenerate, because in the eagerness and confidence of a good intention the Ten Commandments were left on one side, or kept out of view, or it was taken for granted that of course they were obeyed, because people meant to do God service.—R. W. Church, *Discipline of Christian Character*, pp. 41, 48.

References.—XX. 1.—T. F. Lockyer, *The Inspirations of the Christian Life*, p. 19. F. W. Farrar, *The Voice from Sinai*, p. 37. H. Scott Holland, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxix. 1906, p. 264. XX. 1, 2.—G. S. Barrett, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxi. 1902, p. 214. XX. 1-11.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—Exodus*, etc., p. 97. XX. 1-17.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. li. No. 2928.

'I am the Lord thy God.'—Exodus xx. 2.

'I have many times essayed,' said Luther in his *Table-Talk*, 'thoroughly to investigate the Ten Commandments; but at the very outset, "I am the Lord thy God," I stuck fast; that very one word, I, put me to a *non-plus*. He that has but one word of God before him, and out of that word cannot make a sermon, can never be a preacher.'

FROM EGYPT TO CANAAN

'I am the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.'—Exodus xx. 2.

Life is a journey, on which we did not start for ourselves to travel to God; but He started us. He brought us out of the dark night of nothingness, and made us living creatures; He gave us man's powers of thinking and working and loving. It was not, we may be sure, for nothing. This is true of the life of each one of us; it is true of that larger life of which we are each one little part, the life of mankind on earth. What God begins, He means to carry on, and to bring to a good end. And so the very root truth of religion is this: God is, and there is a purpose in life.

I. Redemption has been wrought for us; and we walk in the light of it. Egypt and the Red Sea lie behind. Consider what this means. What is the bondage under which the world groans? (1) There is the bondage of sin: the evil which holds us, and we cannot do right. But Jesus Christ broke that bondage once for all by being entirely and perfectly good; by making a good human life a living reality, and not merely a dream; so that now even our imperfect goodnesses, joining on to Him, have got a sure promise of victory. (2) There is the bondage of guilt. But Jesus Christ broke that bondage too, He 'made peace through the blood of His Cross'. (3) There is once more the bondage of pain and grief and death: but Christ suffered every pain of that iron slavery; He died the death of the slave, and through death, like a new Red Sea, passed to victory.

II. How true it is that the Christian Church is the body which bears the stamp of that deliverance. You see it in her faith; in her sure and certain hope; in her patience and her joy. She knows whence she started: the start has made her sure of the finish.

III. And that is what in the Church each of us must learn. The true Christian is a man upon whose life, mind, and character a great deliverance from God has set its stamp. The power of it was given to each of us in our baptism. That is our beginning; from it we are to go, sure that God is with us, sure that He will be with us to bring us through; sure that He Who brought us out of Egypt has strength to bring us to Canaan, and means to do it; sure that He will perform the cause which we have in hand.

This is what gives its strength and firmness to the Christian character, and lights it with hope and joy and peace which are not of the world. But this also is what makes us penitent. What will stir us really to repent is not to be told that if we do perhaps God will redeem us, but to know of a surety that He has redeemed us; that we have been forgetfully, ungratefully, rebelliously sinning against our redemption; but that the Redeemer, with His long-suffering patience, waits for us to turn to Him, and when we do so, will accomplish for us His Redemption.—Bishop Talbot, *Sermons Preached in the Leeds Parish Church*, 1889-95, p. 117.

REFERENCE.—XX. 2, 3.—Bishop Gore, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lvii. 1900, p. 155.

'Thou shalt have no other gods before Me.'—EXODUS xx. 3.

'WHAT is the whole Psalter,' said Luther, 'but merely thought and exercises on the First Commandment?'

'IT is evident to my reason that the existence of God,' says Coleridge in his *Omeriana*, 'is absolutely and necessarily insusceptible of a scientific demonstration, and that Scripture has so represented it. For it commands us to believe in one God. *I am the Lord thy God: thou shalt have none other gods but Me.* Now all commandment necessarily relates to the will; whereas all scientific demonstration is independent of the will.'

ALL self-sacrifice, made solely for the love of man, or for the gratification of some merely human ambition, is not a righteous but a sinful thing—and, as sin, will assuredly find its punishment. This furnishes, apparently, a solution to the great mystery, why so many noble self-sacrifices are so futile, so aimless, so positively injurious. 'I am the Lord thy God; thou shalt have none other gods but Me.' If we make to ourselves dols of any sort—that is, if we allow love to conquer right, and set aside what we ought to do in favour of what we like to do, we suffer accordingly—and God Himself, who is justice as well as mercy, cannot save us from suffering.—MRS. CRAIK, *Sermons Out of Church*, pp. 39-40.

REFERENCES.—XX. 3.—'Plain Sermons' by contributors to the *Tracts for the Times*, vol. ix. p. 240. F. W. Farrar, *The Voice from Sinai*, p. 105; see also *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xl. 1891, p. 129. H. J. Wilmot-Buxton, *The School of Christ*, p. 73. W. C. E. Newbolt, *Church Times*, vol. xxix. 1891, p. 1059. G. Campbell Morgan, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lvii. 1900, p. 61. G. S. Barrett, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxi. 1902, p. 264.

'Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image.'—EXODUS xx. 4.

'IN regard to idolatry,' says Melanchthon to Calvin in Landor's *Imaginary Conversations*, 'I see more criminals who are guilty of it than you do. I go beyond the stone quarry and the pasture, beyond the graven image and the ox-stall. If we bow before the distant image of God, while there exists within our reach one solitary object of substantial sorrow, which sorrow our efforts can remove, we are guilty (I pronounce it) of idolatry; we prefer the intangible effigy to the living form. Surely we neglect the service of our Maker if we neglect His children.'

'Thou shalt not.'—EXODUS xx. 4.

THERE is a whole life reluctant as well as a life consenting. The involuntary words, the thoughts we would not think, the things we would not do, and those that we do not love, are among the strongest influences of our lives.—MISS THACKERAY in *Old Kensington*.

REFERENCES.—XX. 4.—F. W. Farrar, *The Voice from Sinai*, pp. 123, 321; see also *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xl. 1891, p. 145. XX. 4, 5.—J. Hamilton, *Faith in God*, p. 61. XX. 4, 5, 6.—Bishop Gore, *Church Times*, vol. xliii. 1900, p. 315; see also *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lvii. 1900, p. 161. G. S. Barrett, *ibid.* vol. lxi. 1902, p. 358.

AN INHERITANCE OF BLESSING

'I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate Me; and showing mercy unto thousands of them that love Me, and keep My commandments.'—EXODUS xx. 5, 6.

I. Visiting the Sins of the Fathers upon the Children.—The Jews spoke of that visitation as a Divine punishment for a particular sin. Here we have a law of nature, a law which is continually fulfilling itself in that district of nature which we call human society. The moral struggle of each man that is born into the world is made harder for him by each failure to resist sin on the part of those who went before him. When we hear men speak of the law of heredity, it is this that they generally have in their minds, the transmitted tendency to evil.

II. Visiting the Sins of the Fathers upon the Children.—Is that all? Nay; for He shows *mercy unto thousands of them that love Him and keep His commandments.*

The inheritance of evil is not the sole inheritance which we receive from our forefathers. The scathing satire which Shakespeare puts into the mouth of Antony:—

> The evil that men do lives after them;
> The good is oft interred with their bones,

was certainly not intended to teach that the influence of evil is more potent than the influence of good. There is no law of life which tells that evil tendencies are handed down from father to son which does not tell us more plainly that good tendencies are. That, indeed, is the very law by which the world grows. The survival of the fittest—what does it mean but that good is more enduring than evil? That evil propagates itself is true; but in each succeeding generation its influence becomes less and less baneful. The curse is to the third and fourth generation. Good, on the other hand, increases in power and in fertility as it is handed on from one to another in the march of the race.

III. The true inheritance of the Christian soul is the grace of Jesus Christ, Incarnate, tempted, suffering, but victorious over sin as over death. Here again is a heritage which comes to you through no conscious act of your own. Just as surely as the disciplined lives of your fathers make it easier for you to lead disciplined lives, far more surely than the sins of your fathers beset you in your conflict with sin is the grace of Christ yours for battle, for endurance, for achievement. Here at least is an inheritance with no taint of evil, which may be used for yourselves and for those who shall come after you in untold blessing. *Ye see your calling.* And the Voice which calls you is the Voice of Jesus Christ Himself, in whose Body ye are

very members incorporate.—J. H. Bernard, *Via Domini*, p. 92.

References.—XX. 5.—G. Tyrrell, *Oil and Wine*, p. 230. C. Kingsley, *Sermons on National Subjects*, pp. 144, 153. XX. 5, 6.—A. H. Moncure Sime, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. li. 1897, p. 74. W. G. Elmslie, *Expository Lectures and Sermons*, p. 150.

'Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain.'
—Exodus xx. 7.

'Many persons,' says Julius Hare in *Guesses at Truth*, 'are so afraid of breaking the third commandment that they never speak of God at all; and to make assurance doubly sure, never think of Him. Others seem to interpret it by the law of contraries: for they never take God's name except in vain.'

THE SACRED BANNER

'Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain; for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh His name in vain.'—Exodus xx. 7.

The Hebrew word translated 'take' has sometimes been connected by commentators with the solemn phrase which refers to Jehovah's name as the banner or standard under which we advance to work or to fight. It was under that standard that Moses and Joshua secured the first victory of the Lord's people in the earliest beginning of their national life and recorded it in the name of Jehovah Nissi—the Lord my banner.

I. New Tests of Loyalty.—'Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain.' The temptation comes in two different ways. Have we a right to claim the title and privileges of Christian believers in the Lord God if we are ceasing firmly and courageously and openly to defend His banner—the banner under which we were enlisted in Baptism—from those who do it wrong? If we think that nothing in the realm of belief matters very much, it is not likely that we shall be particularly brave or outspoken in its defence. To claim as a Christian, the 'holy sanction' of our Redeemer's Name means, or ought to mean, a quite deliberate admission of the demands, sometimes the exacting demands, to which membership in His society makes us liable.

The Church has been put in trust with a sacred deposit of essential truth which God has in Jesus Christ revealed to man, and no respect for other people's opinions, much less any mere good-natured and almost careless kindliness, will justify us in tampering with that deposit or belittling its unique authority.

II. The Spirit of Persecution.—We must be not less sternly on our guard against too ready an appropriation of that sacred banner and its sanctions, on behalf of every honest opinion which we may any of us form in matters of Christian faith or Christian usage. There is more than one way in which genuinely religious people can take the Name of the Lord their God in vain.

III. Conscience and the Law.—The danger is, I suppose, greatest when we reach the border, or cross the border of what is commonly called the realm of conscience. Is it possible that the old-fashioned reverence for law and order shown forth in things Divine and human, in Nature and in national life, has somewhat waned amongst us, and not least amongst earnestly religious men?

IV. 'Verities' and 'Opinions'.—There are great things and small, great issues and small, in our religious life. There are mighty and unchallengeable verities, the things which cannot be shaken, and there are pious and reasonable opinions, and devout and wholesome usages which stand upon a humbler level, and are neither unchallengeable nor unchallenged. Do not confuse the two kinds of verities, or mistake the one for the other.—Archbishop Davidson, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxxii. 1907, p. 218.

References.—XX. 7.—Bishop Gore, *Church Times*, vol. xlii. 1899, p. 174. F. W. Farrar, *The Voice from Sinai*, p. 143; see also *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xl. 1891, p. 321. G. Campbell Morgan, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lvii. 1900, p. 301. G. S. Barrett, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxii. 1902, p. 27.

'Remember the Sabbath Day, to keep it holy.'—Exodus xx. 8.

What is meant by to 'keep holy'? Nothing but to devote ourselves to holy words, works, and life. For the day requires no special hallowing: it is holy in itself; but God wills that it be holy to thee.—Luther.

There was a time when it delighted me to flash my satire on the English Sunday; I could see nothing but antiquated foolishness and modern hypocrisy in this weekly pause from labour and from bustle. Now I prize it as an inestimable boon, and dread every encroachment upon its restful stillness. . . . The idea is surely as good a one as ever came to heavy-laden mortals; let one whole day in every week be removed from the common life of the world, lifted above common pleasures as above common cares. With all the abuses of fanaticism, this thought remained rich in blessings; . . if its ancient use perish from among us, so much the worse for our country.—George Gissing, *Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft*, pp. 86-87.

References.—XX. 8.—J. Percival, *Some Helps for School Life*, p. 186. C. Holland, *Gleanings from a Ministry of Fifty Years*, p. 233. F. W. Farrar, *The Voice from Sinai*, p. 163; see also *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xl. 1891, p. 337. R. W. Church, *Village Sermons* (2nd Series), p. 337. XX. 8, 9.—E. Fowle, *Plain Preaching to Poor People* (3rd Series), p. 25. XX. 8, 11.—Lyman Abbott, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xl. 1891, p. 412. G. Campbell Morgan, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lviii. 1900, p. 13. G. S. Barrett, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxii. 1902, p. 84. XX. 9.—W. J. Hocking, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xli. 1892, p. 284. J. H. Shakespeare, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lviii. 1900, p. 248. XX. 10.—A. Murray, *The Children for Christ*, p. 100.

'Honour thy father and thy mother.'—Exodus xx. 12.

In the first of his lectures on *Alexandria and Her Schools* Kingsley applies this commandment to the true relation of one generation to another. 'On reverence for the authority of bygone generations,

depends the permanence of every form of thought or belief, as much as of all social, national, and family life: but on reverence of the spirit, not of the letter; of the methods of our ancestors, not of their conclusions.'

And this is maternity—to give the best years and best love to ensure the fate of being despised.—Thomas Hardy, *The Return of the Native.*

'I don't know who would be a mother,' says Mrs. Transome to her son in *Felix Holt* (chap. II.), 'if she could foresee what a slight thing she will be to her son when she is old.' And in her essay on Riehl, George Eliot observes how 'among rustic moral tales and parables' of the German peasantry, 'not one is more universal than the story of the ungrateful children, who made their grey-headed father, dependent on them for a maintenance, eat at a wooden trough, because he shook the food out of his trembling hands. Then these same ungrateful children observed one day that their own little boy was making a tiny wooden trough; and when they asked him what it was for, he answered—that his father and mother might eat out of it, when he was a man and had to keep them.'

Of all forms of self-elevation, the one which, even when it amounts to absolute self-sacrifice, we cannot but regard with very tender and lenient eyes, is the devotion of the young to the old, of children to parents. No doubt, there is a boundary beyond which even this ought not to be permitted; but the remedy lies on the elder side. There are such things as unworthy, selfish, exacting parents, to whom duty must be done, simply for the sake of parenthood, without regarding their personality. 'Honour thy father and thy mother' is the absolute command, bounded by no proviso as to whether the parents are good or bad. Of course no one can literally 'honour' that which is bad—still one can respect the abstract bond, in having patience with the individual. But I think every high or honourable instinct in human nature will feel that there is hardly a limit to be set to the devotion of a child to a good parent—righteous devotion, repaying to a failing life all that its own young life once received, of care and comfort and blessing.—Mrs. Craik, *Sermons Out of Church*, pp. 37-38.

References.—XX. 12.—F. W. Farrar, *The Voice from Sinai*, p. 187; see also *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xl. 1891, p. 353. A. Murray, *The Children for Christ*, p. 108. G. Campbell Morgan, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lviii. 1900, p. 93. G. S. Barrett, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxii. 1902, p. 139. XX. 12-21.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—Exodus*, etc., p. 107.

'Thou shalt not kill.'—Exodus xx. 13.

Catholics still revere the memory of Carlo Borromeo, Cardinal Archbishop of Milan, who gave his blessing to Campion and Parson, on their way to stir up rebellion in England, as well as in Ireland, and to assassinate Elizabeth if opportunity should serve. God said, 'Thou shalt do no murder'. The Pope, however, thought that God had spoken too broadly, and that some qualification was required. The sixth commandment could not have been intended for the protection of heretics; and the Jesuits, if they did not inspire, at least believed him.—Herbert Paul, *Life of Froude*, p. 140.

References.—XX. 13.—F. W. Farrar, *The Voice from Sinai*, p. 209; see also *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xli. 1892, p. 1. G. Campbell Morgan, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lviii. 1900, p. 156.

'Thou shalt not commit adultery.'—Exodus xx. 14.

The Bible is God's great Police Court, as well as His Temple, and till life ceases to be coarse, lessons on coarseness will be needed.—Edward Thring.

Those who penetrate below the surface of society cannot bring themselves to speak lightly of these sins. They are destructive alike to the family and to the State. For the State is based on justice, and voluptuousness is a cruel injustice, for it engages in a combat which is both unequal and cowardly; the aggressor risks comparatively nothing, and the victim risks all.—Vinet.

References.—XX. 14.—F. W. Farrar, *The Voice from Sinai*, p. 233. G. Campbell Morgan, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lviii. 1900, p. 294.

'Thou shalt not steal.'—Exodus xx. 15.

Under 'stealing, generically taken,' says Carlyle, 'you may include the whole art of scoundrelism; for what is lying itself but a *theft* of my belief?'

So far as a nation is to be considered a *natural* being, 'thou shalt not steal' is as much a natural law as 'thou shalt not breathe without oxygen'. National life is as impossible without honesty as natural life without oxygen.—Miss Wedgwood, *Message of Israel*, p. 280.

What is there in the world worth lying, or robbing, or ferociously striving for? If one could cheat death by cheating one's neighbour, there might be some sense in it. If one could steal genius or knowledge—could filch away 'this man's art and that man's scope'—in that, too, there would be some show of reason. But nothing worth having is capable of being stolen, either by force or fraud. What can be stolen, or otherwise basely acquired, is the means of enjoying the pleasures of ostentation, sensuality, or sport—the very things which a religion of the intellect would most decisively discount.—*Let Youth But Know*, p. 198.

References.—XX. 15.—S. Pearson, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lii. 1897, p. 99. G. Campbell Morgan, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lviii. 1900, p. 326. G. S. Barrett, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxii. 1902, p. 416. F. W. Farrar, *The Voice from Sinai*, p. 257.

'Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour.'—Exodus xx. 16.

Dr. Johnson, once arguing with Garrick and Gifford on the lack of accent and emphasis in actors' reading, declared, 'Well now, I'll give you something to speak, with which you are little acquainted, and then

we shall see how just my observation is. That shall be the criterion. Let me hear you repeat the ninth commandment, "Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour".' 'Both tried at it,' says Boswell, reporting a friend's account of the incident, 'and both mistook the emphasis, which should be upon *not* and *false witness*. Johnson put them right, and enjoyed his victory with great glee.'

REFERENCES.—XX. 16.—F. W. Farrar, *The Voice from Sinai*, p. 281. G. Campbell Morgan, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lix. 1901, p. 13. G. S. Barrett, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxiii. 1903, p. 35. XX. 17.—F. W. Farrar, *The Voice from Sinai*, p. 302; see also *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xli. 1892, p. 177. G. Campbell Morgan, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lix. 1901, p. 116. G. S. Barrett, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxiii. 1903, p. 123. XX. 18-20.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxxv. No. 2097.

'And they said unto Moses, Speak thou with us, and we will hear: but let not God speak with us, lest we die.'—EXODUS XX. 19.

As men's prayers are a disease of the will, so are their creeds a disease of the intellect. They say with those foolish Israelites, 'Let not God speak to us lest we die. Speak thou, speak any man with us, and we will o ey.' Everywhere I am hindered of meeting God in my brother, because he has shut his own temple doors and recites fables merely of his brother's or his brothers' brother's God.—EMERSON on *Self-Reliance*.

LET nothing come between you and the light. Respect men as brothers only. When you travel to the Celestial City, carry no letter of introduction. When you knock, ask to see God—none of the servants.—THOREAU.

THE Children of Israel in times past said unto Moses, 'Speak thou unto us, and we will hear: let not the Lord God speak to us, lest we die'. Not so, Lord, not so do I beseech Thee. Let not Moses nor any of the prophets speak to me, but rather Thou Thyself, who inspirest and enlightenest all prophets. For Thou, apart from them, canst instruct me perfectly, whereas without Thee they can avail nothing. Let not Moses therefore speak unto me, but Thou, O Lord my God, the Truth Eternal, lest I die and prove unfruitful, being only warmed outwardly and not kindled inwardly.—*The Imitatio Christi* (vol. IV. chap. II.).

REFERENCES.—XX. 21.—'Sermons' by contributors to the *Tracts for the Times*, vol. ii. p. 89. XX. 23.—H. Scott Holland, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxix. 1906, p. 280. XX. 24. (R.V.)—F. S. Webster, *In Remembrance of Me*, p. 11.

'Now these are the judgments which thou shalt set before them.'—EXODUS, XXI. 1.

THE Maker's Laws, whether they are promulgated in Sinai thunder, to the ear or imagination, or quite otherwise promulgated, are the Laws of God; transcendent, everlasting, demanding obedience from all men. The Universe is made by Law; the great Soul of the World is just and not unjust. Look then, if thou have eyes or soul left, into this Shoreless Incomprehensible; into the heart of its tumultuous Appearances, Embroilments and mad Time-Vortexes, is there not, silent, eternal, an All-just, an All-beautiful; sole Reality and ultimate controlling power of the Whole? This is not a figure of speech; this is a fact.—CARLYLE, *Past and Present*.

THE Egyptians were the first people upon the earth who emerged into what is now called civilization. How they lived, how they were governed during the tens of hundreds of generations which intervened between their earliest and latest monuments, there is little evidence to say. At the date when they become distinctly visible they present the usual features of effete Oriental societies; the labour executed by slave gangs, and a rich luxurious minority spending their time in feasting and revelry. Wealth accumulated, Art flourished. Enormous engineering works illustrated the talent or ministered to the vanity of the priestly and military classes. The favoured of fortune basked in perpetual sunshine. The millions sweated in the heat under the lash of the task-master and were paid with just so much of the leeks and onions and flesh-pots as would continue them in a condition to work. Of these despised wretches some hundreds of thousands were enabled by Providence to shake off the yoke, to escape over the Red Sea into the Arabian desert, and there receive a code of laws under which they were to be governed in the land where they were to be planted.

What were these laws? A revelation of the true God was bestowed on them, from which, as from a fountain, a deeper knowledge of the Divine Nature was to flow out over the earth; and the central thought of it was the realization of the Divine government—not in a vague hereafter, but in the living present. The unpractical prospective justice which had become an excuse for tyranny was superseded by an immediate justice in time. They were to reap the harvest of their deeds, not in heaven, but on earth. There was no life in the grave whither they were going. The future state was withdrawn from their sight till the mischief which it had wrought was forgotten. It was not denied, but it was veiled in a cloud. It was left to private opinion to hope or to fear; but it was no longer held out either as an excitement to piety or a terror to evildoers. The God of Israel was a living God, and His power was displayed visibly and immediately in rewarding the good and punishing the wicked while they remained in the flesh.

It would be unbecoming to press the parallel, but phenomena are showing themselves which indicate that an analogous suspension of belief provoked by the same causes may possibly be awaiting ourselves. It may be that we require once more to have the living certainties of the Divine government brought home to us more palpably; that a doctrine which has been the consolation of the heavy-laden for eighteen hundred years may have generated once more a practical infidelity; and that by natural and intelligent agencies, in the furtherance of the everlasting

purposes of our Father in heaven, the belief in a life beyond the grave may again be about to be withdrawn.—FROUDE, *Short Studies*, vol. II.

REFERENCES.—XXI. 5, 6.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. XX. No. 1174. XXII. 21, 22.—H. Adler, *The Orphan and the Helpless*, *Sermons*, 1855-84. XXII. 29.—R. B. Brindley, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. XL. p. 41.

'Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil.'—EXODUS XXIII. 2.

AT certain seasons the only way of being right in the future consists in knowing how to resign ourselves to being unfashionable in the present.—RENAN.

UNIVERSAL suffrage assembled at hustings—I will consult it about the quality of New Orleans pork, or the coarser kinds of Irish butter; but as to the character of men, I will if possible ask it no question: or if the question be asked and the answer given, I will generally consider, in cases of any importance, that the said answer is likely to be wrong,—that I have to listen to the said answer and receive it as authentic, and for my own share to go, and with whatever strength may lie in me, do the reverse of the same. Even so, your Lordship; for how should I follow a multitude to do evil? There are such things as multitudes full of beer and nonsense, even of insincere factitious nonsense, who by hypothesis cannot but be wrong.—CARLYLE, *Latter-day Pamphlets* (ii.).

HUMAN authority at the strongest is but weak, but the multitude is the weakest part of human authority.—JOHN HALES.

REFERENCE.—XXIII. 2.—J. Cole Coghlan, *Penny Pulpit*, vol. xiv. No. 828, p. 293.

'Thou shalt not wrest the judgment of thy poor in his cause.'—EXODUS XXIII. 6.

IT is a lamentable fact that pure and uncorrupt justice has never existed in Spain, as far at least as record will allow us to judge; not that the principles of justice have been less understood there than in other countries, but because the entire system of justiciary administration has ever been shamelessly profligate and vile. Spanish justice has invariably been a mockery, a thing to be bought and sold, terrible only to the feeble and innocent, and an instrument of cruelty and avarice.—BORROW'S *The Gypsies of Spain* (chap. XI. pt. i.).

'The gift blindeth the wise, and perverteth the words of the righteous.'—EXODUS XXIII. 8.

AND that he would for no respect digress from justice well appeared by a plain example of another of his sons-in-law, Mr. Heran. For when he, having a matter before him in the Chancery, presuming too much of his favour, would by him in no wise be persuaded to agree to any indifferent order, then made he in conclusion a flat decree against him. . . . And one Mr. Gresham likewise having a cause depending in the Chancery against him, sent him for a new year's gift a fair cup, the fashion whereof he very well liking caused one of his own to be brought out of his chamber, which he willed the messenger to deliver in recompense, and under other conditions would he in no wise receive it. Many things more of like effect for the declaration of his innocence and clearness from corruption, or evil affection, could I here rehearse besides.—ROPER'S *Life of Sir Thomas More.*

COMPARE the discussion on bribery in Macaulay's *Essay on Bacon.*

'Thou shalt not oppress a stranger; for ye know the heart of a stranger, seeing ye were strangers in the land of Egypt.'—EXODUS XXIII. 9.

IT was God's argument to the Israelites, to be kind to strangers, because themselves had been strangers in the land of Egypt. So should you pity them that are strangers to Christ, and to the hopes and comforts of the saints, because you were once strangers to them yourselves.—BAXTER, *Saints' Rest*, chap. IX.

'The seventh year thou shalt let it rest and lie still; that the poor of thy people may eat.'—EXODUS XXIII. 11.

GOD throws the poor upon our charge—in mercy to *us*. Couldn't He take care of them without us if He wished? are they not His? It's easy for the poor to feel, when they are helped by us, that the rich are a godsend to them; but they don't see, and many of their helpers don't see, that the poor are a godsend to the rich. They're set over against each other to keep pity and mercy and charity in the human heart. If every one were entirely able to take care of himself we'd turn to stone. . . . God Almighty will never let us find a way to quite abolish poverty. Riches don't always bless the man they come to, but they bless the world. And so with poverty; and it's no contemptible commission to be appointed by God to bear that blessing to mankind which keeps its brotherhood universal.—G. W. CABLE, *Dr. Sevier*, p. 447.

REFERENCES.—XXIII. 12.—J. H. Shakespeare, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lviii. 1900, p. 248. XXIII. 14, 15.—A. M. Fairbairn, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxiii. 1903, p. 316. XXIII. 15-17.—G. Monks, *Pastor in Ecclesia*, p. 135. XXIII. 16.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—Exodus*, etc., p. 115. XXIII. 18-20.—Bishop Simpson's *Sermons*, p. 347.

'Thou shalt not seethe a kid in his mother's milk.'—EXODUS XXIII. 19.

'IN less than two minutes,' says Scott, describing at the close of *Kenilworth* the murder of Amy Robsart, 'Foster heard the tramp of a horse in the courtyard, and then a whistle similar to that which was the Earl's usual signal;—the instant after, the door of the Countess's chamber opened, and in the same moment the trap-door gave way. There was a rushing sound—a heavy fall—a faint groan—and all was over. . . . "So pass our troubles," said Varney, entering the room; "I dreamed not I could have mimicked the Earl's call so well." "Oh, if there be judgment in Heaven, thou hast deserved it," said Foster, "and wilt meet it! Thou hast destroyed her by means of her best affections. It is a seething of the kid in the mother's milk!"'

Compare Newman's resentful application of this verse to the behaviour of the Anglican Bishops towards himself in 1843. 'I resigned my living on September the 18th. I had not the means of doing it legally at Oxford. The late Mr. Goldsmid was kind enough to aid me in resigning it in London. I found no fault with the Liberals; they had beaten me in a fair field. As to the act of the Bishops, I thought, to borrow a Scriptural image from Walter Scott, that they had "seethed the kid in his mother's milk".'

Reference.—XXIII. 20, 21.—J. B. Brown, *The Divine Life in Man*, p. 235.

'I will not drive them out all at once.'—Exodus xxiii. 29.

I had never an extraordinary enlargement, either of joy, strength, or sanctification, but the waters dried up. There are no sudden steps in grace; 'I will not drive them out all at once'.—Fraser of Brea, *Memoirs* (chap. i.).

References.—XXIII. 30.—C. Jerdan, *Pastures of Tender Grass*, p. 299. XXIV. 1-12.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—Exodus*, etc., p. 118.

'And Moses alone shall come near the Lord.'—Exodus xxiv. 2.

All deep feelings of a *chronic* class agree in this, that they seek for solitude, and are fed by solitude. Deep grief, deep love, how naturally do these ally themselves with religious feeling!—and all three, love, grief, religion, are haunters of solitary places.—De Quincey.

'All the words which the Lord hath said will we do.'—Exodus xxiv. 3.

Under baleful Atheisms, Mammonisms, Joe-Manton Dilettantisms, with their appropriate Cants and Idolisms, and whatsoever scandalous rubbish obscures and all but extinguishes the soul of man—religion now is; its Laws, written if not on stone tables, yet on the azure of Infinitude, in the inner heart of God's Creation, certain as Life, certain as Death! I say the Laws are there, and thou shalt not disobey them. It were better for thee not. Better a hundred deaths than yes. Terrible 'penalties' withal, if thou still need 'penalties,' are there for disobeying.—Carlyle in *Past and Present.*

Reference.—XXIV. 3.—E. Talbot, *Sermons Preached in the Leeds Parish Church*, 1889-95, p. 126.

THE VISION OF GOD AND THE FEAST BEFORE HIM

'They saw God, and did eat and drink.'—Exodus xxiv. 11.

I. Consider the vision of God possible for us.

The Bible says two things about that. It asserts, and it denies with equal emphasis, the possibility of our seeing Him. That vision which is impossible is the literal vision by sense, or, in a secondary meaning, the full, adequate, direct knowledge of God. The vision which is affirmed is the knowledge of Him, clear, certain, vivid, and, as I believe, yielding nothing to sense in any of these respects.

What lessons does this vision bring for us? That we Christians may, even here and now, see God, the God of the covenant. Christ, the revealer of God, makes God visible to us.

The degree of this vision depends upon ourselves, and is a matter of cultivation. There are three things wanted for sight—something to see; something to see by; something to see with. God has given us the two first, and He will help us to the last if we like. Christ stands before us, at once the Master-Light of all our seeing, and the Object. Faith, meditation, purity, these three are the purging of our vision, and the conditions in us of the sight of God.

II. Notice the feast in the Divine presence.

'They did eat and drink.' That suggests, in the singular juxtaposition of the two things, that the vision of God is consistent with, and consecrates, common enjoyment and everyday life. If we see God there is only one thing that we shall be ashamed to do in His presence, and that is to sin.

That strange meal on the mountain was no doubt made on the sacrifices that had preceded, of which a part were peace-offerings. The same meaning lies in this meal on the mountain that lay in the sacrificial feast of the peace-offering, the same meaning that lies in the great feast of the New Covenant, 'This is My Body; this is My Blood'. The vision of God and the feast on the mountain are equally provided and made possible by Christ our Passover, who was sacrificed for us.

III. We may gather out of this incident a glimpse of a prophetic character, and see in it the perfecting of the vision and of the feast.

Whatever may be the change in manner of knowledge, and in measure of apprehension, and in proximity of presence, there is no change in heaven in the medium of revelation. Christ is forever the Manifester of God, and the glorified saints see God as we see Him in the face of Jesus Christ, though they see that face as we do not.

The feast means perfect satisfaction, perfect repose, perfect gladness, perfect companionship.—A. Maclaren, *The Unchanging Christ*, p. 125.

VISION AND DRUDGERY

'Also they saw God, and did eat and drink.'—Exodus xxiv. 11.

It has been said by a very competent scholar, that this is the most significant chapter in the whole of the Old Testament. It is the basis of that covenant between God and man, which is glorified in the New Covenant of Christ. There was first the shedding of the blood of oxen, and 'This cup is the New Covenant in *My* Blood'. There was the pouring of half the blood upon the altar, in token of lives that were forfeited to God. And then there was the sprinkling of the people with the other half, as if God were saying, 'My children, live again'. For the blood is the life, and God, in covenant-mercy, was redeeming them from the death which they deserved. It was then that Moses and the seventy elders went up-

wards to the rocky heights of Sinai. And above a heaven, blue as a sapphire stone, somehow the vision of the Eternal broke on them. And they saw God, not with the eye of sense, for no man hath seen God at any time—and they saw God and did eat and drink. Is not that a strange conclusion to the matter? It is a magnificent and unequalled anti-climax. They saw God and began to sing His praise? Not so; they saw God and did eat and drink. What does it mean?

I. First, the vision of God is the glory of the commonplace.

It was an old and a widespread belief that the vision of God was the harbinger of death. You are all familiar with Old Testament passages where men have voiced this primitive conviction. We are far away from that conception now, thanks to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Our God is love; He has a Father's heart; He has a Father's yearning for the prodigal. But God was terrible and dreadful once; and to see Him was not a blessing but a woe, driving a man apart from all his fellows into a loneliness horrible as death. I have no doubt that these seventy men of Israel had some such heavy feeling in their hearts. Let them see God, and then farewell for ever to the common lights and shadows of humanity. And so they climbed the hill, and had their vision above the pavement of the sapphire stones, and they saw God, and did eat and drink. Do you see what they were learning in that hour? They were learning that the vision of God does not withdraw us. It is not vouchsafed to drive a man apart, and rob him for ever of familiar joys. It is vouchsafed to consecrate the commonplace; to shed a glory on the familiar table; to send a man back into his daily round with the light that never was on sea or land.

II. The vision of God is the secret of tranquillity.

That day at Sinai, as you may well conceive, had been a day of most intense excitement. It was a day when the most deadened heart was wakened to awe and to expectancy. If that were so with the body of the people, it was doubly so with these seventy elders. Think what it must have signified to them as they clambered up the rocky steeps of Sinai. There God had dwelt: there He had spoken to Moses: there there was blackness and darkness and tempest, and so terrible was the sight that even Moses said, 'I exceedingly fear and quake'. I do not think that these seventy elders were in any state to think of food or drink. Like a soldier in the excitement of the charge, they forgot that they were hungry or athirst. And then they had their vision of the infinite, and it brought them to their quiet selves again, and the tumult and confusion passed away, and they saw God, and did eat and drink. That means that in the vision of God there is a certain tranquillizing power. Just to realize that He is here, is one of the deep secrets of repose. The man who has learned *that* can eat and drink and join in the happiness of feast and fellowship, although his table be set upon Mount Sinai, and be ringed about with darkness and with fire.—G. H. Morrison, *The Return of the Angels*, p. 235.

THE VISION OF GOD

'They saw God, and did eat and drink.'—Exodus xxiv. 11.

Bishop Chadwick remarks on this passage: 'They saw the God of Israel,' and under His feet the blueness of the sky like intense sapphire. And they were secure: they beheld God, and ate and drank.

I. But in privilege itself there are degrees: Moses was called up still higher, and left Aaron and Hur to govern the people while he communed with his God. For six days the nation saw the flanks of the mountain swathed in cloud, and its summit crowned with the glory of Jehovah like devouring fire. Then Moses entered the cloud, and during forty days they knew not what had become of him. Was it time lost? Say rather that all time is wasted except what is spent in communion, direct or indirect, with the Eternal.

The narrative is at once simple and sublime. We are sometimes told that other religions besides our own rely for sanction upon their supernatural origin. 'Zarathustra, Sâkya-Mooni, and Mahomed pass among their followers for envoys of the Godhead; and in the estimation of the Brahmin the Vedas and the laws of Manou are holy, Divine books' (Kuenen, *Religion of Israel*, i. p. 6). This is true. But there is a wide difference between nations which assert that God privately appeared to their teachers, and a nation which asserts that God appeared to the public. It is not upon the word of Moses that Israel is said to have believed; and even those who reject the narrative are not entitled to confound it with narratives utterly dissimilar. There is not to be found anywhere a parallel for this majestic story.

II. But what are we to think of the assertion that God was seen to stand upon a burning mountain?

He it is Whom no man hath seen or can see, and in His presence the seraphim veil their faces.

It will not suffice to answer that Moses 'endured as seeing Him that is invisible,' for the paraphrase is many centuries later, and hostile critics will rule it out of court as an after-thought. At least, however, it proves that the problem was faced long ago, and tells us what solution satisfied the early Church.

With this clue before us, we ask what notion did the narrative really convey to its ancient readers? If our defence is to be thoroughly satisfactory, it must show an escape from heretical and carnal notions of deity, not only for ourselves, but also for careful readers from the very first.

Now it is certain that no such reader could for one moment think of a manifestation thorough, exhaustive, such as the eye receives of colour and of form. Because the effect produced is not satisfaction, but desire. Each new vision deepens the sense of the unseen. Thus we read first that Moses and Aaron, Nadab and

Abihu and the seventy elders, saw God, from which revelation the people felt and knew themselves to be excluded. And yet the multitude also had a vision according to its power to see; and indeed it was more satisfying to them than was the most profound insight enjoyed by Moses. To see God is to sail to the horizon; when you arrive, the horizon is as far in front as ever; but you have gained a new consciousness of infinitude. 'The appearance of the glory of the Lord was seen like devouring fire in the eyes of the children of Israel.' But Moses was aware of a glory far greater and more spiritual than any material splendour. When theophanies had done their utmost, his longing was still unslaked, and he cried out, 'Show me, I pray thee, Thy glory'. To his consciousness that glory was still veiled, which the multitude sufficiently beheld in the flaming mountain. And the answer which he received ought to put the question at rest for ever, since, along with the promise 'All My goodness shall pass before thee,' came the assertion 'Thou shalt not see My face, for no man shall see Me and live'.

III. So, then, it is not our modern theology, but this noble book of Exodus itself, which tells us that Moses did not and could not adequately see God, however great and sacred the vision which he beheld. From this book we learn that, side by side with the most intimate communion and the clearest possible unveiling of God, grew up the profound consciousness that only some attributes and not the essence of deity had been displayed.

REFERENCE.—XXIV. 11.—J. Kerr Campbell, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xli. 1892, p. 119.

'Come up to Me into the mount, and be there; and I will give thee tables of stone, and a law, and commandments, which I have written; that thou mayest teach them.'—EXODUS XXIV. 12.

'THE monastical life,' says Bacon in the second part of *The Advancement of Learning*, 'is not simple, contemplative, but performeth the duty either of incessant prayers and supplications, which hath been truly esteemed as an office in the Church, or else of writing or taking instructions for writing concerning the law of God, as Moses did when he abode so long in the mount. . . . But for contemplation which should be finished in itself, without casting beams upon society, assuredly divinity knoweth it not.'

MY life is not stolen from me. I give it. A pleasure which is for myself alone touches me slightly. It is for myself and for my friends that I read, that I reflect, that I write, that I meditate, that I hear, that I observe, that I feel. I have consecrated to them the use of all my senses.—DIDEROT.

'And Moses went up into the mount.'—EXODUS XXIV. 15.

'THERE was an idea of sanctity,' says Ruskin, in the third volume of *Modern Painters*, 'attached to rocky wilderness, because it had always been among hills that the Deity had manifested Himself most intimately to men, and to the hills that His saints had nearly always retired for meditation, for especial communion with Him, and to prepare for death. Men acquainted with the history of Moses, alone at Horeb, or with Israel at Sinai . . . were not likely to look with irreverent or unloving eyes upon the blue hills that girded their golden horizon, or drew down upon them the mysterious clouds out of the height of the darker heaven.'

How insignificant Sinai appears when Moses stands on its summit! This mountain seems but a pedestal whereon rest the feet of the man, whilst his head reaches to the clouds, where he speaks with God.—HEINE.

'And Moses went into the midst of the cloud.'—EXODUS XXIV. 18.

IF we insist upon perfect intelligibility and complete declaration in every moral subject, we shall instantly fall into misery of unbelief. Our whole happiness and power of energetic action depend upon our being able to breathe and live in the cloud; content to see it opening here and closing there; rejoicing to catch, through the thinnest films of it, glimpses of stable and substantial things; but yet perceiving a nobleness even in the concealment, and rejoicing that the kindly veil is spread where the untempered light might have scorched us, or the infinite clearness wearied.—RUSKIN, *Frondes Agrestes*, p. 24.

THE region of dimness is not wholly without relations towards our moral state.—F. W. NEWMAN.

FORTY DAYS

'Moses was in the mount forty days and forty nights.'—EXODUS XXIV. 18.

MOSES was forty days and forty nights in the mount. He was away. The mount means high elevation, an altitude crowned with golden clouds, utmost distance, perspective, and all the music of mystery. Sometimes we can only say of the great man, legislator, poet, or prophet, He is not here. Where is he? Away. Where? No man can tell; in the hidden places, in the invisible sanctuaries; away among the shaping clouds that are sometimes almost living presences. It is only when we are at some distance from our own life that we can make anything really of it; you cannot deeply consider that problem in the throng, you cannot use your slate and pencil in the great city multitude; you must go away into a mountain or valley or hang over the sanctuary-sea; in order to see yourself you must stand some distance back from yourself.

I. Moses was in the mount forty days and forty nights. What was he receiving? He was receiving the law. Our greatest men are not the men on the streets. We call these men on the streets very active persons, much too active; the law is not a street anecdote or an incident of the thoroughfare, the law is away in the sanctuary of the infinite, the invisible, and the ineffable.

II. Moses was away forty days and forty nights receiving, not inventing, the law. There is a

wondrous deliberation about the movement of God. The few commandments which we once called the law could be written in less than a minute each; it was not the handwriting but the heart-writing that required the time.

III. In Matthew iv. 2 we read that Jesus was tempted in the wilderness, 'And when He had fasted forty days and forty nights, He was afterward an hungered'. Moses and the Lamb; the similarities between their histories are worth tracing out; such collocation of coincidence and repetition constitutes itself into an argument. Forty days and forty nights Jesus was fasting: surely great preparation means great issues; surely this is an athlete in training for some fight; this cannot be a mere pedantic arrangement; we must wait and see what comes of this trial of the soul: it may be that fasting is the true feasting, it may be that this disciplining the body and all that gathering up of force which we call passion or desire may mean that the greatest contest ever fought on the theatre of time is about to take place.

IV. What is the meaning of all this withdrawal, of all this forty days and forty nights' experience?

1. The meaning is rest. The prophets must go away for a time, they must become nothing, enter into a state of negativeness, forget for the time being their own office and function; to forget it may be best to remember it. But the withdrawal must not be too long; too much rest would mean weariness; there is a rest that leads to reluctance, disbelief, and despair. A measurable rest, and then a happy renewal of service, that is the Lord's idea of the ministry of His own discipleship.

2. The meaning is self-culture. A man may be too busy keeping other vineyards to keep his own, a man may be so much from his own fireside that his own children shall be turned into atheists by a misconstruction of his false piety. We should not indulge in any culture that separates us from the people.

3. The meaning is reception. There must be a time of intaking, there must be periods when we are not giving out, but when we are receiving in. Understand therefore that withdrawment from the prophetic office and service, as in the case of Moses and Elijah, does not mean abandonment of that office, but further preparation for it, and that the best withdrawment is a withdrawment which takes us right into the very sanctuary of the soul of Jesus Christ.—Joseph Parker, *City Temple Pulpit*, vol. I. p. 132.

'Purple and scarlet.'—Exodus xxv. 4.

We know it to have been by Divine command that the Israelites, rescued from servitude, veiled the tabernacle with its rain of purple and scarlet, while the under sunshine flashed through the fall of the colour from its tenons of gold.—Ruskin, *Stones of Venice*, (vol. II.).

References.—XXV. 8.—W. Allen Whitworth, *The Sanctuary of God*, p. 1. T. Champness, *New Coins from Old Gold*, p. 32. XXV. 9.—T. M. Morris, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxiv. 1903, p. 228. XXV. 10-22.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xlix. No. 2838. XXV. 15.—S. Baring-Gould, *Sermon Sketches*, p. 19. XXV. 18.—T. Jones, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lii. 1897, p. 268.

THE MERCY-SEAT

Exodus xxv. 18-20.

It would be a great mistake to suppose that the mercy-seat was a mere lid, an ordinary portion of the ark itself. It was made of a different and more costly material, of pure gold, with which the ark was only overlaid. There is separate mention that Bezaleel 'made the ark, . . . and he made the mercy-s at,' and the special presence of God in the Most Holy Place is connected much more intimately with the mercy-seat than with the remainder of the structure. Thus He promises to 'appear in the cloud above the mercy-seat'. And when it is written that 'Moses heard the Voice speaking unto him from above the mercy-seat which is upon the ark of the testimony,' it would have been more natural to say directly 'from above the ark' unless some stress were to be laid upon the interposing slab of gold. In reality no distinction could be sharper than between the ark and its cover, from whence to hear the Voice of God. And so thoroughly did all the symbolism of the Most Holy Place gather around this supreme object, that in one place it is actually called 'the house of the mercy-seat'.

Let us, then, put ourselves into the place of an ancient worshipper. Excluded though he is from the Holy Place, and conscious that even the priests are shut out from the inner shrine, yet the high priest who enters is his brother; he goes on his behalf; the barrier is a curtain, not a wall.

But while the Israelite mused upon what was beyond, the ark, as we have seen, suggests the depth of his obligation; for there is the rod of his deliverance and the bread from heaven which fed him; and there also are the commandments which he ought to have kept. And his conscience tells him of ingratitude and a broken covenant; by the law is the knowledge of sin.

It is therefore a sinister and menacing thought that immediately above the ark of the violated covenant burns the visible manifestation of God, his injured Benefactor.

And hence arises the golden value of that which interposes, beneath which the accusing law is buried, by means of which God 'hides His face from our sins'.

The worshipper knows this cover to be provided by a separate ordinance of God, after the ark and its contents had been arranged for, and finds in it a vivid concrete representation of the idea 'Thou hast cast all my sins behind Thy back'. That this was its true intention becomes more evident when we ascertain exactly the meaning of the term which we have not too precisely rendered 'mercy-seat'.

THE FIRST TOKEN OF DIVINE FELLOWSHIP

'I will commune with thee from above the mercy seat.'—EXODUS XXV. 22.

I. Is it not rather a strange place for communion between God and man. Communion always implies some affinity of nature between two or more minds. One would think the mercy seat the last place for affinity of man with God. It is a meeting of extremes—the Holy One and the conscious sinner, the Righteous Judge and the suppliant for pardon, the Sitter on the Great White Throne and the convicted miscreant at the bar of justice.

II. We could have understood communion with the Divine in *other* quarters. We could have felt it under the throbbing stars, where our hearts vibrate with the sense of the infinite. We could have realized it in the presence of genius where our spirit is made to forget its own limits. We could have learned it even from our moments of spiritual thirst, for the thirst for God implies a capacity for God. But that there should be communion in the moment of our moral conviction, that there should be Divine fellowship in the hour when we recognize that we are clothed in rags—this is a startling thing! And yet it is true. For, what is it that convicts a man? What is it that makes a human soul a suppliant for mercy? It is holiness already begun. The white throne of God is only visible to the eye that is emerging from impure waters. I am never so near to God as when I cry, 'Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!' Not even when vibrating 'neath the stars am I so near as then. The stars reveal something *beyond* me; the conviction of sin reveals something *in* me.

III. George Macdonald has somewhere said that there are colours which are only brought to light by a cloudy day. I think it is pre-eminently true in the sphere of the mercy seat. I never learn that I have a little good in me till I have realized my worthlessness. It is not increased poverty but increased means that makes me a suppliant. It is the light, not the darkness, that brings me to my knees. The shadow that I see is the shadow of my God. I mistake the shadow for nightfall; I sit down to weep. I imagine that I am sitting on the cold ground; and all the time I am on the doorstep of my Father's house, and the door is open, and my Father is coming out to take me in. It is the brightness of God's face that makes me cry for mercy.—G. MATHESON, *Messages of Hope*, p. 113.

REFERENCES.—XXV. 22.—J. W. Atkinson, *The Penny Pulpit*, vol. xiv. No. 841, p. 405. XXV. 30.—A Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—Exodus*, etc., p. 126. XXV. 31. —*Ibid.* p. 134.

'And look that thou make them after their pattern, which was shewed thee in the mount.'—EXODUS XXV. 40.

HE is not altogether silent about religion. But he has the power of suspending absolutely his belief and the natural effect it would have on a thoughtful mind busy with man's nature and fortunes; he lodges it apart, and above him, in dignity and honour, but where it has no more influence on the temptation, the troubles, the issues of the real world than the gods of the epicurean heaven. . . . He looked on it as a sort of art or mystery, with rules and grounds independent of and unconnected with the ordinary works and thought of life.—R. W. CHURCH on Montaigne, *Miscellaneous Essays*, pp. 80-81.

IN different ages, a different pattern is shown to the prophets on the mount; always what is fairer and more august than can be seen in the restless plain of life below. . . . The Soul of Christ, the sinless, risen, and immortal, is the pattern shown to us; shown first upon the field of history, and on the paths of this living world, and then taken to the heavens, to look down thence on the uplifted eye of faith and love throughout successive generations.—MARTINEAU.

EVERY man is tasked to make his life, even in its details, worthy of the contemplation of his most elevated and critical hour.—THOREAU, *Walden*.

REFERENCES.—XXVII. 3-8.—Newton H. Marshall, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxix. 1906, p. 187 XXVIII. 12, 29.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—Exodus*, etc., p. 144.

'And thou shalt make the breastplate of judgment with cunning work . . . and thou shalt set in it settings of stones.' —EXODUS XXVIII. 15, 17.

AARON had to wear upon his breast before the Lord twelve precious stones, *not of one sort*, but each one reflecting the light *differently* from his neighbour. There was one nearly black, whatever the diamond thought of him. But all the stones being set equally upon the priest's breast, no one of them might quarrel with another, saying, 'You are quite wrong, you are; you ought to reflect the light as I do. *You* will never be admitted into the most holy place.' Even the dark jasper reflected its measure of light as freely as brilliant diamond. The former may have a meekness the latter has not. Indeed, it is a known fact that the diamond is *harder* than any other stone. And hardness is distance from life in proportion to the hardness.

One thing is clear, *there is a tribe in Israel corresponding with each stone.* And the Lord requested that He might see the twelve stones upon Aaron's breast, with the names of the Twelve Tribes engraven on them, as often as he appeared before Him to minister in the priest's office (Exod. xxviii. 29).

Perhaps it was in virtue of his representing, impartially, every tribe of God's people, that he obtained Divine responses pertaining to every tribe. A man cannot be the medium of truth to all the tribes of God, unless all truth has a place in him. Learn, whether the priests and ministers of God ought not to comprehend in their souls and characters considerable breadth and variety.—DR. PULSFORD, *Quiet Hours*.

'And the stones shall be with the names of the children of Israel, twelve.'—EXODUS XXVIII. 21.

As the High Priest of old, when he entered into the Holy of Holies, bore upon his breast those twelve jewels which witnessed to the Twelve Tribes of Israel, so now, with a converse fitness and an equal duty, a religious and just people, advancing towards the gates

of its new and higher destinies, must bear upon its breast that cause which is the cause of God.—Aubrey de Vere.

'When he goeth in unto the holy place.'—Exodus xxviii. 29.

If the veil has as yet been but little withdrawn from the Holy of Holies, those who come after us will have learnt at least this one lesson, that this lifting of the veil which was supposed to be the privilege of priests, is no longer considered as a sacrilege, if attempted by any honest seekers after truth.—Max Müller.

References.—XXVIII. 29.—S. Baring-Gould, *Village Preaching for a Year*, vol. ii. p. 132.

'Thou shalt put in the breastplate of judgment the Urim and the Thummim; and they shall be upon Aaron's heart, when he goeth in before the Lord.'—Exodus xxviii. 30.

'May I ask you,' said John Bright to the citizens of Birmingham in 1858, 'to believe, as I do most devoutly believe, that the moral law was not written for men alone in their individual character, but that it was written as well for nations, and for nations great as this of which we are citizens. If nations reject and deride that moral law, there is a penalty which will inevitably follow. It may not come at once; it may not come in our life-time; but, rely upon it, the great Italian is not a poet only, but a prophet, when he says:—

> The sword of Heaven is not in haste to smite,
> Nor yet doth linger.

We have experience, we have beacons, we have landmarks enough. . . . We are not left without a guide. It is true we have not, as an ancient people had, Urim and Thummim—those oraculous gems on Aaron's breast—from which to take counsel, but we have the unchangeable and eternal principles of the moral law to guide us, and only so far as we walk by that guidance can we be permanently a great nation, or our people a happy people.'

References.—XXVIII. 36.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—Exodus*, etc., p. 151. R. F. Horton, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. l. 1896, p. 232. XXVIII. 36-38.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxxvi. No. 2153.

BACTERIA IN THE CHALICE

'Aaron shall bear the iniquity of the holy things, which the children of Israel shall hallow in all their holy gifts.'—Exodus xxviii. 38 (R.V).

Science tells us that bacteria lurk in the white snow and sparkling dew; and the purest saints are conscious of secret frailty marring holiest things and hours. Infection, alloy, degeneration, play their part in the spiritual as well as the natural sphere.

I. In private devotional hours it is not difficult to shut the door of our chamber, but it is far from easy to close the door of the mind upon base and secular images and feelings. Our prayers are hindered by insincerity, uncharitableness, impatience, and unbelief; we regard iniquity in our heart, and therefore many petitions we offer can never be put into the golden censer.

II. Outside sanctuaries, Sabbaths, and Scriptures are institutions, days, and relations whose sacredness we must not forget. The loves of the home, kinship, friendship, citizenship, the treasures of literature, the gifts of beauty, the stewardship of wealth, the flowers and lutes of pleasure—these are holy also. But if these things are great and noble, Divine symbols and instruments of infinite suggestion and purport, how often are we forgetful and perverse, awakening in our better moments to reproach ourselves with the sin of sacrilege!

III. We must not think lightly of these sins because they seem in their refinement to stand apart from and beyond ordinary morality. They are not ecclesiastical but real sins, and with all their apparent subtilization they injuriously affect the whole sphere of character and action equally with coarser faults. In coining, the addition to gold of one five-hundredth part by weight of bismuth produces an alloy which crumbles under the die and refuses to take an impression; the very scent of an incongruous element sometimes debases and destroys the whole vast mass into which it enters. And if in physics the influence of minute admixtures is so immense, we may be sure that the iniquity of our holy things is not less pervasive and disastrous, affecting all that we are and do, and vitiating what otherwise would be the pure gold of life and action.—W. L. Watkinson, *Themes for Hours of Meditation*, p. 66.

References.—XXIX. 1.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xx. No. 1203. XXIX. 26-28.—J. Pulsford, *Our Deathless Hope*, p. 241. XXIX. 33.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xliii. No. 2528. XXIX. 43.—A. Rowland, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xliv. 1893, p. 74.

'And I will dwell among the children of Israel, and be their God.'—Exodus xxix. 45.

So long as there is in man's heart one fibre to vibrate at the sound of what is just and true and honourable, so long as the instinctively pure soul prefers purity to life, so long as friends of truth are to be found who are ready to sacrifice their peace in the cause of science, friends of righteousness ready to devote themselves to holy and useful works of mercy, womanly hearts to love whatsoever is good, beautiful, and pure, and artists to express it by sound and colour and words of inspiration—so long God will dwell within us.—Renan on *Spinoza*.

References.—XXX. 1.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—Exodus*, etc., p. 159. XXX. 1-4.—W. Garrett Horder, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lii. 1897, p. 330. XXX. 7, 8.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxix. No. 1710. XXX. 11, 12, 15.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons Preached in Sackville College Chapel*, vol. ii. p. 361. XXX. 11-16.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxvii. No. 1581. J. Hammond, *What Shall I Give for My Life?* A Sermon for the Census.

THE CENSUS AND ITS RELIGIOUS ASPECT

'When thou takest the sum of the children of Israel.'—Exodus xxx. 12.

I. This first census of which we have any recorded history took place more than three thousand years ago. It was taken in the wilderness, and in a very different way from that in which our census is taken.

From the grouped tribes every man of twenty years of age and upwards was called out, and afterwards passed over to the crowd of the 'numbered'. No women or children were numbered. Women and children owe even more than men to the influence of Jesus Christ. Then each man had to pay a half-shekel, about thirteenpence-halfpenny, at the express command of God, to be devoted to religious purposes. The census was the solemn recognition of the separate individuality, the responsible manhood of every full-grown Israelite.

II. The payment of the half-shekel was an acknowledgment of his obligation to sue for the mercy of Heaven and to do the will of God. When you fill up your census-paper remember that you are a sinful being before you are anything else. Do you not realize the necessity of paying the half-shekel, of ransoming your soul? The census expresses the solidarity of our interests. All humanity is one great organism, one colossal man, as Pascal says, of whom Christ is the Head. No one can say that he is so insignificant that it does not matter whether he goes to the devil or not. Nobody will be left out because of his poverty or crime.—Hugh Price Hughes, *The Sermon Year Book*, 1891, p. 362.

Reference.—XXX. 12.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—Exodus*, etc., p. 168.

'The rich shall not give more, and the poor shall not give less, than half a shekel, when they give an offering unto the Lord, to make an atonement for your souls.'—Exodus xxx. 15.

The tribute to be paid for the ransom of the soul was half a shekel, about fifteenpence of our money. The rich were not to give more nor the poor less; to intimate that the souls of the rich and poor were alike precious.—Matthew Henry.

Reference.—XXX. 15.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—Exodus*, etc., p. 170.

'And I have filled him with the spirit of God, in wisdom, and in understanding, and in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship, to devise cunning works.'—Exodus xxxi. 3-4.

The ambition of art, to come ever nearer to a perfect work, is an evidence that the spirit of the Master-Artist stirs and quickens the human spirit. 'See, I have filled him with the spirit of God, in wisdom, and in understanding, and in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship, to devise cunning works.' In the spirit of God every art is latent. . . . Faith and art have all the sympathy of mother and child. Neither of them is content with nature's conditions. Faith discerns a higher world, and art would fain body it forth.—Dr. John Pulsford, *The Supremacy of Man*, pp. 97 f.

Compare Adam Bede's words to his brother, in the opening chapter of *Adam Bede*: 'There's such a thing as being over-speritial; we must have something beside Gospel i' this world. Look at the canals, an' th' aqueducs, an' th' coal-pit engines, and Arkwright's mills there at Cranford; a man must learn summat beside Gospel to make them things, I reckon. But t' hear some o' them preachers, you'd think as a man must be doing nothing all's life but shutting's eyes and looking what's a-going on inside him. I know a man must have the love o' God in his soul, and the Bible's God's word. But what does the Bible say? Why, it says as God put His sperrit into the workman as built the tabernacle, to make him do all the carved work and things as wanted a nice hand. And this is my way o' lookin' at it: there's the sperrit o' God in all things and all times—week-day as well as Sunday—and i' the great works and inventions, and i' the figuring and the mechanics. And God helps us with our headpieces and our hands as well as with our souls.'

Reference.—XXXI. 3-4.—G. Matheson, *Voices of the Spirit*, p. 8.

'Verily My sabbaths ye shall keep.'—Exodus xxxi. 13.

If we measure things not as they were divinely intended, nor as they are in themselves, but as they are subjectively entertained, it might be a question whether the Scottish Sabbath was not for 200 years a greater Christian Sacrament, a larger, more vital, and more influential fact in the Christianity of the country than the annual or sometimes semi-annual celebration of the Lord's Supper, or the initiatory rite of Baptism, or both together. . . . We are born, on each Lord's day morning, into a new climate, a new atmosphere; and in that new atmosphere (so to speak), by the law of a renovated nature, the lungs and heart of the Christian life should spontaneously and continuously drink in the vital air.—W. E. Gladstone, *Later Gleanings*, pp. 342 f.

Where every day is not the Lord's, the Sunday is His least of all.—George Macdonald, *Donal Grant*, chap. vii.

There is a deep Christian instinct in England, an instinct which has come down to us through many generations, and for the last 350 years at any rate, founded in a large measure on Puritan belief, fed by what may be called the 'two Puritan Sacraments'—the Bible and Sunday.—Father Dolling in *The Pilot* (10 Nov., 1900).

References.—XXXII.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xli. No. 2398. XXXII. 1.—W. C. E. Newbolt, *Church Times*, vol. xxxii. 1894, p. 244. W. C. Magee, *Outlines of Sermons on the Old Testament*, p. 28. XXXII. 1-8, 30-35.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—Exodus*, etc., p. 171. XXXII. 1-29.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. liii. No. 2384.

'And Aaron said to them, Break off the golden ear-rings which are in the ears of your wives.'—Exodus xxxii. 2.

Who would not have been ashamed to hear this answer from the brother of Moses, 'Pluck off your ear-rings'? He should have said, 'Pluck this idolatrous thought out of your hearts'.—Bishop Hall.

'And all the people brake off the golden ear-rings which were in their ears, and brought them unto Aaron.'—Exodus xxxii. 3.

Unless reason be employed in ascertaining what doctrines are revealed, humility cannot be exercised in acquiescing in them; and there is surely at least as much presumption in measuring everything by our own fancies, feelings, and prejudices, as by our own reasonings. Such voluntary humiliation is a prostration, not of ourselves before God, but of one part of ourselves before another part, and resembles the idolatry of the Israelites in the wilderness: 'The people *stripped themselves* of their golden ornaments, and cast them into the fire, and there came out this calf.—Archbishop Whately, *Annotations to Bacon's Essays* (i.).

'These be thy gods, O Israel.'—Exodus xxxii. 4.

It is the very joy of man's heart to admire, where he can; nothing so lifts him from all his mean imprisonments, were it but for moments, as true admiration. Thus it has been said, 'All men, especially all women, are born worshippers'; and will worship, if it be but possible. Possible to worship a Something, even a small one; not so possible a mere loud-blaring Nothing! What sight is more pathetic than that of poor multitudes of persons met to gaze at Kings' Progresses, Lord Mayors' Shows, and other gilt-gingerbread phenomena of the worshipful sort, in these times; each so eager to worship; each, with a dim fatal sense of disappointment, finding that he cannot rightly here! These be thy gods, O Israel? and thou art so *willing* to worship—poor Israel.—Carlyle in *Past and Present*.

'And Aaron made proclamation, and said, To-morrow is a feast unto the Lord.'—Exodus xxxii. 5.

Writing in 1657 to Lord Craighall, Samuel Rutherford warns him seriously against kneeling before the consecrated elements. 'Neither will your *intention* help, which is not of the essence of worship; for then, Aaron in saying, "To-morrow shall be a feast for Jehovah,' that is, for the golden calf, should not have been guilty of idolatry; for he *intended* only to decline the lash of the people's fury, not to honour the calf. Your intention to honour Christ is nothing, seeing that religious kneeling, by God's institution, doth necessarily impart religious and Divine adoration.'

RECREATIONS AND AMUSEMENTS

'And the people sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to play.'—Exodus xxxii. 6.

I. We must have 'play'. Even the children of Israel must. We have great examples in this matter. Our Incarnate Lord and His Apostles had their feasts as well as their fasts; their quiet hours as well as their hours crowded with holy toil.

Such 'play' is greatly needed in our over-worked days. Physical labour requires mental amusement, and mental labour demands physical recreation.

The words 'amusement' and 'recreation' are in themselves full of suggestiveness. The idea of the word 'amusement' is 'to draw the mind to' something lighter. 'Recreation' obviously signifies a fresh creation.

Everything, however, depends upon the quality and the quantity of our recreations and amusements.

II. Let me enumerate some good amusements and recreations. Some 'play' that is to be held honourable to all.

Earliest in such a category I would place pure light literature.

Music, at home and in public, is one of the most exalted and delightful of recreations.

Art offers splendid and tranquil amusement and recreation.

What delights modern science opens to the multitude! Nature teems with instructive delights.

I hardly need to remind young men or young women in these times of the athletic pleasures which abound.

A good walk in the city streets will, if we practise an educated observation, be a manifold benefit to us. Charles Kingsley said that a walk along Regent Street was an intellectual tonic. A walk in the country, especially with the ministry of pleasant and profitable conversation, may be a memorable and every way beneficial experience.

The pleasures of travel are happily now by the co-operative plan within reach of large numbers of young people.

Church life affords the best recreation to some. Ever remember the noble words of Dean Church, 'Every real part of our life ought to be part of our Christian life'.

III. Suffer me to warn you against certain evil amusements and recreations.

Shun that class of entertainments which vulgarizes and sullies mind and soul.

It is not wholly superfluous to caution you against exhausting amusements. Whatever impairs your vital energy and lowers your physical tone is a foe to your highest well-being. Nor is it fatuous to enter a caution against such amusements and recreations as disincline you for more serious pursuits. Few, if any, amusements work such injury as do betting and gambling.

The 'play' in which Israel occupied itself and to which my text refers was arrantly unworthy. May this ancient lapse save us from similar lapse. Take heed lest evil 'play' discredit and ruin you.

Christ is the ultimate source of true pleasures. He causes these to abound to the believing soul.—Dinsdale T. Young, *Messages for Home and Life*, p. 47.

Illustration.—You have heard the story of the young hunter at Ephesus: returning from the chase with his unstrung bow in his hand he entered the house of the venerable St. John. To his utter astonishment John was playing with a tame dove. He indicated his surprise that the seer should be so frivolously occupied. St. John asked him why he carried his bow unstrung. 'In order that my bow may retain its elasticity,' was his immediate reply. 'Just so,' said

St. John; 'and mind and body will not retain their elasticity or usefulness unless they are at times unstrung; prolonged tension destroys their power.'—Dinsdale T. Young, *Messages for Home and Life*, p. 47.

References.—XXXII. 7-14.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xlii. No. 2486. XXXII. 10, 31, 32.—T. G. Selby, *The God of the Patriarchs*, p. 185. XXXII. 14.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xli. No. 2398. XXXII. 15-26.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—Exodus*, etc., p. 177.

EPIPHANY

'And Moses said, I beseech Thee, show me Thy glory. And God said, I will make all My goodness pass before thee, and I will proclaim the name of the Lord before thee.'—Exodus xxxii. 18.

I. The pleading supplication, 'I beseech Thee, show me Thy glory,' is the language of the human heart, under the pressure of the deepest desire man can experience. It is the voicing of the ceaseless, age-long yearning on the part of man for tangible, ocular demonstration of God. And the answer given to Moses is an authoritative declaration of the only demonstration of the existence and character of God possible to beings in the finite condition of earth's education.

The only proof of the existence of any primal force is that force in action; the absolute is only known as it is conditioned. God to us, only *is* as He *acts;* and so the answer to the universal appeal of humanity is, 'I will make all My goodness pass before thee'.

II. The unwillingness on the part of man to accept this answer of God as final has been the cause of most of the defective apprehension, narrowness, superstition, and second-hand religion which have clipped the wings of Godward growth. He who follows God's clue is he whose eyes are slowly opened. God makes all His goodness to pass before him. He has discovered and acknowledged physical beauty in the universe, and moral beauty in man; he infers logically that there must be a Divine ideal of both physical and moral beauty, of which he has recognized the shadow, and he knows that that Divine ideal must be God.

Moses, the servant of the Lord, affords a striking example, from the ancient world, of a standard thus slowly raised, till his one absorbing need was to see God. He had followed the clue. Symbolisms and limitations had no power to satisfy the instincts of his heart, and his whole soul goes out in the cry, 'I beseech Thee, show me Thy glory'. A picture-lesson of the same process is afforded by our Lord's dealings with His disciples. Slowly He unfolds their aspirations, as the sun unfolds a flower. At last, one of them, as the spokesman of the rest, bursts out with the cry, 'Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us'. And in each case the answer is the same: to Moses it is, 'I will make all My goodness pass before thee'; to Philip it is, 'Have I been so long time with you, and hast thou not known Me, Philip? He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father.'

III. Now, is not this the meaning of the Festival of the Epiphany? The story of that star leading thoughtful Zoroastrians across the wilderness to Bethlehem, is the analogy of the secret drawing of the Infinite Mother-Heart, leading watchful souls through the deserts of materialism, idolatry, imperfect Theism, to the oasis of the Incarnation, the highest philosophical demonstration of the character of God.

Two conditions appear to be suggested by to-day's Epiphany teaching as pre-requisite for the right apprehension of this full restful revelation of God: the one is aspiration, the other is activity. God is often not known because He is not wanted. At the threshold of every spiritual function there is a want, a restlessness, a desire, a hunger, that the largest promises of the world cannot fill. Prayer, thought, aspiration, will quicken and vitalize that blessed restlessness.

The second condition is activity, usefulness, ministry. A life of selfish vanity, a life of idle indulgence, a life of mean self-concentration, may have a good deal of religion in it, but it cannot see God.—B. Wilberforce, *Following on to Know the Lord*, p. 57.

Illustration.—O, my God, let me see Thee; and if to see Thee is to die, let me die, that I may see Thee.—*Prayer of St. Augustine*, p. 58.

References.—XXXII. 24.—J. H. Halsey, *The Spirit of Truth*, p. 261. XXXII. 26.—H. J. Wilmot-Buxton, *God's Heroes*, p. 197. C. Perren, *Revival Sermons in Outline*, p. 303. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxvi. No. 1531; see also vol. l. No. 2884. XXXII. 31, 32.—E. L. Hull, *Sermons Preached at King's Lynn* (3rd Series), p. 106.

'Yet now, if Thou wilt forgive their sin;—and if not, blot me, I pray Thee, out of Thy book which Thou hast written.'—Exodus xxxii. 32.

'Not by reading, but by some bitterly painful experience,' said Maurice (*Life*, i. p. 171), 'I seem to have been taught that to aim at any good to myself while I contemplate myself apart from the whole body of Christ, is a kind of contradiction.

Let my name be blotted out, and my memory perish, if only France may be free.—Danton.

'And the Lord plagued the people because they made the calf.'—Exodus xxxii. 35.

Afflictions speak convincingly, and will be heard when preachers cannot. If our dear Lord did not put these thorns under our head, we should sleep out our lives and lose our glory.—Baxter, *Saints' Rest*, chap. x.

References.—XXXIII.—W. Gray Elmslie, *Expository Lectures and Sermons*, p. 295. XXXIII. 7.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. vii. No. 359. XXXIII.—R. J. Campbell, *City Temple Sermons*, p. 27. C. Brown, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxix. 1906, p. 273. XXXIII. 12-14.—H. Varley, *Spiritual Light and Life*, p. 97. XXXIII. 12-23.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—Exodus*, etc., p. 186.

THE PRESENCE SHALL ENLIGHTEN THE WAY

(For the New Year)

Shew me now Thy way. . . . And He said, My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest. And he said unto Him, If Thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence.'
—Exodus xxxiii. 13-15.

We have here:—

I. An unenlightened prayer for light. A rash prayer, impatient, unwise, and of the kind which God never answers according to our pleasure. Show me now Thy way. He wanted to have the sealed book opened, unrolled and set before him—that book in which God has written things to come.

The Lord is too merciful to let us look ahead. It is in mercy that He overthrows our predictions and mocks our guesses. It is nearly always the unexpected that appears. We know not anything about to-morrow—we can only hope and trust: and it is better so. The uncertainties of life keep us sober, watchful, reverently humble and prayerful. They help to make us patient, brave, dutiful and religious. It would not help us to know the way that God is going to take with us.

II. The rash and inconsiderate prayer is answered in God's larger wisdom. Show me what is coming, said Moses. And the voice replies, Only this much will I show thee. My presence shall go with you, and I will give thee rest. God strips the request of all that is presumptuous and unwise, and answers what remains. He denies the wish that would work mischief, and grants the sure blessing. It is a mercy that most of our prayers are dealt with in this manner. Faith and foolishness go hand in hand in most of our approaches to God. We should miss most of the best and highest things of life if God were to say yes to all our requests, and we should imbibe a great deal of poison in the course of life if He allowed us to drink every cup that we asked for. If the presence go with us, all will be well. In the desert there will be water springs, and in all barren and rugged places the green pastures of His love.

III. Now see how faith at once recognizes that this is the surest and best blessing, and eagerly asks that it may be given. Yes, cries Moses at the finish, that is what I need, just that and not the other thing—Thy presence. If Thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence.

This will be the confession of every religious man and woman at the beginning of the year. We dare not trust ourselves; we cannot depend upon any of life's uncertainties. If the past has taught us anything it is this: That we were weak when we thought ourselves strong, often most foolish when we deemed ourselves specially wise, most erring where we claimed infallibility, most disappointed where our calculations were most confident, and that we only acted wisely and well when we took hold of God's hand and in trustful prayer let Him lead us.—J. G. Greenhough, *Christian Festivals and Anniversaries*, p. 10.

'My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest.'—Exodus xxxiii. 14.

Many are quite conscious that the person has never yet appeared who can unlock for them and lead their way into the depths and hiding-places of their nature. Others are quite conscious that the presence of certain individuals gives them a totally new and different possession of their being. . . . If the presence of a gifted creature be so mysteriously helpful, what help must there be for us in the Divine Presence?—Dr. Pulsford, *Quiet Hours*, pp. 222 f.

I WILL GIVE THEE REST

Compare Nietzsche's analysis in *The Twilight of the Idols* of spurious 'peace of soul'. It may be the beginning of fatigue, the first shadow which the evening—every sort of evening—casts. Or a sign that the air is moist, that southern winds arise. Or unconscious gratitude for a good digestion or the quieting dawn of the convalescent to whom all things have a new taste and who is waiting in expectancy. Or the condition which follows upon a full gratification of our ruling passion, the agreeable feeling of a rare satiety. Or the senile weakness of our will, of our desires, of our vices. Or laziness, persuaded by conceit to deck itself out in moral guise.

GOD'S PRESENCE AND GOD'S REST

(Third Sunday after the Epiphany)

'And He said, My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest.'—Exodus xxxiii. 14.

I. God's Presence.—Notice the promise of the text, 'My presence shall go with thee'. Whatever the world may say, however men may scoff, there is something real in the presence of God.

(*a*) *God's presence gives us safety.*—Whatever our work may be, in whatever land it may lie, however risky it may seem to men, if we have God's presence with us we are truly safe.

(*b*) *God's presence gives us also perfect strength.*—It was in the realization of that presence that David went forth to meet Goliath. If God is with you, you will have strength to be holy.

(*c*) *God's presence gives strength to live as God would have us live.*

(*d*) *God's presence gives us the song.*—You remember the Psalmist's words, 'In Thy presence is fullness of joy; at Thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore'. When the Lord Jesus Christ had ascended to heaven the disciples 'returned to Jerusalem with their joy.'

II. God's Rest.—The rest God gave to Moses was not a rest of idleness without service, but a rest in service, and if you have God's presence with you, you will find rest even in your busiest moments. You will find that you must be up and doing, that you cannot, you dare not, be idle, as, for every hour, you must give account to God; but in the midst of service, service which is tiring and oftentimes dispiriting, you will find that the presence of God will give you perfect rest.

III. The Condition of God's Presence.—God will not come and take possession of an unholy temple. The heavenly Dove will never dwell in a foul nest. If you want His presence you must come out from all that is evil and be separate, and then He will be a Father to you, and you His son or daughter. Do you know His presence? If you want to know it, you will know it. Give yourself up to Him, wholly and entirely, for as you give yourself wholly you shall be holy. Holiness lies in being wholly Christ's.

A NEW YEAR'S PROMISE

(For New Year's Day)

'My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest.'—Exodus xxxiii. 14.

I. The Call to Service.—To-day there is a call to consecrate again ourselves and our time to the service of Almighty God: as this new year stretches before us all uncertain in its issue, to step out, upheld by the great resolve that by God's help our feet shall be set upon a higher ridge than before, that we shall go across a battle-field where we shall not always be the vanquished, that our lives shall have less of self in them and more of God, that we will cast away some garment that impedes our every step and rise and come to Jesus, that we will take the wider views, look for larger horizons. Dim and misty and all uncertain lies before us this coming year. As you and I have sat upon some hill in the early morning, and have seen all the country covered with a mist, here and there perhaps some hill top or mountain standing out, so lies our life before us to-day. But read these words of the text into that life, and they will interfuse it, will irradiate it and make it to glow with the purpose and the power of our God.

II. Freedom in Service.—Freedom is a necessity if we would enter into the meaning of the words of our text. Freedom is not licence to live to self, but power to live to God. And how is the presence here spoken of manifested but through love? What are the desires that we are conscious of from time to time, desires for something better, something purer, something higher than we ourselves ever yet attained to—what are these but God bending down to the soul to draw it up to Him, and the soul reaching up to God that it may answer to that attraction? In order that I may be able to render the free service of love, God has given me the power of refusing His love, and of refusing His service, in order that my service which is evoked by the love of God may be the service of a free and a willing man. So through the love of God raising in us an echo, the returning love of our soul, there comes the free service that we would render to God. In the family life and in the life of the family of God, first there comes the love, and then the love issues into the desire of obedience or of service on the part of the members of the family, and so that love of God that evokes my love in willing service is to me an abiding proof of the presence in me of One Who not only attracts but upholds, supports, uplifts me. And then there comes that mysterious guiding of the hand of God of which we must be conscious from time to time in our lives. Looking back, we can see that there has been something mysterious from time to time that has shaped and guided our life, and we recognize the finger-marks of God upon the life.

III. The Promised Rest.—And the rest that is promised, what are we to understand by that?

(*a*) *Partakes of God's character.*—If it is to come from God it is clear that it must partake of the character of God. When God rested from the work of creation, as we read, did it mean inactivity, or did it mean a passing on to further and still greater work? Our Lord has answered that question for us, 'My Father worketh hitherto and I work'—work, progress in work, change in work. In active loving service there is rest for the spirit of man. There stands before us the Central Figure in the history of the world, and from His lips is coming the precious promise, 'Come unto Me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest,' and He goes on to tell us still, 'Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly in heart; and ye shall find rest unto your souls'. To take the yoke, the daily burden under the guiding hand of God, to do the Lord's work that He sets for you and me to-day, to live the life of God by the power that God can give us—thus may we find rest unto our souls. In doing the will of God alone is there rest for the soul of man. We look into the Garden of Gethsemane and we see the Lord battling there with all the evil weight of temptation, and we see at last the human will bending to the will of God the Father; then it is that the rest begins and the agony is over, 'Nevertheless not My will but Thine be done'.

(*b*) *Sanctified by the presence of God.*—In proportion as we learn to recognize the presence of God with us we shall be able to bow our will before God. In that surrender and in the active service of God that follows depend upon it we shall experience the promised rest. To-day once more we try by the power of God to prepare our hearts that the presence of God may be there. Let us rise to the height of our vocation! Try sometimes to take wider views, to look to more boundless horizons; not always to walk with our heads down and hearts heavy and lives depressed, but to look up into the sunshine.

References.—XXXIII. 14.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxvii. No. 1583. J. Vaughan, *Fifty Sermons* (9th series), p. 249. R. Higinbotham, *Sermons*, p. 84. C. Brown, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxv. 1904, p. 22. C. Stanford, *Central Truths*, p. 227. XXXIII. 14, 15.—T. G. Rooke, *The Church in the Wilderness*, p. 139. R. H. McKim, *The Gospel in the Christian Year*, p. 61. XXXIII. 15.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xlviii. No. 2811. XXXIII. 18.—W. Winn, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xliii. 1893, p. 262. R. Waddy Moss, *The Discipline of the Soul*, p. 219. XXXIII. 18, 19.—H. Varley, *Spiritual Light and Life*, p. 113. S. Baring-Gould, *Village Preaching for a Year*, vol. ii. p. 264.

'I will make all my goodness pass before thee . . . and will be gracious to whom I will be gracious.'—Exodus xxxiii. 19.

God's goodness appeareth in two things, giving and forgiving.—Matthew Henry.

References.—XXXIII. 19.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. x. No. 553. XXXIII. 19-23.—C. H. Osler, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxxiv. 1908, p. 121. XXXIII. 23.—R. Collyer, *Where the Light Dwelleth*, p. 249. XXXIV. 1-10, 27-35.—A. B. Davidson, *The Called of God*, p. 129. XXXIV. 2.—J. W. Mills, *After Glow*, p. 111.

'Neither let the flocks nor herds feed before that mount.'—Exodus xxxiv. 3.

St. John of the Cross remarks that by this verse the soul is taught that 'he who seeks to climb the mount of perfection and to hold communion with God must not only renounce all things but must not even allow his appetites, which are the beasts, to feed within sight of the mount.'

THE USE OF ISOLATED MOMENTS

'No man shall come up with thee.'—Exodus xxxiv. 3.

I. Here was a Divine call to solitude. There are moments of many souls in which they are doomed to be alone—to have no man with them. The inspirations of genius are such moments; the voices of the crowd then sound from afar. The throbs of conscience are such moments; the heart then speaks to itself alone. The arrests by sickness are such moments; we feel shunted from the common way. The approaches of death are such moments; the hour comes to all, but it comes separately to each. We should have missed something from the Bible if amid the many voices of God there had been no place found for such moments as these. But with this verse of Exodus before us, the want is supplied. I learn that my times of solitude as well as my days of crowdedness are a mission from the Divine.

II. There is a lesson which my soul can only get from solitude; it is the majesty of the individual. Society tells me I am only a cipher—an insignificant drop in a mighty stream. But when I am alone, when the curtain is fallen on my brother man, when there seems in the universe but God and I, it is then I know what it is to be an individual soul; it is then that there breaks on me the awful solemnity, the dread responsibility, the sublime weightedness, of having a personal life.

III. Therefore it is that betimes my Father summons me into the solitude. Therefore it is that betimes He calls me up to the lonely mount and cries, 'Let no man come with thee'. Therefore it is that betimes He shuts the door on my companionships, and bars the windows to the street, and deafens the ear of the world's roar. He would have me see myself by *His* light, measure myself by His standard, know myself even as I am known.—G. Matheson, *Messages of Hope*, p. 23.

Reference.—XXXIV. 5.—J. Halsey, *The Spirit of Truth*, p. 34.

'And the Lord passed by before him, and proclaimed, The Lord, The Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth.'—Exodus xxxiv. 6.

Compare Cromwell's words in his letter to Fleetwood of 1652: 'The voice of Fear is: If I had done this; if I had avoided that; how well it had been with me. Love argueth in this wise: What a Christ have I; what a Father in and through Him! What a Name hath my Father: *merciful, gracious, long-suffering, abundant in goodness and truth; forgiving iniquity, transgression and sin.* What a Nature hath my Father: *He is* Love; free in it, unchangeable, infinite!'

Then the Recorder stood up on his feet, and first beckoning with his hand for silence, he read out with loud voice the pardon. But when he came to these words, 'The Lord, The Lord God, merciful and gracious, pardoning iniquity and transgressions, and sins; and to them, all manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven,' etc., they could not forbear leaping for joy. For this you must know, that there was conjoined herewith every man's name in Mansoul; also the seals of the pardon made a brave show.—Bunyan, *Holy War*.

Reference.—XXXIV. 6.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—Exodus*, etc., p. 195.

'Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children.'—Exodus xxxiv. 7.

In his reminiscences of Erskine of Linlathen, Dean Stanley recalls how the Scottish theologian 'was fond of dwelling on the passages in the Bible which bring out the overbalance of love and mercy as against vengeance and wrath. "This," he said, "shows the right proportion of faith." And one of these to which he often referred was the close of the second commandment—"visiting the sins of the fathers unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me, and *showing mercy* unto (—not thousands, as of individuals—but) unto the thousanth and thousanth generation—(quoting the words of the Hebrew original—) *of them that love Me*". I never read that part of the commandment without thinking of this saying, and of the tones in which he uttered it.'

THE DARK LINE IN GOD'S FACE

'That will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and to the fourth generation.'—Exodus xxxiv. 7.

I. Consider the Proof of this Dark Line.—'And that will by no means clear the guilty.' Mark, at the outset, how clear is the testimony of Scripture. In the first story of God's dealing with man, that story of the Garden which foreshadows all His love and grace, we see it in the face of God. Adam and Eve are driven out of Eden, and the angel with the flaming sword which turned every way keeps the way of the tree of life. That is the first declaration that God will by no means clear the guilty.

Mark it again on the broader page of universal history. The one truth of which all secular historians are sure is that the Nemesis of judgment forgets nothing and forgives nothing. In narrower spheres of life the truth is as evident and as appalling. The little child who is ushered into life, misshapen in body, cramped in mind, darkened in spirit, has done

no sin, but its helplessness and torture are the terrifying proofs that God will by no means clear the guilty, and that He visits the iniquity of the fathers upon the children and upon the children's children.

Mark it again in the teaching of Jesus. There is scarcely a parable which does not emphasize it. But the more convincing and definite sayings of Jesus are those which affirm that this dark line remains in God's face in the world to come. He speaks in grave warning of the outer darkness, the everlasting fire, the shut door, the weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth.

II. Consider the Significance of this Dark Line in the Face of God.—Have you never known a human face in which there were lines, at first sight stern and forbidding, but as you learned their meaning, and came to know what lay behind their severity, they gave the face its strength and distinction and charm? This dark line makes God wondrously beautiful.

Its first significance is *His inflexible justice.* It declares that God is unswervingly just and impartially righteous towards all men. Now we can look up at that dark line and see its beauty.

Its second significance is *His wrath at sin.* The darkest line in a human face is the line of an anger which is shot through with grief. It is not otherwise with the face of God.

The third significance is *His passionate desire for holiness.* Here we touch the deeper significance. Where only justice and aggrieved wrath are found there is no room for mercy or for healing, but where a passionate desire for holiness lodges, there is hope even for the worst. This line in God's face is darker when it sees the sin of His own, because of His passion for holiness.

III. Now let us Learn why so Many Refuse to see the Truth and Beauty of This Dark Line.—The reason is that one of the most controlling truths in God's character is overlooked. *What stirs God to the depths is not suffering, but sin.* If men would take God's way, and deal first with the world's sin, the world's suffering would greatly cease.

Nowhere can it be more movingly seen than at the Cross that God will by no means clear the guilty. Nowhere is it more sadly plain that He visits the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, than when He laid the sins of men upon the Son of Man. In the Cross we see the dark line of God's face, and understand His justice, His grieved anger, and His passionate desire for holiness. Had there been no dark line in God's face there would have been no Cross. What Jesus saw as He was dying was this line in a face of love dark with anger at the sin of man.—W. M. Clow, *The Cross in Christian Experience*, p. 28.

References.—XXXIV. 7.—H. Ward Beecher, *Sermons* (4th Series), p. 183. A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—Exodus*, etc., p. 199. XXXIV. 8, 9.—J. K. Popham, *Sermons*, p. 116.

'O Lord, let my Lord, I pray thee, go among us; for it is a stiff-necked people.'—Exodus xxxiv. 9.

Read that account on the proclaiming of God's name to Moses given in the 33rd and 34th chapters of Exodus, 'The Lord, The Lord God, forgiving iniquity, transgression and sin, without clearing the guilty' (which last expression refers to the sacrifice of Christ, and just means through an atonement). As soon as Moses heard it, he thought, This is just the God that we want, for the people are continually committing sin, and this is a sin-forgiving God; and Moses made haste and said, Go with us; for this is a stiff-necked people. That *for* is an extraordinary word.—Thomas Erskine of Linlathen, *Letters*, p. 121.

THE DIVINE JEALOUSY

'For the Lord, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God.'—Exodus xxxiv. 14.

Is jealousy primarily a vice masking as a much-suffering virtue, or is it a virtue that has caught many of the basenesses of a vice? May we ascribe jealousy to the holy and glorious God without reflecting the least stain of dishonour upon His nature?

I. Our literature, like that of all nations, indeed, abounds in pictures of this consuming passion. Perhaps the most familiar and impressive delineation of the passion is that presented by Shakespeare in his great masterpiece, 'Othello the Moor'. If you recall the chief outlines of the tragedy you will have a concrete illustration before you from which to start in studying the subject of the Divine jealousy.

1. Our condemnation of jealousy is not infrequently *condemnation of the ignorance and infatuation with which it is mixed.* Jealousy must always rank with the vices rather than virtues when, like that of Othello, it is blind—blind with the guilty blindness that will not consent to see.

2. Our condemnation of jealousy is very often *condemnation of the despotic temper,* in which it has its root. We class it with the vices rather than the virtues, because in many cases it is not love seeking the just return of love. How often is it thinly disguised ambition, aggressive and overbearing egotism? I have no doubt Shakespeare meant us to recognize an element of this sort in the jealousy of Othello.

3. Our condemnation of jealousy, again, is sometimes the *condemnation of moral unfitness to win and to retain* the love that has been vainly sought or miserably abused. The temper is often a vice, because the chilled affection that has provoked it is the just retribution of neglect, ungraciousness, intemperance of disposition and behaviour.

4. Our condemnation of jealousy is often a *condemnation of the merciless and savage forms* in which it expresses itself. We class it with the vices rather than with the virtues, because when the passion is once encouraged it tends to become a masterful impulse akin to homicidal madness.

II. The flaws in our current human jealousies notwithstanding, may not the very highest moral and

spiritual forces go to inform and energize this sentiment? The heart which upon just and righteous occasion is incapable of jealousy is likewise incapable of love. Love has rights it can never renounce without proving false to its own deepest qualities. And if no love can compare with God's, no right can rival the right that is inherent in the foundation qualities of that love.

All humane and civilized governments which account themselves responsible for the well-being of the people committed to their care are characterized by this temper of jealousy, and the strength of the temper is a test of their very right to exist. In such cases the passion is emphatically a virtue.

The jealousy exercised in the interests of others must be holy and beneficent. God will brook no intrusion into His work, no division of His authority, no departure from His laws. He alone can guide us through the rocks and whirlpools, and bring us to our far-off goal. That He should be supreme is the very salvation of the universe.

III. Now let us face the question: if jealousy has this high and holy basis, and if God's jealousy does not need to be held in check because of the imperfection of knowledge, the risk of mistake, or the fear lest the passion once kindled should hurry into inordinate and unconsidered excess, is not the Divine type of the passion likely to be more terribly intense and overwhelming than any of the modern types we find around us? God gives incalculably more love than others, and He is moved with a deeper indignation when you suffer a rival to reign in His place.

Mark how this feature reappears in the character and teaching of Jesus Christ, who is the image of the Father's person and glory. 'He that loveth father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me.' The holy jealousy of Christ's life is as true a hint of the surpassing qualities of His love as the vicariousness of His bitter death.—T. G. Selby, *The Lesson of a Dilemma*, p. 102.

References.—XXXIV. 14.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. ix. No. 502. XXXIV. 23.—C. S. Robinson, *Simon Peter*, p. 41.

SPIRITUAL BEAUTY

'Moses wist not that . . . his face shone.'—Exodus xxxiv. 29.

Spiritual beauty is loveliest when it is unconsciously possessed.

I. Moses has been closeted with God. The glory of the Lord has been poured upon him, bathing him in unearthly brightness, so that when he returns to the mountain-base his countenance shines like the light. The same transformation is effected every day, and by the same means. Spiritual communion alters the fashion of the countenance. The supreme beauty of a face is its light, and spirituality makes 'a face illumined'. The face of Moses was transfigured by the glory of the Eternal.

II. But 'Moses wist not that his face shone'. That is the supreme height of spiritual loveliness; to be lovely, and not to know it. Surely this is a lesson we all need to learn. Virtue is so apt to become self-conscious, and so to lose its glow.

1. Take the grace of humility. Humility is very beautiful when we see it unimpaired. It is exquisite with the loveliness of Christ. But there is a self-conscious humility which is only a very subtle species of pride. Humility takes the lowest place, and does not know that her face shines. Pride can take the lowest place, and find her delight in the thought of her presumably shining face.

2. Charity is a lovely adornment of the Christian eye, but if charity be self-conscious it loses all its charm. The Master says that true charity does not let the left hand know what the right hand doeth. The counsel is this—do not talk about thy giving to thyself. Do not let it be done in a boastful self-consciousness, or its beauty is at once impaired.

3. It is even so with the whole shining multitude of virtues and graces. No virtue has its full strength and beauty until its possession is unnoticed by its owner. Virtue must become so customary as to be unconsciously worn.

III. And so it is that the problem shapes itself thus—we must become so absorbed in God as to forget ourselves. We cannot gaze much upon God's face and remain very conscious of ourselves.—J. H. Jowett, *Meditations for Quiet Moments*, p. 22.

THE ELEMENT OF UNCONSCIOUSNESS IN CHARACTER

'Moses wist not that the skin of his face shone while he talked with Him.'—Exodus xxxiv. 29. **'(Samson) wist not that the Lord was departed from him.'**—Judges xvi. 20.

Moses wist not, he did not know, that the skin of his face shone after he had been with God. Samson wist not, he did not know, that the strength which he had with God had departed from him until he arose and wished to shake himself as at other times, and then he found, and it was a sad discovery, that all his strength was gone, that the Lord had gone away from him. Now why was this? Why were they both unconscious, one that his appearance was so glorified and the other that he had become so weak? In both cases this unconsciousness was due to their former way of life.

I. **Think of Moses.**—You cannot read the story in the early books of the Bible without having the truth brought very closely home that Moses was a man of prayer. He never forgot the need of supplication, of asking God to help him in every hour of his difficulties as he led the children of Israel through the many trials of the wilderness. He was a man who trusted in God. He never forgot that he was in God's hands, and he thought all the time of the honour and glory of God. He did not think of how he himself could gain honour and glorify himself, but he remembered the great truth that every one who loves God must learn, that we must seek first the honour and glory of God. And so throughout his life he was one who spent much time in God's presence, and all this had an effect upon his character. It brought him more

and more into union with God Almighty, and he became more humble, maybe. He remembered all the time that God was his loving Father, and that his life was safe in the keeping of God, and that all the people who were trusted to his care would be safe, because they were in God's hands. But here is the remarkable fact, he does not seem to have been conscious of it. He does not seem to have recognized his own power and his own greatness; he thought of the glory of God. And this was the most marked and most evident when he was in the mount with God. He met God face to face. He had the letters written upon the tables of stone, and he brought them down and gave them to the children of Israel, and when he came down from the mountain a wonderful thing happened: his very countenance shone so that he was compelled to veil his face before the people could look upon him and he could speak to them. Yes, so it was with Moses in some marvellous way, because he lived so near to God there was beauty in his life and in his character. He came down from the mountain, and he was a different man from what he was when he went up.

II. There are many People to-day, and there have been many people in every age in the world's history, who are also very anxious to know what they are like in the sight of God. It may be that they have so often drawn near God that they have humbled themselves, that they think themselves the greatest sinners of all (like Saint Paul, who, we know, was such a holy man and yet thought he was the least of all saints), and they are disappointed, it may be, and cast down; but here is a great encouragement which I would bring to you, that if you feel your sin is so great you can yet feel that the power of the Saviour is greater, that if you are conscious of your terrible state in God's sight, that there is One Who has taken the sin upon Himself, and all is well. It may be that the work of these people for God, though it seems so unimportant, will one day be recognized, and their faces will shine.

III. Look at Samson.—He was entrusted with a great gift, he was a very strong man; but that great physical strength given him by God was given to him for a special purpose. He, like Moses, had work to do for his God. He was a chosen vessel, he was to be used of God. He was set apart to bring salvation to the people, and yet he seems to have thought of his own strength, and not of the honour and glory of God. He tampered with temptation. He went into the very stronghold of the Philistines, into Gaza, and then all through his life forgot the work he had been called to do. The years passed by, and Samson forgot God. The life of Samson seems so sad when we think of his great opportunities, what he might have been, and how he failed. And why was it? It surely was that great reason that he had forgotten God. If he had remembered that he was set apart, if he had understood that from his earliest years his work in life was to free the people from the burden of the Philistines and from the trouble that was in the country, he would have looked up to God and trusted Him and been able to do great things for God.

IV. We need to Live very near the Lord Jesus Christ if our life is to be a life of usefulness and bring honour and glory to God. We need to sink ourselves, to be very humble, not to trust in our own strength, but to put all our trust in our God. Then our life, like Moses' life, will be a life of usefulness. We shall not get into the bad habits which bind so many people as Samson was bound, but we shall be able to help others on the heavenly road.

'When he came down from the mount, Moses wist not that the skin of his face shone.'—EXODUS XXXIV. 29.

CHRISTIANS that are really the most eminent saints, and therefore have the most excellent experiences, . . . are astonished at and ashamed of the low degrees of their love and thankfulness, and their little knowledge of God. Moses, when he had been conversing with God in the mount, and his face shone so bright in the eyes of others as to dazzle their eyes, *wist not that his face shone.*—JONATHAN EDWARDS, *The Religious Affections* (part iii.).

MEN of elevated minds are not their own historians and panegyrists. So is it with faith and other Christian graces. Bystanders see our minds; but our minds, if healthy, see but the objects which possess them. As God's grace elicits our faith, so His holiness stirs our fear, and His glory kindles our love. Others may say of us, 'here is faith,' and 'there is conscientiousness,' and 'there is love'; but we can only say, 'this is God's grace,' and 'that is His holiness,' and 'that is His glory'.—NEWMAN, *Lectures on Justification*, p. 337.

LET thy face, like Moses', shine to others, but make no looking-glasses for thyself.—JEREMY TAYLOR.

THE late Dr. Andrew Bonar, when visiting Mr. Moody at Northfield, was out in his garden at early morning one day talking with his host. Along came a band of happy students, who shouted out: 'We've been having an all-night prayer meeting; can't you see our faces shine?' Dr. Bonar turned to them, and said, with a quiet smile, and shake of the head: 'Moses wist not that his face shone'.

REFERENCES.—XXXIV. 29.—W. J. Back, *A Book of Lay Sermons*, p. 247. S. G. McLennan, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxv. 1904, p. 83. T. Teignmouth Shore, *The Life of the World to Come*, p. 157. W. A. Gray, *The Shadow of the Hand*, p. 177. A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—Exodus*, etc., p. 204. XXXIV. 29-35.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxxvi. No. 2143.

'Behold, the skin of his face shone.'—EXODUS XXXIV. 30.

MAKE conscience of beginning the day with God. For he that begins it not with Him, will hardly end it with Him. It is he that finds God in his closet that will carry the savour of Him into his house, his shop, and his more open conversation. When Moses had been with God in the mount, his face shone, he brought of that glory into the camp.—BUNYAN.

HIGH gracious affections leave a sweet savour and relish of Divine things on the heart, and a stronger bent of soul towards God and holiness; as Moses'

face not only shone while he was in the mount, extraordinarily conversing with God, but it continued to shine after he came down from the mount.—JONATHAN EDWARDS.

'MILLAIS was the best trained of all,' says Mr. Holman Hunt in his *History of Pre-Raphaelitism* (i. p. 139). 'Not one hour of his life had been lost to his purpose of being a painter. The need of groping after systems by philosophic research and deductions was superseded in him by a quick instinct which enabled him to pounce as an eagle upon the prize he searched for. . . . He felt the fire of his message; it seemed to make his face shine, so that Rossetti, to justify an expression of his in "Hand and Soul," said that when he looked at Millais in full, his face was that of an angel.'

REFERENCE.—XXXIV. 30.—John Ker, *Sermons*, p. 170.

'These are the words which the Lord hath commanded, that ye should do them.'—EXODUS XXXV. 1.

RELIGION is the recognition of all our duties as if they were Divine commandments.—KANT.

REFERENCES.—XXXV. 21.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—Exodus*, etc., p. 213.

'And he hath filled him with the spirit of God, in wisdom, in understanding, and in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship.'—EXODUS XXXV. 31.

RELIGION devotes the artist, hand and mind, to the service of the gods; superstition makes him the slave of ecclesiastical pride, and forbids his work altogether, in terror or disdain.—RUSKIN, *On the Old Road* (I.).

'And he hath put it in his heart that he may teach.'—EXODUS XXXV. 34.

THE art which scorns all point of contact with morals, which denies all responsibility as a teacher, and knows no law but itself—nay, which evokes from the artist no real self-restraint, no recognition of the consecrating power of his gift, is a sterile art which has missed its purpose.—MORRIS JOSEPH, *The Ideal in Judaism*, p. 180.

'The people bring much more than enough for the service of the work, which the Lord commanded to make.'—EXODUS XXXVI. 5.

WHEN will the earth again hear the glad announcement that *the people bring much more than enough for the service of the work, which the Lord commanded to make?* Yet, until we bring more than enough, at least until we are kindled by a spirit which will make us desire to do so, we shall never bring enough.—JULIUS HARE in *Guesses at Truth.*

REFERENCES.—XXXVII. 7.—S. Baring-Gould, *Village Preaching for a Year*, vol. ii. p. 103. XXXVII. 23.—*Ibid.* vol. ii. p. 145.

And he made the altar of incense of shittim wood . . . and he overlaid it with pure gold.'—EXODUS XXXVII. 25, 26.

THE carved and pictured chapel—its entire surface animated with image and emblem—made the parish church a sort of book and Bible to the people's eye.—EMERSON, *Essay on Religion.*

REFERENCES.—XXXVIII. 8.—S. Baring-Gould, *Village Preaching for a Year*, vol. i. p. 189. XXXVIII. 26, 27.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxvii. No. 1581. XXXIX. 8.—T. Champness, *New Coins from Old Gold*, p. 234.

'A bell and a pomegranate, round about the hem of the robe.'—EXODUS XXXIX. 26.

THE golden bells on this ephod, by their precious matter and pleasant sound, do well represent the good profession that the saints make; and the pomegranates the fruit they bring forth. And as, in the hem of the ephod, bells and pomegranates were constantly connected, as is once and again observed, *there was a golden bell and a pomegranate, a golden bell and a pomegranate*, so it is in the true saints. Their good profession and their good fruit do constantly accompany one another. The fruit they bring forth in life evermore answers the pleasant sound of their profession.—JONATHAN EDWARDS, *The Religious Affections* (part iii.).

'And Moses did look on all the work, and behold they had done it as the Lord had commanded, even so had they done it.'—EXODUS XXXIX. 43.

THOUGH the gift of inspiring enthusiasm for duty and virtue is like other gifts, very unequally distributed among well-meaning persons, I do not believe that anyone who had himself an ardent love of goodness ever failed to communicate it to others. He may fail in his particular aims, he may use ill-devised methods, meet with inexplicable disappointments, make mistakes which cause him bitter regret; but we shall find that after all, though the methods may have failed, the man has succeeded; somewhere, somehow, in some valuable degree, he has—if I may use an old classical image—handed on the torch of his own ardour to others who will run the race for the prize of virtue.—SIR LESLIE STEPHEN.

REFERENCE.—XL. 1-16.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—Exodus*, etc., p. 223.

'Thou shalt set up the tabernacle of the tent of the congregation.'—EXODUS XL. 2.

WHAT makes worship impressive is just its publicity, its external manifestation, its sound, its splendour, its observance universally and visibly, holding its sway through all the details both of our outward and of our inward life.—JOUBERT.

'ALL the charm of ritual and ceremonial in worship has for Pater an indefinable and constant attraction. He is for ever recurring to it, because it seems to him to interpret and express an emotion, a need of the human spirit, whose concern is to comprehend if it can what is the shadowy figure, the mysterious will, that moves behind the world of sight and sense.—A. C. BENSON, *Pater*, p. 216.

'And thou shalt sanctify Aaron, that he may minister to me in the priest's office.'—EXODUS XL. 13.

THIS very Aaron, whose infirmity had yielded to so foul an idolatry, is chosen by God to be a priest to himself. As the light is best seen in darkness, the mercy of God is most magnified in our unworthiness. —BISHOP HALL.

Abraham Lincoln once used this passage to defend his appointment to a high position of some official who had wronged and opposed him. He argued from God's magnanimity. 'I have scriptural authority for appointing him. You remember that when the Lord was on Mount Sinai getting out a commission for Aaron, that same Aaron was at the foot of the mountain making a false god for the people to worship. Yet Aaron got his commission, you know.'

'Thus did Moses: according to all that the Lord commanded him, so did he.'—Exodus xl. 16.

I lighted in the *Journal* on a very appreciative notice of Faraday, whose death I was grieved to observe. It is by one who signs himself *A. de la Rive*, and I am sure you will be gratified by the close of it. After describing his scientific career, and speaking of the failing health of latter years, he says, '. . . Sa fin a été aussi douce que sa vie; on peut dire de lui qu'il s'est endormi au Seigneur. J'ai rarement vu un chrétien plus convaincu et plus conséquent.' That word *conséquent* I like—one who follows it up into all its consequences.—Dr. John Ker, *Letters*, pp. 40-41.

'So Moses finished the work.'—Exodus xl. 33.

It is more of this quality of will that is needed—this faithful, loyal temperament that cannot put its hand to the plough and afterwards lightly turn back. A *persistent* will—patient and unfaltering—above all things it is well to nurse this quality in children—faithfulness to the work once taken in hand, be it ever so trivial. Faithfulness is the backbone of faith, and without faith enthusiasm will fade or flicker, after which virtue will be very moderate indeed. And faithfulness implies a sense of duty, a habit of taking conduct as a series of acts that ought to be done, or as pledges that ought to be fulfilled—a sense of responsibility for the accurate and thorough fulfilment of every piece of work.—Dr. Sophie Bryant, *Studies in Character*, p. 170.

'If the cloud were not taken up, then they journeyed not till the day that it was taken up.'—Exodus xl. 37.

All our troubles come from impatience, from not trusting God. It is like moving, when the cloud is still.—General Gordon, *Letters*, p. 268.

LEVITICUS

LEVITICUS—THE BOOK OF LAWS

This book has been aptly called the handbook of the priests. The content of the book is linked to the subjects dealt with in Exodus and is in direct continuation thereof.

I. Dedication.—In this division there is revealed the provision of God for the approach of His people to Himself in worship. The offerings are first described and then their laws are enunciated. There followed instructions concerning the method of offering, which revealed the true attitude of the worshipper.

II. Meditation.—The second division consists of a brief historical portion which gives an account of the actual ceremony of the consecration of the priests and the tabernacle, and the common cement of worship.

III. Separation.—While provision for approach was made, and the method of appropriation was provided there were still very definite conditions which must be fulfilled in order that the people might avail themselves of the provision made. These conditions may be summarized as those of entire separation to God. This division also deals with the responsibilities of the priests.

IV. Consecration.—The feasts of Jehovah were the national signs and symbols of the fact that the people, dedicated to God as the offering witnessed, permitted to approach through the mediation of the priestly service, separated in all the details of life, were by God consecrated to Himself.

V. Ratification.—The laws of ratification consisted of the outward signs of the principle of possession to be observed in the land together with solemn promises and warnings. The first sign was of the sabbath of the land. In the seventh year of rest the original Ownership of God was recognized. The second sign was that of the jubilee, wherein great human inter-relationships, dependent upon the fact of Divine possession, were insisted upon. The book ends with a section dealing with vows. The principle laid down is that it is not necessary that vows should be made, but that if they are made they must be religiously observed.—G. Campbell Morgan, *The Analysed Bible*, p. 55.

References.—I. 1.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxx. No. 1771. I. 4, 5.—Spurgeon, *Twelve Sermons on the Atonement*, p. 49. I. 5.—*Ibid.* p. 383. I. 9.—J. Flemming, *The Gospel in Leviticus*, p. 46. I. 7.—J. Monro Gibson, *The Mosaic Era*, p. 171. II. 1, 2.—J. Flemming, *The Gospel in Leviticus*, p. 96. II. 11.—Herbert Windross, *The Life Victorious*, p. 17. IV. 2, 3.—*Ibid.* p. 107. IV. 3.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xiii. No. 739. IV. 6 and 7.—Spurgeon, *Twelve Sermons on the Atonement*, p. 395. VI. 13.—Bishop Bickersteth, *Sermons*, p. 16. VIII. 22, 23.—H. Bonar, *Short Sermons for Family Reading*, p. 212.

HOLY AND COMMON

'This shall be a statute for ever throughout your generations ye shall put a difference between holy and unholy, between clean and unclean.'—Leviticus x. 10.

Rehearse the circumstances: They had confused 'holy' and 'common'.

I. This distinction was the leading idea of religion for many years. It was not based upon any intrinsic difference, moral or physical. Nor was it confined to Judaism.

II. Now, something has changed our way of thinking. Priesthood cannot be regarded apart from the personal quality of the man. The punishment of sacrilege, as such, has been everywhere abolished.

III. Is this because our time is less religious? No, but because it is more so. The change has been effected by Christ. He has subordinated every other distinction to the fundamental one of intrinsic goodness or badness.

IV. But the distinction of 'holy' and 'common' is a constant one also. The governing principle seems to be that goodness is of transcendent value; and lifts into value everything connected with itself. —S. D. McConnell, *Sermon Stuff*, p. 101.

THE SCAPEGOAT

Leviticus xvi. 8-22.

Among a primitive people who seemed to have more moral troubles than any other and to feel greater need of dismissing them by artificial means, there grew up the custom of using a curious expedient. They chose a beast of the field, and upon its head symbolically piled all the moral hard-headedness of the several tribes; after which the unoffending brute was banished to the wilderness and the guilty multitude felt relieved. However crude that ancient method of transferring mental and moral burdens, it had at least this redeeming feature; the early Hebrews heaped their sins upon a creature which they did not care for and sent it away. In modern times we pile our burdens upon our dearest fellow-creatures and keep them permanently near us for further use. What human being but has some other upon whom he nightly hangs his troubles as he hangs his different garments upon hooks and nails in the walls around him?—James Lane Allen in *The Mettle of the Pasture*, pp. 161-162.

THE HIGH PRIEST AND THE ATONEMENT

'On that day shall the priest make an atonement for you to cleanse you, that ye may be clean from all your sins before the Lord.'—Leviticus xvi. 30.

I. There were many priests, but only one high priest. He only could make atonement. Under the gospel all believers are priests. But there is but one high priest,

Jesus Christ, called the Great High Priest; He alone can make atonement; He only can forgive sin.

II. The high priest on the day of atonement was an humbled priest. On this day he came out clothed in fine linen only. And Jesus, when He made atonement, was an humbled priest. They stripped from Him even the seamless garment that He wore.

III. The high priest on that day was a spotless priest. Aaron had to be ceremonially purified. We have a spotless High Priest; He needed no atonement for Himself—He had no sin to put away.

IV. The high priest on that day was a solitary priest. It is remarkable that no disciple died with Christ. His disciples forsook Him and fled. We owe all our salvation to Him, and to Him alone.

V. The high priest on that day was a laborious priest. Jewish authorities assert that on that day everything was done by Him. Jesus, though He had toiled before, yet never worked as He did on that wondrous day of atonement.—C. H. SPURGEON, *Outline Sermons*, p. 254.

THE BLOOD OF CHRIST

(*For Good Friday and Easter*)

'The life of the flesh is in the blood . . . it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul.'—LEVITICUS XVII. 11.

THE thoughts of Easter and of Good Friday must keep close together. They are, of course, at first sight, poles apart. And yet they are two sides of one great event. Consider this by help which God Himself has given us in the Old Testament.

The precious Blood of Christ, that certainly is a Good Friday thought, but yet that Blood is at the centre of our Easter feast. It is the power of eternal life. In it are washed the robes of the redeemed. The text from the old law gives us the clue to understanding this.

I. In the sacrifices of the Jewish Temple, meant to prepare for and point to Christ, the Blood was the most important thing. It was offered to God; with it the holy place and the altar were sprinkled. With it the leper was touched. The high priest once a year carried it into the holiest before the mercy seat. It was the symbol of God's own presence. And the reason of this was in the belief that the Blood is the life: 'For the life of the flesh is in the blood'. To us carnage and blood-shedding mean the same, and speak only of the ghastly incidents of death. To the Jew blood-shedding meant release of life. The innocent animal gave its life for a high and Divinely ordered purpose. A wonderful mystery indeed. It declared the power of life that had passed through death. The ox or the goat could only die in its own time, but there was one way in which it could, as we see, give its life before its time by its owner's free will and at his cost. The animal stood, and was at least partly understood by the Jew to stand, for the man that offered it, and then the meaning begins to come clear. The life in man must die with the death of the body, and see corruption, and be no more, unless some stainless life—for the Temple victims had to be without spot or blemish—could be freely given up to pass out through death as an offering to God, and then it would bless and reconcile and purify. This it is which we, in its wonderful fulfilment, have been allowed to see.

Good Friday shows the slaughter, the inhuman and cruel murder of the Holy One and the Just. It is a day of tragedy and gloom. All the same, there was done there the noblest thing ever done on earth, and it shines with glory amidst the darkness. For the life slaughtered was also a life laid down. The death which darkens the earth is also the coming out of the life, free, powerful, new, and quickening, as the glory of the Resurrection follows to prove. The death had to be, but it is the life that remains, and it sprinkles, and cleanses, and quickens. Unlike the coarse natural blood of the old sacrifices, this life can still, in rite and symbol, give itself as blood to be drunk and to be consumed. 'The Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, which was shed for thee, preserve thy body and soul unto everlasting life.' It enters into us, and we live with a double life, our own, and His, and in the power of that life we can approach to God, having boldness to enter into the holiest by the Blood of Jesus.

II. We have here the truth, at once severe and splendid, which Good Friday and Easter should leave with us. We have, like the animals slain of old in the Temple, our natural life in us which must die. If we live by the flesh, we must die; but the Cross shows us a way of using death which makes it to be a power of life. We can make a sacrifice of life. It has its opportunities and chances, its dangers and risks, its sorrows and joys, its temptations, and through all we can carry the spirit of sacrifice. So we can do in small ways that which Jesus did through life, and completed on Calvary. We can mortify our members which are on the earth, we can die unto sin, we can be united with Jesus by His death. But such dying is really life. Like the slaughter of the victim, it sets free the blood which is the true life; like the sacrifice of the Cross, it opens into the glory of the Resurrection. We are to reckon ourselves alive, not with the old life that must die, but alive unto God in Christ Jesus with the new life that cannot die. That is the mystery of Easter, gathering up all the sorrow and severity of Good Friday into its joy, and it sheds a glory over all life. This present life is not a thing merely to be despised and cast away. The body of the victim slain, slain to yield the blood, was not treated as a worthless carcass to be cast aside, but as holy food upon which the offerer might feed. The Body of the Redeemer, from which the Blood was shed upon the Cross, was a holy thing, and when He makes His Sacrament, it is not of the Blood only that He takes, but also: 'The Body of our Lord Jesus Christ, which was given for thee, preserve thy body and soul unto everlasting life'. The earthly life which has in it the spirit of sacrifice, gains already on earth a fuller strength and truer beauty. Thus it is, too, that even the bodies of Christians partake of the glory. The spirituality

which despises them is not the spirituality of Scripture or of Christ. Our bodily natures may be sanctified by the sacrifice of disciplined, sober, and thankful use as well as by the sacrifice of surrender. It must be for each as God appoints, and He calls.

THE LIMITATIONS OF THE DWARF

'A dwarf . . . shall not come nigh to offer the bread of his God.'—LEVITICUS XX. 21.

UNDER the old Hebrew priesthood the dwarf, while permitted to partake of the holy bread, was restrained from offering it to others. He was not to blame for being a dwarf, but only men without blemish, and who had the full measure of manly power, were permitted to exercise the functions of that holy office.

I. It is the bitterest sorrow of weakness that a man cannot render aid to the helpless. And in the higher realm the sorest pang that a man can know is that he is so dwarfed in his spiritual nature that he cannot offer the bread of his God to his fellows. The physical dwarf is very often, and indeed usually, without personal blame. It is his misfortune, which may have come to him by inheritance, or by accident. But the spiritual dwarf, while the conduct of others may have contributed to his lamentable condition, is in the last analysis personally responsible, for the power to emerge from such a condition is always within his reach.

II. The Hebrew priest that was born a dwarf, or who had been dwarfed by accident or by cruel treatment in childhood, could never become anything else. No penitence, no care, no culture could ever give him the broad shoulders, the splendid presence, and the noble personality of the full-grown and mature manhood necessary for his office. But God is more gracious in spiritual things, or rather the spirit is not subject to the limitations of the flesh, and the man who has been dwarfed by poverty, or affliction, or harsh treatment, into narrowness of vision and experience, may through devotion and self-surrender to God emerge out of the dwarfed manhood he now knows into the large and splendid personality which shall give him the privilege of offering the bread of God to humanity.

III. We do not need to be weak and powerless. We need not go along the way of life spiritual dwarfs. God is no respecter of persons. He is seeking for men and women to offer the bread of life to hungry souls. All that is needed is that we should surrender ourselves to Him for the highest and holiest service. What folly that for a few paltry dollars, or for a few years of sensual pleasure, or for a few shouts of applause from unthinking crowds, we should miss the building up of soul and character into those splendid proportions that shall fit us for Divine usefulness.—L. A. BANKS, *Sermons which have Won Souls*, p. 211.

REFERENCES.—XX. 26.—J. Vaughan, *Sermons* (9th Series), p. 117. XXI.-XXII.—H. Bonar, *Short Sermons for Family Reading*, p. 358. XXII. 21.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxxii. No. 1897. XXIII. 42.—Bishop Woodford, *Sermons on Subjects from the Old Testament*, p. 1. XXIII.-XXVII.—J. Monro Gibson, *The Mosaic Era*, p. 223. XXIV. 5-9.—J. H. Holford, *Memorial Sermons*, p. 127. XXV. 9, 10.—J. Flemming, *The Gospel of Leviticus*, pp. 91, 123. XXV. 10.—J. A. Aston, *Early Witness to Gospel Truth*, pp. 23, 36.

THE MESSAGE OF THE BOOK OF LEVITICUS

'Ye shall be holy unto Me, for I the Lord am holy.'—LEVITICUS XX. 26.

THE book of Leviticus is one which we all feel to be specially difficult. Yet there is no book that more amply repays study. At every point it proves itself to be the Word of God, and as such profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for inspiration in righteousness. While, by the advent of the Lord Jesus, many of the forms enjoined in Leviticus were abolished, the principles which found expression in these forms have been reasserted with greater force than ever. The book has a message for us to-day, and it is this message which we must now strive to discover. Perhaps the most remarkable thing about it is its insistence on the holiness of the body. Leviticus recognizes what is expressly asserted at a later period in revelation, that the body is meant to be a temple of the Holy Ghost, and as such must be kept holy unto God.

I. It set before the Israelite his duty to God. In its religious aspect this code is the exposition of the first and great commandment. It bade the Israelite recognize Jehovah as the one object of worship. It bade him recognize Jehovah as the ultimate ground of all morality, it bade him see in what was good and right the expression of the will of God. It bade him recognize Jehovah as the Lord of Life and the Lord of Time, the giver of every good and perfect gift. Moreover it bade the Israelite recognize that Jehovah was a God terrible in His moral government.

II. Then this law of holiness set before the Israelite his duty to his fellow-men. It endeavoured to explain also the second great commandment of the law, 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself'. In the precepts that it lays down there is a wisdom and an enlightenment from which present-day legislators would do well to learn. To begin with, it puts social relations in their right place. But having defined the relation between our duty to God and our duty to man, it goes on to demand for our brother men justice, honesty, forbearance, kindness, purity, tenderness, and love.

III. And then this law of holiness set before the Israelite his personal duty as a member of the holy nation. This it did in an indirect manner by the regulations it enjoined for maintaining the purity of the priests. All Israelites were not priests and did not actually minister at the altar. But Israel was not allowed to forget that she was a priestly nation. With such care manifested that the priest who ministered to the law should be holy, pure, and without blemish, the law of necessity taught the Israelite how holy his God was, and at the same time taught him that he also must be holy if he would stand accepted in God's presence. Then having dealt with

the holy life in its Godward, manward, and selfward aspects, the section of Leviticus closes by announcing the rewards which God has promised to the obedient, and the punishment threatened to those who wilfully disobey. This code completes the short appendix, and the matter of vows brings the whole book to a close.—G. H. C. Macgregor, *Messages of the Old Testament*, p. 31.

SOJOURNING WITH GOD

'The land shall not be sold for ever; for the land is Mine; for ye are strangers and sojourners with Me.'—Leviticus xxv. 23.

There are two views to be taken of that famous land about which so much of Old Testament history gathers. (1) When you are looking at the children of Israel passing out of Egypt and through the wilderness, their prospect of this promised land awaiting them reminds you of the heavenly inheritance held out to believers as the rest that remaineth for the people of God. (2) But when you think of the Israelites in actual occupation of Canaan, then there are aspects of it which rather suggest the provision of earthly support during this mortal life, which God has promised to His children here in this world.

I. The first thing suggested is the sojourning condition of the children of God in this world. They are strangers and sojourners. It must be admitted in the first place that they have much in common with everybody else. All are lately come into existence—ere long shall cease to be connected with the present order of things, and therefore sojourners. Those therefore are sojourners who really have in view another country; another system of things as their durable inheritance.

II. Observe a great element in this sojourning state emphasized in the text. To be strangers and sojourners has something depressing in it; but a great element of gladness comes when we hear the voice that says 'The land is Mine; ye are strangers and sojourners with Me". For a believer this world becomes God's world, and in his sojournings he is assured of a Divine companionship and communion.

III. What way of dealing with our earthly possessions is expected of us in this situation? The 'prohibition implied that the Israelite was not to claim absolute ownership, nor was he to act as if he claimed it'. He had a use of it under restrictions, but the land continued to be the Lord's; the Lord had the abiding possession; the Israelite only a transient use as a stranger and a sojourner with God. And you are sojourners so that you are also stewards. These are your Lord's goods. For the direct interest of the cause of God, be stewards—be stewards that shall not fear the reckoning.—Robert Rainy, *Sojourning with God*, p. 1.

Reference.—XXVI. 2.—R. G. Soans, *Sermons for the Young*, p. 7.

NUMBERS

NUMBERS

References.—IV. 1-23.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xlix. No. 2833. IV. 23.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers*, p. 297. IV. 24-26.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xlix. No. 2829. IV. 49.—*Ibid.* vol. xxv. No. 1457.

THE AARONIC BLESSING

'The Lord bless thee and keep thee.'—Numbers vi. 22-27.

I.—'The Lord bless thee and keep thee.' This is pre-eminently the blessing of the Father. The language sets forth the positive and negative side of God's ever-watchful beneficence. It involves all good gifts and deprecates all the opposite evils.

II.—The second part of the benediction is especially the blessing of the Father through the Son. The words suggest the thought of *favour* and of *revelation*. The Aaronic blessing is a prophecy of the Incarnation, for we cannot help thinking of St. Paul's words, 'God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus'. The true characteristic of the revelation given by Christ was *graciousness*.

III.—The blessing of the Holy Ghost is seen in the third movement of this benediction. The Holy Spirit lights up that glorious and gracious face of Christ before our eyes, and gives us peace thereby.—J. Mason, *Sermon Year Book*, 1891, p. 369.

References.—VI. 22-27.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxxvi. No. 2170. VI. 23-27.—W. Binnie, *Sermons*, p. 58. W. Alexander, *Verbum Crucis*, p. 163. VI. 24-26.—W. F. Hook, *Outlines of Sermons on the Old Testament*, p. 35. J. Brand, *The Dundee Pulpit*, 1872, p. 113. VII. 9.—T. G. Rooke, *The Church in the Wilderness*, p. 174. VIII. 5-22.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xlix. No. 2829. IX.—*Ibid.* vol. xli. No. 2407. IX. 11, 12.—*Ibid.* vol. xli. No. 2407.

THE GUIDING PILLAR

'So it was alway: the cloud covered the tabernacle by day, and the appearance of fire by night.'—Numbers ix. 16.

I. Note the Double Form of the Guiding Pillar.—The fire was the centre, the cloud was wrapped around it. The same double element is found in all God's manifestations of Himself to men. In every form of revelation are present both the heart and core of light, which no eye can look upon, and the merciful veil which, because it veils, unveils; because it hides, reveals; makes visible because it conceals; and shows God because it is the hiding of His power. It reappears in both elements in Christ, but combined in new proportions, so as that 'the veil, that is to say, His flesh,' is thinned to transparency and all aglow with the indwelling lustre of manifest Deity.

Note also the varying appearance of the pillar according to need. By day it was a cloud, by night it glowed in the darkness.

Both these changes of aspect symbolize for us the reality of the Protean capacity of change according to our ever-varying needs, which for our blessing we may find in that ever-changing, unchanging, Divine presence which will be our companion, if we will.

II. Note the Guidance of the Pillar.—When it lifts the camp marches; when it glides down and lies motionless the march is stopped and the tents are pitched. Never, from moment to moment, did they know when the moving cloud might settle, or the resting cloud might soar.

Is not that all true about us? God guides us by circumstances, God guides us by His word, God guides us by His Spirit, speaking through our common sense and in our understandings, and, most of all, God guides us by that dear Son of His, in whom is the fire and round whom is the cloud.

In like manner, the same absolute uncertainty which was intended to keep the Israelites (though it failed often) in the attitude of constant dependence, is the condition in which we all have to live, though we mask it from ourselves.

III. The Docile Following of the Guide.—'At the commandment of the Lord they rested in their tents, and at the commandment of the Lord they journeyed.' Obedience was prompt; whensoever and for whatsoever the signal was given, the men were ready.

What do we want in order to cultivate and keep such a disposition? We need perpetual watchfulness lest the pillar should lift unnoticed. We need still more to keep our wills in absolute suspense, if His will has not declared itself. Do not let us be in a hurry to run before God. We need to hold the present with a slack hand, so as to be ready to fold our tents and take to the road, if God will. We need, too, to cultivate the habit of prompt obedience. If we would follow the pillar, we must follow it at once.—A. Maclaren, *The Unchanging Christ*, p. 203.

References.—IX. 16.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers*, p. 305. X. 1, 2.—C. Jerdan, *Pastures of Tender Grass*, p. 98. X. 10.—J. Baines, *Sermons*, p. 1.

HOBAB'S OPPORTUNITY

'Come thou with us, and we will do thee good.'—Numbers x. 29.

Hobab was the son of Raguel the Midianite, who is called Reuel in Exodus ii. 18, and elsewhere Jethro. Hobab was therefore the brother-in-law of Moses. When Jethro, having brought back Zipporah and her two sons to Moses (Exod. xviii.), returned to his own house, Hobab appears to have remained in the

camp. But now that the Israelites were about to continue their journey to the Promised Land, he expressed a desire to return to his own kindred and country. Moses, however, urged him to cast in his lot with the people of God, and he prevailed. The descendants of Hobab are spoken of in the books of Judges and Samuel as dwelling in Canaan. We have in the text:—

I. A Cordial Invitation.—'Come thou with us.' Three things are implied. He was invited:—

1. To conform to their principles. 'He could not remain with them and serve other gods.'

2. To share their privileges. 'The Lord hath spoken good concerning Israel.'

3. To enjoy their prospects. 'We are journeying unto the land,' etc.

II. A Solemn Promise.—A. 'We will do thee good.'

1. By social intercourse. 'As iron sharpeneth iron,' etc.

2. By wise counsel. 'Admonish one another.'

3. By a holy example. 'Let your light so shine,' etc.

4. By genuine sympathy. 'Bear ye one another's burdens,' etc.

B. 'What goodness the Lord shall do unto us, the same will we do unto thee.'

We can only give as we receive.—F. J. Austin, *Seeds and Saplings*, p. 31.

References.—X. 29.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xvi. No. 916. C. Perren, *Revival Sermons in Outline*, p. 145. A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers*, p. 314. X. 29-31.—Hugh Black, *University Sermons*, p. 259; see also *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxvii. 1905, p. 65. X. 33.—Phillips Brooks, *The Law of Growth*, p. 328. X. 35.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. vii. No. 368. X. 35, 36.—J. E. C. Welldon, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxiv. 1894, p. 243. A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers*, p. 321; see also *Outlines of Sermons on the Old Testament*, p. 39. XI. 1-10.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxxix. No. 2332. XI. 4.—C. Gore, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lv. 1899, p. 265.

THE IRKSOMENESS OF RELIGION

'There is nothing at all, beside this manna, before our eyes.'—Numbers xi. 6.

We all know how after a certain time the children of Israel began to loathe the manna. Their soul rejected it, it was light food. It was bread from heaven, says the Psalmist—angels' bread, and yet it proved distasteful to the camp. The strange thing is that it was they—and not God's enemies—who found the manna such a distasteful dish. It was the children of Israel who felt the diet irksome, and the children of Israel were the people of God.

I. That leads me by quite a competent spiritualizing—for did not Jesus say, 'I am the bread'?—to dwell on a very urgent matter, I mean the irksomeness inherent in religion. There is nothing on earth so paramount and vital as the relationship of the human soul to God. Yet men who have felt all that, and feel it now—and wherever an awakened soul is, there it is felt—such men and women, whensoever they reveal their souls, confess to the seasons, sometimes unbroken years, when religion was an irksome thing to them.

Or again, one might say religion cannot be irksome if the great key-words of the New Testament be true. There is rest, and there is joy and love on the narrow path which Jesus Christ hath trodden. But for all that, there are few travellers on that path who have not felt the irksomeness of their religion.

II. We detect it sometimes by the quiet relief we feel when our religious exercises are concluded—a certain secret sense of satisfaction when the prayer is got over, and the worship done.

We detect it again in the way in which many try to put service in the place of personal religion.

But the irksomeness of a quiet and abiding piety is seen above all in the love of religious excitement.

III. I wonder if we can discern the grounds of this element of irksomeness in heart-religion? Surely the first and the deepest is just this—religion is spiritual, and we are carnal. It is because we are far from Christlike yet; it is because God is holiness and love and purity and truth, and because in religion we must walk with God, that even to the saint it has its irksomeness.

Another reason for that same feeling is this, we strive and seem to make so little progress.

But in our religion, I think it is the *Cross* above all else that does it. It is the fact that in the very centre there hangs the pallid figure on the tree. In other words, it is the abnegation, it is the humility and self-denial, it is the renunciation of much that is sweet to us, and the eye fixed on a dying and bleeding Saviour; it is *that*, when life is sweet and full of music, and calling us as to the freedom of a bird, that may keep an element of irksomeness in all following of the blessed Lord.—G. H. Morrison, *Sun-Rise*, p. 279.

DEW AND MANNA

'And when the dew fell upon the camp in the night, the manna fell upon it.'—Numbers xi. 9.

Israel represents humanity in its pitiful failure to realize the goodness of Divine providence.

I. Here are Usual and Unusual Mercies.—Dew is usual, manna is unusual. Dew falls everywhere and always; not so manna. Life, however, receives both dew and manna. The sad fact is that we often fail to appreciate either class of mercies.

II. Here are Natural and Spiritual Mercies.—Dew is a natural blessing; manna represents a spiritual good. One is according to the established course of nature, the other a supernatural gift of God. And yet the distinction between natural and spiritual is largely man-made. To the Christian it is almost impossible to differentiate between the two spheres. God is behind the dew as surely as the manna. The spiritual represents the *super*natural, but not the *un*natural.

III. Here are Mysterious Processes in Life.—Who understands the dew? Who understands manna? The very word carries the idea of mystery. It con-

notes an inquiry—'What is it?' None can evacuate either gift of its mystery. And life is full of mysterious processes. There is mystery about the ordinary and mystery about the usual. If we give up religion because of its mystery, both logic and honesty will compel us to surrender a host of other things, for they are instinct with mystery. Life would be a dreary monotony if there were no mystery; and you would not accept a religion devoid of mystery, for mystery is the sign of divinity.

IV. 'Dew and Manna.' Life abounds in Common Mercies.—'When the dew fell *upon the camp*, the manna fell upon it.' It was a universal benefit. Both dew and manna were common to all Israel.

Do not the best gifts of life bear the stamp of universality? The dew and manna fall upon 'the camp'. Sir Walter Scott, in the latter part of his life, said to a young friend, 'The older you grow, the more you will be thankful that the finest of God's mercies are common mercies'. It is profoundly true. The Apostle Jude writes of 'our *common* salvation'. Peter speaks of 'the *common* faith'. Moses spoke of 'the *common* death'. Recall that fine saying of Schiller's: 'Death cannot be an evil, for it is universal'.

V. 'When the Dew fell upon the Camp in the Night, the Manna fell upon it.' Here are Associated Mercies.

VI. How regular, too, are God's Mercies!—'When the dew *fell*, the manna *fell*.' Neither sprang out of the earth: they fell from wondrous heights. The sun never fails on any single day to appear. The air currents are always flowing. Harvest comes every year. God's constancy is the miracle of miracles.

VII. God's Mercies do not Absolve Man from his Duty.—God sends the dew, but only that we may utilize the ground He thus prepares for us. God sends the manna, but it is not to be eaten just as it falls. Grace is to be improved.

VIII. Dew and Manna are Typical Gifts.—They are typical in two respects:—

1. In the case before us the season of their bestowment is full of parabolic suggestiveness. When did these blessings fall? 'In the night.' Spiritual benedictions are often richest in darkest hours.

2. Dew is the symbol of grace. Manna, too, is typical. In the 6th chapter of John's great gospel Christ sets Himself in apposition to the manna.—Dinsdale T. Young, *Unfamiliar Texts*, p. 189.

References.—XI. 14.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers*, p. 329. XI. 23.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. vii. No. 363. XI. 25.—G. Matheson, *Voices of the Spirit*, p. 11. XI. 26.—T. G. Rooke, *The Church in the Wilderness*, p. 209.

Numbers xi. 26.

Lord, Thy servants are now praying in the church, and I am staying at home, detained by necessary occasions, such as are not of my seeking, but of Thy sending. My care could not prevent them, my power could not remove them. Wherefore, though I cannot go to church, there to sit down at table with the rest of Thy guests, be pleased, Lord, to send me a dish of their meat hither, and feed my soul with holy thoughts. Eldad and Medad, though staying still in the camp (no doubt on just cause), yet prophesied as well as the other elders. Though they went not out to the spirit, the spirit came home to them.—Thomas Fuller.

Numbers xi. 33.

Lord, grant me one suit, which is this—deny me all suits which are bad for me: when I petition for what is unfitting, O let the King of heaven make use of His negative voice. Rather let me fast than have quails given with intent that I should be choked in eating them.—Thomas Fuller.

References.—XI. 27.—W. J. Dawson, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lii. 1897, p. 296. XI. 29.—T. G. Selby, *The Holy Spirit and Christian Privilege*, p. 215. W. Sanday, *Inspiration*, p. 168. T. De Witt Talmage, *Sermons*, p. 221. T. M. Rees, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxviii. 1905, p. 293. J. Warschauer, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxxiv. 1908, p. 417. XI. 34.—J. Baldwin Brown, *The Soul's Exodus and Pilgrimage*, p. 279. XII. 3.—T. R. Stevenson, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxxix. 1891, p. 109. XIII. 16.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons for Some Feast Days in the Christian Year*, p. 213. G. Trevor, *Types and the Antitype*, p. 115. XIII. 17-33.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers*, p. 332. XIII. 21, 23, 27.—R. Winterbotham, *Sermons Preached in Holy Trinity Church, Edinburgh*, p. 275. XIII. 23.—W. Brooke, *Sermons*, p. 30.

A LAND FLOWING WITH MILK AND HONEY

'And they told Him, and said, We came unto the land whither Thou sentest us, and surely it floweth with milk and honey; and this is the fruit of it.'—Numbers xiii. 27

The idea suggested is, that the true disciples of the Lord Jesus are expected *to show to the world some illustration of the heavenly country to which they are journeying*. In a sense they have been there, and have come back. But in what sense?

I. The idea with many persons is, that the future condition of man is so completely different from this, that it is out of the question to attempt to form a conception of it. Heaven, they think, is absolutely unlike earth. Now, it is true, St. Paul tells us, 'that eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him.' But it is also true, as the Apostle goes on to say, that 'God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit'. Some people then are in a position to understand what the heavenly kingdom is like. They have ideas, true ideas, about it—foretastes, anticipations. In fact, 'Heaven' is really the expansion and development of a life begun here below. 'He that hath the Son hath life.'

II. What then has the true disciple to show as specimens of the produce of this unseen and unknown country? Briefly, the character of Christ reproduced in him, by the Power of the Holy Spirit. It is faintly, imperfectly reproduced; still it is reproduced. The more Christlike we are, the more truly shall we bear in our hands the 'fruit' of the better land.

III. It is by the presentation of these fruits of the land that souls are won. No doubt there are some

persons in the world to whom Christ and everything belonging to Christ are only repulsive; and these will scrutinize the disciple with an unfriendly eye, and rejoice if they can find, or fancy they find, any inconsistency in his conduct. But there are also many others of a different temper. They are halting between two opinions. They say, not of course in words, but by their feelings and manner, 'show us the fruits of the heavenly land, of which you think so much and speak so much. You are amongst us as a citizen of the heavenly city. Enable us to gather from your conduct what are the characteristics of that noble land, of that bright and glorious companionship.'

What is the practical conclusion to be drawn from the whole subject thus discussed? Surely it is this—that we, who profess to serve and follow the Lord Jesus Christ, should be careful to recognize the responsibility laid upon us to give a good report, like Caleb and Joshua, and not a bad report, like the ten other spies, of the unseen land. We shall give a bad report if our lives are not attractive, and are not consistent, or if we say, as the ten did, 'Well, it is true enough that the land is glorious and magnificent, but the difficulties to be overcome are so many, the foes that stand in the way of occupation so powerful, that it is useless to attempt to fight our way into it'.—Gordon Calthrop, *Harvest and Thanksgiving Services*, p. 157.

THE MESSAGE OF THE BOOK OF NUMBERS

'Let us go up at once and possess it.'—Numbers xiii. 30.

The Book of Numbers tells the story of *arrested deliverance*.

I. The book begins well. The object of the encampment at Sinai has been accomplished. And now Jehovah had taken up His abode among His people to lead them to the Promised Land. But this land was not to be occupied peaceably; the inhabitants of it had to be driven out. The land, which was in *right* theirs by the gift of God, had to become in *fact* theirs by actual conquest. Therefore the people, which up to this time had been the *flock* of Jehovah, were now to be organized as the *army* of Jehovah. This is the meaning of the census, the account of which occupies the opening chapters of the book, and has given the book its name in our English Bibles. By this census three lessons were taught Israel; lessons which were enforced subsequently by the legislative enactments and the historical incidents recorded in the book.

1. Israel was taught the *aloneness*, the *majesty*, and the *sovereignty* of Jehovah her God.

2. Israel was taught also the *separateness of the Levites* as the priests of the law.

3. There was also taught the *separateness of the people* of Jehovah: this was implied of course in the other two lessons.

II. When the census was completed the march from Sinai began. Of this march we have the account in chapters ten to fourteen. I think it is most important to distinguish between this march and the subsequent wanderings. Under the trials of their wilderness experiences the people often fell. Their wilderness life was a chequered one, but it was on the whole a life of progress. They were all the time in the line of the will of God. The cloud was guiding them, steadily moving forward, each day bringing them nearer the Promised Land, and so after a brief period they reached Kadesh-Barnea on its very borders.

III. But here a crisis occurred. God had willed that His people should have certain wilderness experiences. But by the time they reached Kadesh this had been learned, and God willed now that their wilderness experiences should cease. He said of Canaan, 'This is the land which I give,' not *I will give*, but I *give* to you. He set before them an open door, and said, 'Go up and possess the land'. But Israel refused to go up. At Kadesh-Barnea Israel deliberately refused to fall in with the purpose of God.

But with this act of opposition the character of Israel's experiences became entirely changed—the wilderness ended, the temptation began; the march ended, the wandering began. Of this time of temptation we may notice lessons:—

1. It was not in the purpose of God for Israel, it was not in the promise of God for Israel. It grieved Him sorely that they did not fall in with His purpose, and that He had so terribly to punish them, but their unbelief left Him no alternative.

2. The time of wandering was a time inconceivably blank and unutterably dreary.

3. Yet we must not go so far as to say that these years were utterly useless. God makes the very wrath of man to redound to His glory. This time of death and doom to the rebels of Kadesh was, in God's mercy, made a time of discipline to their children.

4. The time came to an end. The people were restored to obedience, and were once more willing to do what God told them. The forty years passed and they were brought back to Kadesh. When the new start was made it was found that obedience was the secret of victory. The nation was not perfect, far from it; still it murmured, and still it had to be punished. But it had learned to believe in God and to obey God, and so it went forward to victory.—G. H. C. Macgregor, *Messages of the Old Testament*, p. 45.

'Let us go up at once and possess it; for we are well able to overcome it.'—Numbers xiii. 30.

A favourite missionary text of Hugh Price Hughes. In one sermon, preached for the extinction of a debt, he said: 'Caleb and Joshua were confident that the tribes of Israel were well able to capture Palestine for three reasons: God had promised Canaan to them again and again; He had already begun to accomplish their marvellous destiny by delivering them from Egypt and conducting them to the borders of the Promised Land, and although their enemies appeared to be strong, they were in reality hopelessly

weak. God had with equal clearness promised the whole world to Christ.'

References.—XIII. 30.—J. K. Popham, *Sermons*, p. 93. XIII. 30, 31.—H. Gorton Edge, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxxiv. 1908, p. 183.

ON THE EDGE OF THE LAND—AFRAID TO GO UP

'We be not able to go up against the people; for they are stronger than we.'—Numbers xiii. 31.

I. God has given us, His people, a great deliverance, and received each of us into it at our baptism. We have had our Red Sea. He has taught His covenant and law. We have had our Sinai; the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, and the Ten Commandments, telling us what to believe, how to worship, how to obey. He calls us to enter on our privileges, full members of His Kingdom and Church, in the good land which He blesses; fed with its milk and honey, in His Sacrament, and in all the grace and inward peace which He gives to His people. It will be a fighting life, as Israel's would have been at first, if they had gone up into Canaan: the world, the flesh, and the devil, are most real enemies; but it may be a conquering life. Only for that there is but one secret—faith in God's help. But now comes the temptation. A voice speaks—it may be in your heart, it may be from some companion—and says: 'It is too big a thing for such as me. It is too hard. There is something which I shall never conquer. There are the enemies, all the many temptations, all the things against me, in the ways of the world, in companions; and if I could beat the rest, there are the giants; some strong passion that burns in me; some lust, some pride or temper. Or there are the cities walled up, those habits that have fortified themselves in my life and my heart, and that hands cannot break down.'

II. What shall we say? That the enemies are not strong and not many? Surely not. The spies were right. The people of the land were strong; the giants were formidable; the cities were walled and very great. So it is now. The lusts of the flesh are very strong; the snares of the world are very deceiving and difficult. Only something is left out of account. There are things stronger than walls and bulwarks. Those things are the righteous laws and holy will of God. Those cities which seemed so strong were really doomed. The sentence had gone out against them; the iniquity of the Amorite was full. 'Their defence,' said faithful Caleb, 'is departed from them.' Evil is always really weak. It threatens us, it blusters against us, it makes itself out ever so much bigger than it is; but go right up to it straight and you will find how weak it is, how it gives way, how its tempting or formidable shows are turned to paint and sham. Go right up to it straight, trusting not in your own strength, but in the Name of God. 'The Lord is with us, fear them not.' The unseen power is on your side.

III. Remember that the Israelites were so far right, at least, in this: that if they did not attack they must go back to Egypt, and Egypt is the house of bondage. If you do not fight in God's name against your temptations, and so enter on the free, conquering life of Christ's good soldier, you will assuredly find yourself in that old iron slavery under the evil which you might have slain. If you want to have a free life, fight for it now.

Or is there, perhaps, something between the two? Yes, there may be. Because we would not wholly live for God; because we would not give our first young strength to cut down certain faults of indulgence, or of temper, when with God's help we might have done it, He may condemn us to live and pine forty years in the wilderness outside the land—not indeed destroyed and cast away, because God's own mercy in Christ has pleaded for us, as Moses did that day for Israel, but still not admitted to the freedom, and the wealth, and the nearness to God, of those whom He has brought into their own land.—Bishop Talbot, *Sermons Preached in the Leeds Parish Church*, 1889-95, p. 136.

References.—XIII. 31.—T. G. Selby, *The God of the Patriarchs*, p. 237. XIII. 32.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. iv. No. 197. XIV. 1-10.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers*, p. 340. XIV. 6, 7.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. iv. No. 197. XIV. 9.—D. J. Hiley, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. l. 1896, p. 388. XIV. 11.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxv. No. 1498. 'Plain Sermons' by contributors to the *Tracts for the Times*, vol. v. p. 217. XIV. 13-19.—W. Binnie, *Sermons*, p. 106. XIV. 19.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture, Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers*, p. 349.

CALEB

'But My servant Caleb, because he had another spirit with him, and hath followed Me fully,' etc.—Numbers xiv. 24.

I. God's Testimony Concerning Caleb.

1. He had *another spirit* with him. The contrast is between the spirit which he cherished and (*a*) that of the spies who brought back a discouraging report; (*b*) that of the people who were thereby roused to murmuring and rebellion. The spirit of Caleb was:—

(i) A conciliatory spirit. 'Blessed are the peacemakers.'

(ii) A cheerful spirit. 'All things work together for good,' etc.

(iii) A prompt spirit. 'Let us go up *at once*.'

(iv) A courageous spirit. He stood almost alone.

(v) A trustful spirit. 'The Lord is with us.'

2. He followed the Lord fully. One of the greatest needs of the present age in the Church and in the world is *thoroughness*.

(i) Only a thorough Christian is of much real service in the cause of Christ.

(ii) Only a thorough Christian enters fully into the enjoyment which Christ's service affords.

(iii) Only a thorough Christian will remain steadfast in the hour of trial.

II. The reward which God promised Caleb.—'Him will I bring,' etc.

It is useless to pretend to be indifferent to rewards.

The promise was fulfilled at last.

God has promised something better for us.

Our hopes and expectations rest upon the Word of God. 'The Lord hath *said*.'—F. J. Austin, *Seeds and Saplings*, p. 62.

References.—XIV. 24.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. ix. No. 538. XV. 18-21.—J. Pulsford, *Our Deathless Hope*, p. 241. XV. 27-31.—W. Binnie, *Sermons*, p. 187. XVI. 3.—W. C. E. Newbolt, *Counsels of Faith and Practice*, p. 77. XVI. 8-10.—A. G. Mortimer, *The Church's Lessons for the Christian Year*, part ii. p. 347. XVI. 9.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons Preached in a Religious House*, vol. ii. p. 634. C. New, *The Baptism of the Spirit*, p. 110. S. M. Taylor, *The Choir Man's Ministry*, S.P.C.K. Tracts, 1897-1904. XVI. 14.—W. L. Watkinson, *The Fatal Barter*, pp. 195-212. XVI. 41.—H. J. Wilmot-Buxton, *Sunday Lessons for Daily Life*, p. 330. XVI. 47, 48.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. vi. No. 341. XVIII. 7.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers*, p. 352. XVIII. 25, 32.—J. Pulsford, *Our Deathless Hope*, p. 241. XIX.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xlii. No. 2495. XIX. 2, 3.—*Ibid.* vol. ix. No. 527. XX. 1-13.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers*, p. 353. XX. 5.—W. Hay M. H. Aitken, *The Highway of Holiness*, p. 79. XX. 7-13.—K. Moody-Stuart, *Light from the Holy Hills*, p. 42. XX. 8.—S. Baring-Gould, *Village Preaching for a Year*, vol. ii. p. 112. J. Parker, *City Temple Pulpit*, vol. v. p. 175.

MOSES SMITES THE ROCK

'Hear now, ye rebels: must we fetch you water out of the rock? And Moses lifted up his hand and smote the rock twice.'—Numbers xx. 10, 11.

I. It is a memorable incident in the Jews' history, and it is rich in warning to us at this day. What, you will ask, had Moses done, that he should be so sorely punished? He had failed in his duty towards God; and that in three particulars. (1) He had failed in strict obedience; God had bid him 'speak to the rock,' and he had smitten it, smitten it twice. (2) He had shown temper, used hard language, 'Hear now, ye rebels'. (3) He had taken to himself the credit of supplying the Israelites with water. 'Must *we* fetch water for you out of the rock.'

II. It is a standing admonition to us, (1) not to depart in the least jot or tittle from any law of God. (2) The immense importance attached to temperate speech; the necessity of keeping a check on temper, and not letting ourselves be moved, however we may be provoked, to hot and angry words. It is very noticeable how still our Lord was under provocation; when reviled, He reviled not again; He was never pushed by the taunt of His enemies to hasty, angry reply.

The want of self-control was visited—*very heavily visited*—upon Moses, and upon 'Aaron the saint of the Lord'. Because of it, they were shut out of Canaan.

III. The scene at the rock at Meribah is further useful as carrying our thoughts upwards to Him Who is the source of all our hopes, the nourishment of our soul, the very life of our religion—even the Lord Jesus Christ. The rock in the desert was but a type and shadow; the *reality* it typified is represented in Jesus Christ. Just as the water in the desert kept those six hundred thousand Israelites alive, so does the water which Christ has to give—which He offers freely and without price to all—serve to the comfort of unnumbered souls, to the cleansing, refreshing and sustaining, and the saving them from everlasting death.—R. D. B. Rawnsley, *Village Sermons* (3rd Series), p. 100.

Reference.—XX. 10.—R. W. Hiley, *A Year's Sermons*, vol. iii. p. 166.

THE SIN OF MOSES

'Because ye believed Me not, to sanctify Me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore ye shall not bring this congregation into the land which I have given them.'—Numbers xx. 12.

The life of Moses was so remarkable, his difficulties so great, his patience so terribly tried, his time of service so long, and his fidelity so staunch throughout the whole of those forty years that it does seem sad to find him, when very near the end of his work, cut off from the enjoyment of that land of promise to which, from the beginning, he had been leading his people.

One thing, however, it is important to observe, viz. that it affected only his enjoyment of Canaan, and left his soul perfectly safe. We know this because 1500 years afterwards he was seen, with Elias, conversing with the Lord Jesus at the Transfiguration.

What was the cause of his rejection?

He was directed not to smite the rock as on a previous occasion, but to speak. The direction was (v. 8), 'Speak ye unto the rock before their eyes'. Moses was to bring forth water for the people, but the instrument was to be not a blow but a word. How often we observe that a soft word will accomplish more than the hardest blow! But with this Moses does not appear to have been satisfied. He doubtless remembered how successfully he had smitten the rock in Rephidim, so he would do the same again, and, after using some very intemperate language to the people, he 'lifted up his hand, and with his rod he smote the rock twice' (v. 11).

Such, then, were the facts, and some people may say that it did not much matter whether he smote the rock or spoke to it, especially as the people got the water, so that nobody suffered. But it did matter supremely, and was the one cause why Moses never crossed the Jordan. What, then, was the sin?

I. There was Disobedience.—We do not know his motive. Some people think he lost his temper, and acted hastily as an angry man. Some think it was simple carelessness—that he was worried and vexed, and did not trouble himself to attend to the directions given him by God. He may have used those three words that have proved so fatal to many a noble enterprise, 'It will do'. At all events God told him to do one thing, and he went straight off and did another. He that was the great lawgiver, and the great upholder of law amongst the people of God; he, for some cause best known to himself, in the

face of all the people, disobeyed. Surely it was high time that God should vindicate His own authority, and let even Moses learn that, whatever men may think of it, disobedience is sin?

II. It was an Act of Unbelief.—Disobedience and unbelief are continually linked together. Unbelief leads to disobedience, and disobedience strengthens unbelief. So unbelief is the sin especially mentioned in this v. 12: 'Because ye believed Me not'. Man could see the act of disobedience, but God saw the root of unbelief from which it sprang.

III. It Hindered God's Purposes.—Moses was a typical character, and what he was directed to do was typical. We are taught by St. Paul (1 Cor. x. 4) that this very transaction was a type. 'They drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ.' There was a most important type both in the smiting of the rock and in the speaking to it. The rock gave forth no water till it was smitten, for it was necessary that our blessed Saviour should be 'smitten of God' before the water of life could flow through Him to His people. Then, again, the rock, when once smitten, required no second blow, for the first was sufficient; and after that blow was once given all that was required was that Moses should speak. Have we not here a wonderful type of the work of our blessed Saviour? When He died on that Cross He 'was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities'. But when He had once made that full, perfect, and complete satisfaction for sin there remained no more place for a fresh sacrifice.

References.—XX. 12.—W. H. Hutchings, *Sermon-Sketches*, p. 122. A. G. Mortimer, *The Church's Lessons for the Christian Year*, part ii. p. 361. XX. 23-29.—K. Moody-Stuart, *Light from the Holy Hills*, p. 50. XX. 27, 28.—H. P. Liddon, *Sermons on Old Testament Subjects*, p. 51.

DISCOURAGEMENT

'And they journeyed from Mount Hor by the way of the Red Sea, to compass the land of Edom: and the soul of the people was much discouraged because of the way.'—Numbers xxi. 4.

I. Discouragement is a cause of failure. What are its causes?

1. It may be a result of *bodily weakness*. The better heart you can keep, the better your strength and health is like to be.

2. *Modesty and earnestness*. There are people to whom modesty, or what looks like it, may become a snare.

Remember that pure modesty and simple earnestness will not cause discouragement. There must be dross in them in order to do that. Modesty, knowing itself little, will be prepared to do what is little, and earnestness will be keen to do the little well.

3. The great cause of discouragement is *pride*. It may hide behind modesty or earnestness, or mix itself up with these; but there it generally is. We are apt to forget that it is one and the same sort of heart which is vain of being in front, or mortified at being behind. Is it not that you could do a little, but wanted to do much? You thought you could be good in a hurry, and are not content to plod along? Or you thought you were fully ready for the joys and blessings of a Christian; his sure trust, his comforts in trouble, his stay of faith, his delight in God, and his pleasure in God's worship. And behold you get a little way, and you find it all disappointing. Like the men of Israel in the wilderness, you say, 'Our soul loatheth this light bread'. And you do not see that what discourages you is really, if you take it patiently and humbly, a sign that you are getting on. Egypt with its leeks and its onions, those coarse things you relished once, is left behind, and you are on the way to the heavenly country, if only you will not throw up, if only you will persevere.

4. *Double-mindedness*.—When one sways backwards and forwards between serving God and pleasing one's self, between doing right out and out or letting it go and doing wrong, no wonder we get discouraged.

5. *Indolence*.—How much discouragement, grumbling, and downheartedness come simply from being 'weary in well-doing,' and giving in to the weariness.

II. The means by which we may be saved from this great danger of discouragement.

The promise of God's most ready and kind forgiveness, if we have got far wrong, and begin, although feebly, to work backwards towards Him; the promise of God's sufficient grace, and of His mercy still going with us, although we keep stumbling, so long only as we do not stop or go back, but struggle on; the promise for those who have long served God, that He will never leave them, that He will complete the good work which He has begun, that discouragement is only another trial through which they may be schooled for Him. The whole aim of God's work for us is to bring us to joy. It is a bold saying of Mr. Ruskin, that the only duty which God's creatures owe to Him, and the only service they can render to Him, is to be happy. But it is deeply true; it echoes the Apostle's words, 'Rejoice alway'.

III. Whatever there is in us of the things which make man's answer to God, of faith, hope, and love, goes to drive out discouragement, with its clouded thoughts and cold, spiritless distrust.

But there are special helps.

1. The experience of God's people.

2. If you steadily use your Bible, you will find there is no help like it against discouragement, just because it shows you so tenderly that you are not alone in bearing its burdens and fighting against its danger.

3. Only, to take this comfort and to stand in this hope, there must be humility. We must be humble enough to tarry, if God will; to bear what we deserve; to turn the murmurings of discouragement into the words of true repentance.

4. There is the great help of prayer: prayer in that largest sense in which it includes the praise, by which we tell over those great acts of God, or those glories of His Being, which are the ground of our hope.—Bishop Talbot, *Sermons Preached in the Leeds Parish Church*, 1889-95, p. 15.

REFERENCES.—XXI. 4, 5.—H. J. Wilmot-Buxton, *Sunday Lessons for Daily Life*, p. 344. XXI. 4-9.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxix. No. 1722. A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers*, p. 362. XXI. 8.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. v. No. 285.

THE BRAZEN SERPENT

'It came to pass, that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived.'—NUMBERS XXI. 9.

IN the history of the wandering, we recognize in Jehovah not merely the bountiful Lord Who supplies His people's wants, but the skilful and merciful Physician Who heals His people's diseases. In both capacities alike He demands adoration, He deserves gratitude, He justifies confidence.

I. A Spiritual Malady.—1. A poisonous malady. The serpent's bite is in its virulence symbolical of sin.

2. A destructive malady. As the serpent's bite was death-dealing, so sin destroys the moral nature and the eternal prospects of men.

3. A widespread malady. The serpents committed devastation throughout the camp of Israel. There is no region inhabited by mankind where the mischievous and disastrous effects of sin are not known.

II. A Divine Remedy.—Our Lord Himself has authorized the parallel between the serpent of brass and the crucified Redeemer.

1. Observe the participation of the Saviour in the nature of those He came to save. As the healing object was in the form of the destroyer, so Christ, Who knew no sin, became sin for us.

2. Observe the publicity of the remedy. The brazen serpent was reared on a banner-staff and set on high, and in like manner Christ was lifted up to draw all men unto Himself.

III. The Means of Salvation.—As they who looked towards the serpent of brass received healing and life, even so those who direct the gaze of faith to the crucified Redeemer of the world experience His healing virtue.

IV. Spiritual Recovery.—The healing of the obedient Israelites seems to have been both instantaneous and complete. And we are assured that 'as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have *eternal life*'.

REFERENCES.—XXI. 9.—W. H. Hutchings, *Sermon-Sketches* (2nd Series), p. 141. W. J. Knox-Little, *Church Times*, vol. xxxi. 1893, p. 356; see also *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xliii. 1893, p. 227. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxv. No. 1500.

THE SONG OF THE WELL

'And thence to Be'er: this is the Be'er (or Well) of which the Lord said unto Moses, Gather the people together, and I will give them water. Then sang Israel this song:—

Spring up, O well! Sing ye back to her!
Well which princes digged,
Which nobles of the people delved,
With the sceptre and with their staves.'

—NUMBERS XXI. 16-18, R.V.

THE drawers who sang this song knew that their well was alive. They called to each other to *sing back to it*: the verb means to sing in antiphon, to answer the music of the waters with their own.

I. In such a song I find much inspiration. We are all, whatever our callings may be, ministers of the common life, with the constant need to ennoble and glorify its routine. All of us who are worthy to work, have to do with wearisome details; and as it were, like those Eastern water-drawers, hand over hand every day upon the same old ropes. And the tendency of many, even of those whose is the ministry of the Word and the Church, is to feel their life dreary and their work cheap. There is not a bit of routine, however cheap our unthinking minds may count it, but it was started by genius. In manual toil, in commerce, in education, in healing, and in public service, not a bit of routine rolls on its way but the saints and the heroes were at the start of it. *Princes dug this well, yea the nobles of the people delved it with the sceptre and with their staves.*

II. But the Light, which lighteneth every man that cometh into the world, Himself took flesh and dwelt among us. Among the million memories of men we have one that is unique. We can trace the sacredness and glory of our life to-day, not only to this or that great man whom God raised up to think and to work, but to the Incarnation of God Himself. In the person of Jesus Christ, God Himself did dig these wells of ours. The liberties, offices, and inspirations were opened and fulfilled by Jesus Christ. See how His parables reveal Him in touch with every common office of society!

The parables are the measure of the breadth of our Lord's Incarnation; but His Temptation, His Pain and Weariness, His Shame of the world's sin, His Agony and Forsakenness, His Cross and Death, are its depths.

When we remember breadth and depth alike, we understand how sacramental every hour of life may be.

III. These religious uses of memory, we are now ready to apply to that routine, to which we are bound as members and ministers of Christ's Church. I do not mean the life of the Church as a whole, but the work and conduct of the single congregation. Of no other routine in social life may we more justly say that *princes digged this well, that the nobles of the people delved it with the sceptre and with their staves.*

The influence of the Christian congregation upon history, the contribution of the parish to the world, is a subject which is waiting for a historian. He will lay bare a thousand almost forgotten wells which from all the centuries still feed some of the strongest currents of human life.—G. A. SMITH, *The Forgiveness of Sins and Other Sermons*, p. 218.

BEER, OR THE DIGGING OF THE WELL BY STAVES

'And from thence they went to Beer; that is the well whereof the Lord spake unto Moses, Gather the people together, and I will give them water. Then Israel sang this song, Spring up, O well; sing ye unto it: the princes digged the well, the nobles of the people digged it, by the direction of the lawgiver, with their staves.'—NUMBERS XXI. 16-18.

THE traveller in Switzerland, as he approaches Zermatt, has his attention generally so absorbed in con-

templating the magnificence of the Matterhorn, that for a time he retains scarcely any impression of the neighbouring heights. In a similar manner the mind of the Church of Christ has been so fixed upon the lifting up of the brazen serpent and its miraculous effects, that the subsequent incident at Beer has been wellnigh forgotten. The object of my sermon is to draw attention to some of the more patent teachings of the digging of the well on the eastern border of Moab.

The giving of the manna and the miraculous supply of the water represent the Divine side of redemption; the serpent lifted up by human agency and the well dug up by human hands speak of the earthly side.

I. We Notice, First, God's Promise.—God said to Moses, 'Gather the people together, and I will give them water'. God alone could supply the water for His people. 'I will give them water.' And yet human agency is to be employed. 'Gather the people together. . . . The princes digged the well, the nobles of the people digged it, by the direction of the lawgiver, with their staves' (Num. xxi. 5, 18). This they could do, and what they could do God expected from them. It is so with us. God makes promises, but we are to use the means which He provides.

II. Notice that the 'Princes Digged it, by the Direction of the Lawgiver'.—When the rock was smitten in Horeb, it was smitten 'in the sight of the elders of Israel'; but here the well was dug by them.

III. Observe that they Dug with their Staves.—They needed spades and mattocks, not sticks, for such a work as this! How disproportionate to the toil of digging a well whose waters were to supply the wants of so vast a multitude! The lesson is apparent. *We must use the means we have.* It has been one of the great features of the spread of Christianity that God has made use of very weak instruments.

IV. Notice the Spirit with which they Dug.—They dug (*a*) *prayerfully*, (*b*) *joyfully*. The song at Beer, it has been said, is 'a little carol, bright and fresh and sparkling as the water itself'. It was, doubtless, used afterwards by the maidens of Israel as they drew water from the village wells.

> Spring up, O well! sing to it,
> Well which the princes dug,
> Which the nobles of the people bored
> With the sceptres of office, with their staves.

In the incident which we have been considering we have *the four great elements of success in all work for God.* (1) *United prayer.* When the voice of united prayer ascends to the God of all grace from workers who realize their dependence on Him, then we may expect that the Pentecostal blessing will come. (2) *United praise.* 'Sing ye to it.' (3) *United effort.* It was not Moses alone who digged, but the princes also, his representatives, his helpers. (4) *Order.* 'By the direction of the lawgiver.' He commanded—they obeyed. Order is Heaven's first law.—J. W. Bardsley, *Many Mansions*, p. 199.

BIBLE WELLS

'Spring up, O well.'—Numbers xxi. 17.

How many wells are mentioned in the whole Bible? We cannot pretend to count them. Sometimes the well is in the singular number, and frequently the word well swells into the plural number, as if it became a gathering of waters and a meeting of singing streams.

I. We find one wonderful well in Genesis xxi. 19: 'And God opened her eyes, and she saw a well of water'. It was there all the time, but the eyes were not there. But had not the woman eyesight? Yes, of a bodily kind; but all that is sensuous ought to be typical and sacramental. 'And she went, and filled the bottle with water.' She only took a bottleful when she might have had a whole well. We might have more gospel if we had more capacity; sometimes we need a greater boldness that we may test the generosity of God; for saith He to those who draw from His wells, Bring another vessel, another, another; until the recipient says, Lord, I have been looking for more vessels, but I cannot find any. It is the receiver that gives in, not the Giver. She 'gave the lad drink'—water drink, the true drink, the wine of heaven, in which no man ever found murder, lust, shame. 'The lad'—that is a generic designation, taking in all the lads of the world; but in this particular instance she gave a nation drink, she nourished a nation in her bosom.

A great range of subject is started by this Hagar's well, covering such suggestions as the unexpected supplies of life. We were at our extremity, and that extremity became God's opportunity. Also referring to the unexpected deliverances of life.

Then the subject further suggests the unexpected friends, the human wells that occur or arise in life. This man will befriend me when I am in difficulty? Where is he? Gone. I am sure that I can apply to such an old comrade when this poor head fails and this poor hand can no longer serve itself, I will go in quest of him. And lo, he does not know me; he knew me when I was young and strong and prosperous. Yet I have friends and deliverances and supplies: how did I get them? You did not get them, God sent them; and the same night when Herod would have brought you forth to your mockery and contempt and derision, so far as society was concerned, the Lord sent His angel, and the chain melted at his touch.

II. There is a curious little idyll about a well in this same book of Genesis—xxiv. 13. 'Behold, I stand here by the well of water; and the daughters of the men of the city come out to draw water'. They will all come to the well. You may not meet them in the field or in the wood or on the broad wayside; only now and then people come to such places or pass through them; but the well—that is the point of union, that the wedding-ring place. Perhaps we may meet these fair daughters of men in the gardens of spices. Perhaps not; now and then they may be there, and we may be fortunate enough to catch a vision of such living beauty, but I can

promise you nothing positive about that. We may find them in the cornfields. Well, the cornfields are a kind of annual festival, there is a time when the cornfields are thronged with people; but I cannot make you any definite promise about meeting the persons you are in quest of even in the cornfields, but I can promise you that all the city will be at the well. What! is it water? so simple and poor a thing as water that will bring men together? Many a man has been in such straits for want of water that he would have emptied his pockets if you would have given him one vessel full of spring water.

III. Here is a well mentioned in Proverbs v. 15, 'Drink waters out of thine own cistern, and running waters out of thine own well'. Have a city of the mind. There is an athe stical fidgeting; there is a yearning or a solicitude after outward things that would make the sacrament you drank in the morning of no effect.

IV. Does any other well occur to you? The greatest well of all. Jesus sat thus by the well, Jacob's well, Himself a deeper well, Himself, indeed, the creator of that well. Do you not read in the prophets this wondrous expression, 'The wells of salvation'? It is a beautiful picture. Men are drawing water out of the wells of salvation, and as they do so they sing a sweet song unto the Lord; for who can be silent in the plash of living streams?—Joseph Parker, *City Temple Pulpit*, vol. iii. p. 98.

References.—XXI. 16-18.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xiii. No. 776. XXI. 17, 18.—T. G. Rooke, *The Church in the Wilderness*, p. 296. XXII.-XXV.—B. J. Snell, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. li. 1897, p. 153. XXII. 5.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers*, p. 367. Marcus Dods, *Christ and Man*, p. 163. XXII. 7.—Hiley, *A Year's Sermons*, vol. i. p. 228. XXII. 12, 20-22.—Hugh Black, *University Sermons*, p. 223.

Numbers xxii.

'Carlyle,' says Mr. Herbert Paul in his *Life of Froude* (pp. 312-313), 'was in truth one of the noblest men that ever lived. His faults were all on the surface. His virtues were those that lie at the foundation of our being. For the common objects of vulgar ambition he had a scorn too deep for words. He never sought, and he did not greatly value, the praise of men. He had a message to deliver, in which he profoundly believed, and he could no more go beyond it, or fall short of it, than Balaam when he was tempted by Balak. . . . Popularity was not his aim. His aim was to tell people what was for their good, whether they would bear or whether they would forbear.'

BALAAM

'If Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot go beyond the word of the Lord my God, to do less or more.'—Numbers xxii. 18.

Let us point out two chief lessons that there are for ourselves in Balaam's history.

I. *Beware of tampering with conscience.* In all questions of doubt and difficulty use yourselves to consult the living oracle, the Tabernacle of witness which God has set within you, however enticing the bait may be by which Satan, or Satan's agents, the world, and the flesh would seduce you—seek to lead you astray. However great the promises that Balak may make of earthly honour and reward, put it back with a resolute hand and steadfast denial; 'If Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot go beyond the word of the Lord my God, to do less or more'.

II. *How vain are good wishes when separated from good actions.*

Balaam's famous wish, 'Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his,' is a wish that finds an echo in every heart. It is but right that we should so pray and wish, but we must do *more* than wish and pray, or else the wish in itself will profit us nothing—profit us no more than it profited Balaam, for in spite of his good and pious wish, he died a miserable and untimely death. To have our wish fulfilled, we must first live (God helping us) the life of His servant, live as those who have been redeemed of the Lord; live soberly, live righteously, live godly; walk in all His statutes and ordinances, live in His faith and fear.

III. Trust not to mere good wishes, or to utterance of warm, excited feelings, to secure to yourselves a truly happy, a truly blessed death. 'Awake to righteousness and sin not,' 'the sting of death is sin,' sin never forsaken, never repented of, persisted in to the end. Till that sting be done away, there can be no peace, no good ground of hope for the dying man. You know how alone that sting can be removed, you say with me 'thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ'.—R. D. B. Rawnsley, *Village Sermons* (3rd Series), p. 109.

THE STORY OF BALAAM

'And Balaam answered and said unto the servants of Balak, If Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot go beyond the word of the Lord my God, to do less or more. Now therefore, I pray you, tarry ye also here this night, that I may know what the Lord will say unto me more.'—Numbers xxii. 18, 19.

Balaam is one of those extraordinary characters that we meet with in Holy Writ, who flash across the page of Scriptural history and we know no more about them. He is referred to both in the Old and the New Testament, but nothing certain is stated regarding his past history, nor have we any of those details which we should be so glad to know regarding this most interesting person. He was a prophet of the Lord, and as we read his history, so graphic, so clear, we feel absolutely sure that it is a true account, a true history of a true person, because it reveals to us one of those mysteries of human life so hard to explain, and yet not so very remote from our own experience.

I. Balaam's Temptation.—We see, in spite of the privileged position which he held, that he had a very strong temptation. He was susceptible to one

temptation above others—the temptation of covetousness, and, yielding to that temptation, he betrayed away all the privilege which he had enjoyed as the chosen servant of God, and ended his life fighting against the people of God. Balak sent to Balaam. What does Balaam do? He asks the will of God—Is it my duty to go with these men? And the answer comes clear: 'Thou shalt not go with them'. And Balaam told the messengers: 'No, I cannot go'. But the temptation came a second time, for Balak sent messengers more honourable. He repeated the invitation and offered larger rewards than those which had been offered by the first messengers. Balaam knows perfectly well what he has to do. He knows what the answer of God has been. He says, 'If Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot go beyond the word of the Lord'. Whatever temptation Balak could hold out, nothing should tempt him to move to the right or to the left beyond the will of God.

II. Balaam's Fall.—But he does not stop there. He is very anxious to go and he begins to trifle with his conscience, to see whether, after all, he cannot reconcile what he wants to do with the will of God. He bids the messengers 'tarry . . . this night'. Yet he had received his answer, and was convinced of the will of God; but he said, I will have another try, it will bring me such a great advantage. Is there not another way by which I can do what I want to do without disobeying the command of God? The messengers stay another night, and God allows him to go, but, nevertheless, He says: 'The word which I shall say unto thee, that thou shalt speak'. He is delighted with the result of his second inquiry, in the face of what God had told him in the first instance; and what is the result? The angel of God appears to him to turn him back. He receives the awful warning. And the angel of the Lord said unto him in effect, 'If thou hadst not turned back, I would have smitten thee to the earth'. Now he sees his mistake, but he does not tear the desire from his heart. 'If it displease thee, I turn'—but why not in the first instance? He had gone to God and got his answer. He is given permission to go and he goes, but he is only able to speak the words which God puts into his mouth. Having trifled with his conscience, in the end he does not hesitate to risk the souls of a whole nation in order that he may get what he wants. And so he falls, fighting on the side of God's enemies.

III. Balaam a Warning to Us.—What a sad history it is! Balaam's aspiration, 'Let me die the death of the righteous,' is that of every one of us; but, like him, we forget that if we are to die the death of the righteous we must live the life of the righteous.

References.—XXII. 18, 19.—A. G. Mortimer, *The Church's Lessons for the Christian Year*, part ii. p. 372. XXII. 20.—M. G. Glazebrook, *Prospice*, p. 48. XXII. 20-22.—A. Jessopp, *Norwich School Sermons*, p. 149.

BALAAM'S 'I HAVE SINNED'

'And Balaam said unto the angel of the Lord, I have sinned.'—Numbers xxii. 34.

Balaam's 'I have sinned' was of a very different character from Pharaoh's. Pharaoh's was the confession, under terror, of a very hard heart: Balaam's heart—at least at this point—was anything but a hard one.

See the exact position of Balaam. On his lips, 'I have sinned'; probably in his heart a condemning sense that he was wrong; a conviction that he had made a great mistake; but his passions high-wrought; a resolute will and purpose in direct antagonism to the known will of God; one sin, all the while, tightly grasped; and a worldly, covetous affection in the ascendant! This was Balaam, as he went out at Pethor that early morning, through the vineyards of the city. Reduce the picture to the scale of ordinary life, and it is the life of many.

I. An Emotional Repentance. — There is an acknowledgment of sin, under sorrow, which often clothes itself in very strong expressions, even to tears, and which is little else than a passion. It is not altogether an hypocrisy. At the moment, it is sincere, very earnest. But it is an emotion—only an emotion. It goes with many other emotions, some good and some bad. It is one of the developments of an ecstatic temperament. The person who has it is very affectionate; capable of great and loving deeds. And the repentance, in the moment of compunction, takes the shape of the mould of the man's natural disposition. It is rapid—inflated—short!

II. But Without Love.—Need I say, there is no real love to God in it? There is no true sense of sin. There is no relation to Christ. It does not go on to action. It ranges, with other feelings, in the mind, which are just as strongly wrong. It is only the necessary vent of the heat of an ardent spirit, when anything happens to awaken it to a brief solemnity, or to send the toss of its thoughts to death, to eternity, to God; a natural sentiment, clothing itself in a religious dress.

III. One Sin held Back.—I have known a person, whose wonder and regret was that his penitence never seemed to deepen or increase; yet he said, and said often, and said truly, 'I have sinned'. The reason was, he never put the 'I have sinned,' upon the right thing. He said it about his sins generally, or he said it about some particular sin; but, all the while, there was another sin behind, about which he did not say it. That sin he willingly forgot—he connived at it—he allowed it! All the rest he was willing to give up, but not that. And that was his sin. And that sin, reserved and in the background, poisoned and deadened the repentance of all other sins! The 'I have sinned' fell to the ground impotent—like a withered blossom. That was Balaam—and that may be you!

References.—XXII. 34.—J. Vaughan, *Sermons Preached in Christ Church, Brighton* (7th Series), p. 78. F. W. Farrar, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xlvii. 1895, pp. 312, 321. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. iii. No. 113.

THE PREACHER AND HIS MESSAGE

'The word that God putteth in my mouth, that shall I speak.'
—NUMBERS XXII. 38.

WHETHER the extraordinary and scarcely explicable character who thus expressed himself used this language with intelligence, sincerity, and resolution, or vaguely and insincerely, may be questioned; but it cannot be questioned that in themselves these words utter a high, sacred, and noble purpose. It was a prophet's profession, and the proof of Balaam's prophetical office is this, that his solemn utterances corresponded with the profession he herein made.

I. It is God's to Give the Word.

(*a*) *This is obviously true with reference to inspiration*, to the 'living oracles' of God. The great lawgiver Moses, the inspired chroniclers, the majestic prophets of the Hebrews—all received the word from heaven. Their formula was this, 'Thus saith the Lord'.

(*b*) *It is true of every reverent and faithful teacher of religion.* Such a teacher does not ask, 'Is this doctrine acceptable to human nature?' but, 'Is it of the Lord?' To put human fancies and speculations in the place of teaching divinely authorized is not the part of the Lord's servant and prophet. Such a one looks up; asks for a communication, a message; honours the God of truth and wisdom by seeking light and the vision from Heaven.

II. It is Man's to Speak the Word.—High is the honour, precious the privilege, the Creator bestows upon human nature in making man the vehicle to convey Divine truth to his fellow-man. The prophet, the teacher sent from God, echoes the voice which has reached him from above, reflects the sacred light which has shone upon his soul. This vocation he is bound to fulfil with scrupulous care and unremitting diligence. No consideration of his own selfish interests, no regard for the prejudices, no desire for the favour of those who receive his message, should induce him to deviate from his path, to betray his trust. The word 'put into his mouth' he is bound to utter fearlessly and yet with sympathy and affection, with authority and yet with persuasiveness.

III. Application.

(*a*) *The preacher learns from his language* the dignity and responsibility of his vocation.

(*b*) *The hearer of the Divine Word learns* that he is not at liberty to neglect or to refuse a message which is not from man, but from God Himself.

SACRIFICE WITHOUT OBEDIENCE

'And God met Balaam: and he said unto Him, I have prepared seven altars, and I have offered upon every altar a bullock and a ram.'—NUMBERS XXIII. 4.

BALAAM wished to serve his own ends, and yet, if possible, to please God. He has prepared seven altars, etc.; will not God be appeased and accept his service, and be won over to his side? This is the kind of attempt that many people make.

I. Perfect Orthodoxy in place of Humble Christian Graces.—Balaam is particular as to the number. The number seven, sacred and complete. Nothing has been omitted. But might we not say that the very elaborateness and completeness are suspicious and dangerous? So much thought expended on the tithing of mint and cummin left little for the weightier matters of the law; designedly turned itself away from these weightier matters. There is always a danger of proud, conceited orthodoxy and scrupulous ceremonial.

II. Great Efforts in place of Constant Dutifulness.—The seven bullocks and rams rather than the daily offering of devoted service. But the Christian life is a *walk*, not an occasional race or flight. Every day brings its new duty, every relation of life has its own claims. Wait continually on Christ, and ask, 'Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?'

III. A Complacent Looking Back upon the Past.—'I *have* prepared seven altars and *have* offered,' etc. I was converted at such a time. Are they always the best Christians who are sure of the very date of their conversion? It is doubtful. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, or a bad tree good fruit. Let not the Christian rest on past services, however great, that he may have rendered to Christ and his fellowmen. The question is not, How many and how high altars have you reared in the past, and how many and how noble victims have you laid upon them? but, What offerings of love and service are you *now* ready to bring to Him Who gave His life for you?

REFERENCES.—XXIII. 10.—A. G. Mortimer, *Studies in Holy Scripture*, p. 71; see also *Lenten Preaching*, p. 159. Morgan Dix, *Sermons Doctrinal and Practical*, p. 1. H. J. Wilmot-Buxton, *Sunday Lessons for Daily Life*, p. 358. C. Parsons Reichel, *Sermons*, p. 27. Henry Alford, *Quebec Chapel Sermons*, vol. iii. p. 218. Barlow, *Rays from the Sun of Righteousness*, p. 213. T. M'Crie, *Sermons*, p. 235. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xiii. No. 746. XXIII. 10; XXXI. 8.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers*, p. 371. XXIII. 13.—Phillips Brooks, *The Mystery of Iniquity*, p. 208. XXIII. 21.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxix. No. 1709. C. W. Stubbs, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lx. 1901, p. 1.

THE LIVING CHRIST

'What hath God wrought?'—NUMBERS XXIII. 23.

To every age our Father who is in heaven, and to whom all times are alike, proportions the evidence and the Divine helps to the needs and circumstances of His children. The one thing perpetually to remember is this, that in all cases, and in all circumstances, and in all times, the walk must be by faith and not by sight.

I. The particular application of this principle which I ask you to consider, is in looking round on the world in which we are moving to see the influence and the power of our spiritual and invisible King. The actual effect of the faith of Christ about us is the evidence which is the most immediate support of our own belief. Still greater weight has the evidence of our own conscience. And here it is that I wish particularly that we should remind ourselves of the rule that while we may justly expect a reasonable confirmation of our

hopes from the signs of the hand of God about us, we have no right to look for demonstration. It is because they look for demonstration that so many are disappointed. The kingdom of God cometh not with observation. Many thoughtful men who have not grasped this principle weary and vex themselves if they find any movement or tendency or practice or fact amongst a people nominally Christian which is contrary to the teaching of our King. And so, as they have been looking in the wrong direction, Christ has seemed to them very far off. Fallacies have been the food of their hopes. Far from any promise existing that the world as the world would love Christ and be obedient to Him, we are taught the very reverse. And far from promising or predicting any special or exclusive blessing on public movements, or policies, or legislation, or on what is called social progress, our Lord has most distinctly warned us that His kingdom was in no sense of this world, but that the only revolution, or change, or dominion which He wished to create, and from which He would expect any benefit, was in the secret heart of the individual.

II. The kingdom of heaven is within us. That which is the substance of religion, its hopes and consolations, its intermixture with the thoughts by day and by night, the devotion of the heart, the control of the appetite, the steady direction of the will to the commands of God, is necessarily invisible. Yet upon these depend the virtue and the happiness of millions. This cause renders the representations of history with respect to religion defective and fallacious in a greater degree than they are upon any other subject. Religion operates most upon those of whom history knows least.

III. But there is this further. The Christian religion does also act on public wages and institutions, even though it is by an operation which is only secondary and indirect. Christianity is not a code of civil law. It can only reach institutions through private character. Little as legislation can do, still it is of immeasurable consequence that for the most part our laws have had a Christian and not an unchristian spirit and moulding.—W. M. Sinclair, *Christ and Our Times*, p. 105.

Illustration.—Well has it been said by a Socialist writer, Cabet: 'If Christianity had been interpreted and applied in the spirit of Jesus Christ, if it had been well known and faithfully practised by the numerous portions of Christians who are animated by a sincere piety, and who have only need to know truth well to follow it, then this Christianity, its morals, its philosophy, its precepts, would have sufficed, and would still suffice, to establish a perfect society and political organization, to deliver humanity from the evil which weighs it down, and to assure the happiness of the human race on the earth.'—W. M. Sinclair, *Christ and Our Times*, p. 115.

'According to the time it shall be said, What hath God wrought.'
—Numbers xxiii. 23.

This was John Wesley's text when he laid the foundation-stone of City Road Chapel, London, in 1777.

References.—XXIII. 23.—P. H. Hall, *The Brotherhood of Man*, p. 37. XXIII. 25-27.—Marcus Dods, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xlvi. 1894, p. 10. XXIV. 5.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons Preached in Sackville College Chapel*, vol. iv. p. 218.

TRANCE AND TRENCH

Falling into a trance, but having his eyes open.'—Numbers xxiv. 16.

It is the picture of a man, or rather of a group of men, in which we may find our own faces; for we, like Balaam, know something of that double life which corresponds to the trance and the trench—the falling into a trance, and yet living the common, working, trench life; the rapture and the routine, religion and business, commerce and our Communions, the Sacramental and the social, the secular and the sacred. And we thought sometimes that these two lives are hopelessly at variance, and we made the mistake of pitting these two lives one against the other in terrible competition instead of combining both of them together—falling into a trance, leading the spiritual life, and yet having our eyes open to the common daily life; the trance—the devotional life; the trench—the daily life. We made that dreadful mistake, and therefore life was a dismal failure, or it was utterly dreary, or deadly dull, because we either felt that life must be wholly ideal or else it must be wholly at low level. And then we learned that we belonged to both worlds at the same time. It is not in the separation, it is not in the divorce, but it is in the union of these two lives that we find our strength and our happiness.

I. The Trench Life.—We are to lead the trench life, but we are not to lead it apart from the trance life. The trench life—our eyes are to be open to the world in which we live. God knew what He was about when He put us where He has. To close our eyes to facts, to the seamy side of life, would be the height of folly. We must be wideawake, if we would not go to the wall in the life on earth that God has put us in. The man that wool-gathers is the man that is worsted in life. Having our eyes open, we must go through the world, we must send our children out into the world with their eyes wide open to the world as we have met it, to the world as they will meet it. Our eyes must be opened when, morning by morning, every post brings in this circular or that circular, from the money-lender, from the one who at some exorbitant interest will pander to the passing want that so many of us have felt, and then, then it is that the eyes must be wide open to the realities of the life that is around us; but not to the exclusion of the trance.

II. The Trance Life.—There are men known to us all who have combined these two lives—the trance and the trench—in one. There are thousands of honest men. There are merchants, there are shopmen, there are business men and business women, who have seen the trance and yet have their eyes fully open to the trench. Men and women who will say their prayers before they go out to their work, men of standing, men looked up to in commerce and the money market,

who are regular Communicants as well as regular in their business. It is false to say that you must be either all trench or all trance; it is the action of the trance life upon the trench life that makes that solid body of British merchants, or English business people, who form the backbone, the very spinal cord of the English nation.

III. The Union of Trance and Trench.—This is the life that you and I have got to aim at. Some men never look at the trance, they are all trench. They never look above the fog, the mere low level of self-interest. Their eyes are never open save to the short sight that comes from living in the midst of self-contemplation from week end to week end. They are like the animals, always looking down as the animals do, and not as a man, looking up at men, should do. They need their trance. You may remember the oldest Church in England, St. Martin's, Canterbury. There, in days gone by, a woman knelt, praying that her husband's eyes might be opened, and that he might see the trance of Christianity which she had seen, and lo! a vision, wondrous and beautiful, came to Ethelbert, and he too had his eyes opened, and he saw the outward through the inward, became a Christian, and England was converted. Monica prayed for Augustine as he was dipping into all the depths of the sin of Carthage. His eyes were opened; he, too, became the man of the trance and the man of the trench. Some are all trance and no trench, living in an unreal, dreamy state, always in the clouds, whose religion chiefly consists in making things uncomfortable for other people, upsetting the home life, and refusing the commonplace—always being in a trance. They, too, need the sharp ordeal of being taught the other side of life. They want the home-spun life, they want the trench life. But it is in the union of these two lives that they alone can happily live. Have your trance and have your trench; so try to live, 'falling into a trance, but having your eyes open'.—E. E. Holmes, *Church Times*, Vol. LIV. 1905, p. 303.

References.—XXV. 6-8.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons Preached in Sackville College Chapel*, vol. i. p. 258; see also *Readings for the Aged* (4th Series), p. 60. XXVI. 63-65.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxxvii. No. 2198. XXVII. 18.—J. Baines, *Twenty Sermons*, p. 277. XXXI. 8.—Henry Alford, *Quebec Chapel Sermons*, vol. iii. p. 218. XXXI. 16.—B. J. Snell, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. li. 1897, p. 153. XXXI. 23.—T. G. Rooke, *The Church in the Wilderness*, p. 312.

MORAL CONSEQUENCES OF SINGLE SINS

'Be sure your sin will find you out.'—Numbers xxxii. 23.

Few men are great saints. There is always a something; I am not speaking of wilful or admitted sins—sins against the conscience (they of course exclude a man altogether from any hope), but of a defect of view and principle, a perversion of character. This is the common case even with the better sort of Christians; they are deformed in stature, they are not upright, they do not walk perfectly with God. And you cannot tell why it is; they have ever lived religiously, they have been removed from temptation, had good training and instruction, and they fulfil their calling, are good husbands or wives, good parents, good neighbours—still when you come to know them well, there is in them this or that great inconsistency. This consideration, moreover, tends to account for the strange way in which defects of character are buried in a man. He goes on, for years perhaps, and no one ever discovers his particular failings, nor does he know them himself, till at length he is brought into certain circumstances, which bring them out. Hence men turn out so very differently from what was expected; and we are seldom able to tell beforehand of another, and scarcely even dare we promise for ourselves as regards the future. The proverb, for instance, says, power tries a man; so do riches, so do various changes of life. We find that after all we do not know him, though we have been acquainted with him for years. We are disappointed, nay sometimes startled, as if he had almost lost his identity; whereas perchance it is but the coming to light of sins committed long before we knew him.

Who can pretend to estimate the effect of an apparently slight transgression upon the spiritual state of any one of us? Who can pretend to say what the effect of it is in God's sight? What do the angels think of it? What does our own guardian angel, if one be vouchsafed us, who has watched over us, and been intimate with us from our youth up; who joyed to see how we once grew together with God's grace, but who now is in fear for us? What is the real condition of our heart itself? Dead bodies keep their warmth a short time; and who can tell but a soul so circumstanced may be severed from the grace of the ordinances, though he partakes of them outwardly, and is but existing upon and exhausting the small treasure of strength and life which is laid up within him? Nay, we know that so it really is if the sin be deliberate and wilful; for the word of Scripture assures us that such sin shuts us out from God's presence, and obstructs the channels by which He gives us grace.—J. H. Newman.

References.—XXXII. 23.—Marcus Dods, *Christ and Man*, p. 188.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxxii. No. 1916. A. W. Potts, *School Sermons*, p. 56. XXXII. 27.—H. W. Adler, *Our Provincial Brethren*, p. 1.

JESUS CHRIST OUR REFUGE

'Among the cities, which ye shall give unto the Levites there shall be six cities for refuge.'—Numbers xxxv. 6.

I. The Cities of Refuge were so placed, three on either side of Jordan, that they provided the greatest possible readiness of access. The devout imagination has always pictured for the cities conditions almost ideal in character. The gates of the cities, like those of the New Jerusalem, were to be kept always open, both day and night.

The refugee, whether an Israelite or a stranger, was safe the moment he entered the gate of the city of refuge.

This merciful provision of the Cities of Refuge acted as a preventive to idolatry; the involuntary manslayer was not driven to seek a home among the heathen nations around, but was allowed to live in his own land, among his own kindred, who held like him the faith in Israel's God.

The Cities of Refuge were not merely civil institutions serving a local purpose. They were also types of heavenly things, and taught the people lessons of the very deepest significance.

The Cities of Refuge embodied in themselves truths of the highest importance concerning the salvation of God, and His provision of grace and security for His children.

II. The Cities of Refuge point to Christ as the sinner's refuge, and that in more ways than one. They are found in careful and prayerful study to suggest Gospel principles, Gospel promises, Gospel privileges. Christ is the city of refuge.

The six Cities of Refuge belonged to the priestly tribe of Levi. The forty-eight cities of Levi possessed the right of asylum, but the six Cities of Refuge were bound to receive and to entertain, without cost, the involuntary homicide. They were priestly cities, with peculiar privileges of their own.

The refugee, flying from the avenger, had but to pass through the gate, and not only was he immune, free from the slightest danger, but he ranked at once as a fellow-citizen with the priests of the Most High God.

III. Jesus Christ is our first and only Priest. The Levitical priesthood which pointed to Him has been realized and fulfilled in His life and work.

Jesus Christ is the one eternal High Priest, through whom salvation comes to man, and in whom man has communion with God. The Christian believer stands safe and secure within this refuge.

Jesus Christ is not only the divinely appointed way of escape, He is, in Himself, the city of refuge.—W. J. Armitage, *The Cities of Refuge*, p. 7.

References.—XXXV. 9-11.—C. Stowell Pedley, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. liii. p. 217. XXXV. 11.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xlv. No. 2621.

DEUTERONOMY

DEUTERONOMY—THE BOOK OF REVIEWS

This book is essentially a book of Moses, for it consists of his final words to the people whom he had led. It may therefore be most simply divided by the six discourses which it chronicles.

I. Retrospective.—In reviewing the forty years of wandering Moses dealt with the three great movements; from Horeb to Kadesh-barnea, from Kadesh-barnea to Heshbon, and finally, from Heshbon to Beth-peor. Having surveyed the history he exhorted the people to obedience, and continuing this exhortation he looked unto the future. At the close of the first discourse we have a brief account of his appointment of three cities of refuge.

II. Résumé of Laws.—A general introduction indicates the place, time, and subject of this second discourse, which deals with testimonies, statutes, and judgment. The testimonies were the actual words of the law given. The statutes were the provisions for worship and the conduct harmonizing therewith. The judgment dealt with the arrangements for civil and religious authority and the administration of justice.

III. Warnings.—Before proceeding to the more specific purpose of this discourse, he spoke of the blessings which would follow obedience. The effect of disobedience he described first in their own borders; and we find here a detailed description of the Roman victories which came so long after.

IV. The Covenant.—The terms of the covenant had been already given. In urging the people to be true to it, Moses referred to the Lord's deliverance wrought in the past. We have here a great prophetic evangel the value of which Israel has perhaps not learned even until to-day. Moses spoke to the people of his own departure and encouraged their hearts in view of their coming into the land by reassuring them of the presence and power of God.

V. The Song of Moses.—Preceding the public utterance of the great song, Moses and Joshua appeared before the Lord in order that the latter might be officially appointed to succeed in the administration of affairs. The first part of the song consisted of a call to attention, and a statement concerning its nature. Then in a description equally brief he referred to the people. There follows a description of the tender government of God which is full of exquisite beauty. In strange contrast the song now became a wail as the unfaithfulness of the loved people was described. The song then broke out into lament, 'Oh that they were wise,' and celebrated God's ultimate deliverance of His people. Finally Moses appealed to the people to be obedient.

VI. The Blessing.—These were the final words of the man of God. His last words were of blessing only. In stately and majestic language he affirmed anew the majesty of Jehovah. The great words of blessing were pronounced upon the tribes, Simeon only being omitted. The last chapter of Deuteronomy contains the story of the death of Moses, the equipment of Joshua for his work, and a last tender reference to the great leader and lawgiver.—G. Campbell Morgan, *The Analysed Bible*, p. 85.

IMPERATIVE AND DESIRABLE CHANGES

'The Lord our God spake unto us in Horeb, saying, Ye have dwelt long enough in this mount.'—Deuteronomy i. 6.

'The Lord our God spake unto us in Horeb.' And He has been saying it at intervals ever since to communities and families and individuals, and often to their pain and wonder.

I. On one side of our human nature we are never satisfied, always craving for enlargement and novelty. But on another side we are satisfied far too easily; we want to settle down in comfort, to be undisturbed, to rest and be content with the amount of knowledge we have, or of goodness, or usefulness; we have found, after hard marching, a sunny and sheltered spot, and we want to stay in it. And the voice which spoke to Moses speaks to us and says, 'Long enough: Arise ye and depart, for this is not your rest'.

Perhaps more often we have no choice in the matter; we are bidden, and though we go with heavy feet and reluctant and remonstrant hearts, we must move.

Our plans are decided for us. Our plans are broken up, we are hustled out of our pleasant abode, the door is slammed upon us, and only one other door is opened, and it is that or nothing.

1. *God is saying this to people who are living in the land of dreams and pleasure.* You have lived here long enough.

2. *He sometimes says it to people who are in ease and prosperity and comfort. Then* we are loath to listen. Therein lies much of the pain and the bewilderment of life. It is difficult, almost impossible, for a time to believe in the goodness of God. Blessed is the man who can go from one mountain to another, Horeb to the Amorites, and believe that God is leading. In the old simile—'As the eagle stirreth up her nest, so the Lord leadeth His own'.

3. God is sometimes *compelled to say it because of our wrongdoing.* Jacob is driven from his home because he has lied to his father and cheated his brother. In the book of Micah (ii. 10) the reason given for the command to depart is, 'For this is not

your nest: *because it is polluted*'. So men foul their nest and it is overturned; men presume upon a privileged position and are driven from it.

II. Will you observe where it is that they have dwelt long enough? That perhaps is the startling aspect of the situation. *It is Mount Horeb, the place of revelation,* where these men were alone with God, where the law was given. They had stayed long enough there, and the unmistakable inference is that it was possible for them to stay there too long. Even Horeb the Mount of God may be abused.

I gather from this that God has something else for Israel to do besides receive revelations. They are to go from Mount Horeb to the Mount of the Amorites, *i.e.* from *praying to fighting*, to subduing, possessing, and tilling the land. God has His Horebs where He calls His children aside and reveals to them His will, but they are not to stay there. There are times, *and you must keep them*, for sitting at Jesus' feet and leaning on His breast, but there are times when it is better for us to be *doing something else.*

III. We may believe that every disturbance of our ease—every moving forth to seek fresh settlement—is for the expansion and enriching of our life. It is not surprising to be told that Israel shrank from moving on from Horeb. Between them and the Mount of the Amorites lay that great and terrible wilderness, and then beyond that fierce fighting. And it is scarcely surprising, to those who know human nature, that ultimately they failed.

The great and terrible wilderness and the great and terrible warfare that comes after it are not for our destruction—they are to be the theatre and the means of our triumph through the strength of God's grace. Through the desert of trial and hardship, through the warfare of questioning and doubt, we come to a richer life and a sure faith.—C. Brown, *God and Man*, p. 75.

THE WITNESS OF THE SAINTS

'We will send men before us, and they shall search us out the land, and bring us word again by what way we must go up, and into what cities we shall come.'—Deuteronomy I. 22.

This is one great value of the saints of God; they are the men who have gone before us to search out the heavenly country and to bring us word again.

The kingdom of God is a kingdom that begins even in this world in the Church; the gift of the Spirit has been bestowed upon us already, and everything that we need has been bestowed upon us in that great gift, and the saints are our witness to what the Spirit can do, and the possibility of living the life of God fully.

I. This Witness of the Saints is a Witness of the Goodness of that Land to which God Calls Us.—'And they took of the fruit of the land in their hand,' says Moses, 'and brought it down to us, and brought us word again and said, It is a good land which the Lord our God giveth us'. The saints are those who bring to us the fruit of the spiritual country. And we know what that fruit is; the fruit of the Spirit, St. Paul tells us, is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, temperance. When the Spirit of God is fully in a man, love at once springs up there, because the love of God is shed abroad in his heart by the Holy Ghost. Joy springs up there because the kingdom of God is righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost; and peace springs up there because the Spirit of God bears witness with our spirits. And all those other fruits that we need in our intercourse one with another, they all spring from the presence of the Spirit, because the Spirit of God brings to us the character of Christ, and all those fruits are included there.

II. The Saints Show Us in their Own Lives that the Spiritual Fruits of the Country are Really to be Won.—They are men and women like ourselves. They belong, as Moses puts it, to the very tribes to which we belong ourselves; and yet the fruits of the Spirit are seen in all their wonder and beauty in them; and if in them, why not in ourselves also? So, then, the saints give to us the witness of the goodness of the heavenly country. And they bring to us also the witness that we can certainly gain it for ourselves. The saints never tell us for one moment that we can win the kingdom of God without a struggle, or that our enemies will give way except inch by inch. But they witness that the life-conflict, through the power of God, is also of victory; they tell us that, as St. Paul puts it, though they may be perplexed, yet it is not unto despair, though they may be pressed yet they are not forsaken, though smitten down they are never destroyed; they tell us that God's grace is sufficient for us in whatever position we may be, and that no temptation will ever take us but such as through the power of God we are able to bear. If our enemies are stronger and mightier than we, they are not stronger than God Who goes before us and goes with us. And if the cities of the enemies' country are great and walled up to heaven, not one has a wall that God's power cannot throw down.

III. Are we not Called now to Receive their Witness and to Act upon it?—It is fear in one form or another that prevents us from going forward. We are afraid of losing the comforts of our lives, afraid of having to sacrifice our worldly ambitions, afraid of ridicule; worst of all, we are afraid that, if we give ourselves to God altogether, God will not be with us, and our efforts will come to nought. And so we go on in the old lives of the wilderness, just simply trying to obey certain external rules, knowing nothing of love, joy, and peace, nothing of the real glory of the kingdom of God. God does mean us to go forward, God does mean us to give ourselves, all that we are, to Him, that we may be able to return all that He gives to us, receiving continually the very fullness of the gift of the Spirit, and then to look to that Spirit day by day, hour by hour, even moment by moment, to show us what God would have us to do, and to uphold us as we try to do it.

PARTIAL TRUTH

'In this thing ye did not believe the Lord your God.'—DEUTERONOMY I. 32.

THESE are the great battles of the world. Not the clang of swords and the roar of kingdoms, but the conflict of man with God,—man calling God a liar; these are the disastrous and fatal wars.

I. We are often called upon to contemplate what may be called partial faith. We do believe some things, but generally they are things of no importance. We believe things that cost us nothing. Who believes the thing that has a Cross, wet with red blood, in the middle of it? We are all partially religious, whimsically religious, religious after a very arbitrary and mechanical fashion.

We see what is meant by partial faith when we contemplate a vision which comes before us every day of our life, and that is the vision of partial character. Where is there a man that is all reprobate? The son of perdition occurs but now and then in the rolling transient centuries. Who is there who has not some good points about him? How we magnify those points into character; how the man himself takes refuge in these scattered or detached virtues, and builds himself a reputation upon these incoherent fragments! Always the great challenge falls upon us from the angry clouds, In this thing, in that thing, ye did not believe; at this point you suspended your faith, at that point you were a practical atheist; and know ye, say the angry clouds, the chain is no stronger than its weakest link.

II. We all believe in Providence. Which providence? how much providence? in what seasons do we believe in providence? We are great believers in blossoming-time, but what faith have we when the snow upon our path is six feet deep and the wind a hail and frost? The Lord has many fine-day followers.

Do we really believe in Providence?—in the shepherdly God, in the fatherly God, in the motherly God, in the God of the silent step, Who comes with the noiselessness of a sunbeam into the chamber of our solitude and desolation? Do we really believe in the God Who fills all space, yet takes up no poor man's room, and Who is constantly applying to broken or wounded hearts the balm that grows only in old sweet Gilead? Do we believe that the very hairs of our head are all numbered? Are we perfectly sure that if God should take away this one little child of ours, the only child, that all would be well? How deep is our faith in Providence? I want Habakkuk's great sounding faith; he said about fig-trees and herbs and flocks and olive-yards that if they were all swept away yet he would trust in God and strike his harp to the praise of the Almighty Father. I am not so old in faith as mighty Habakkuk, I could see many trees blighted without losing my faith, but there is one tree, if aught should happen to any single branch or twig of that tree, my soul's faith would wither as a blossom would wither under the breath of nightly frost; in that thing I should fail. What, then, can be my faith, if it is true, and it is true, that a chain is no stronger than its weakest link? Lord, save me, or I perish!

III. We believe in prayer. How much? At what time do we believe in prayer? Do we believe in a particular providence, and do we so deeply believe in that providence that we would ask God to intervene and save us from the final disaster? Is there not a time when prayer itself becomes dumb? Remember the possibility of our having a partial faith, a partial faith in Providence, a partial faith in prayer, and remember that the chain is no stronger than its weakest point, and if in this thing or that we do not believe the Lord our God we may strike the rest of our faith dead as with a sword-stroke.—JOSEPH PARKER, *City Temple Pulpit*, vol. II p. 42.

REFERENCES.—I. 32.—S. Martin, *Westminster Chapel Pulpit* (5th Series), No. 24. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. IX. No. 537. W. M. Taylor, *Moses the Law Giver*, p. 408. II. 7.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. No. 1179. II.—J. L. Williams, *Sermons by Welshmen*, p. 48.

'But Sihon King of Heshbon would not let us pass by him: for the Lord thy God hardened his spirit, and made his heart obstinate.'—DEUTERONOMY II. 30.

PROFESSOR ANDREW HARPER remarks on this verse that the writer 'does not mean . . . to lay upon God the causation of Sihon's obstinacy, so as to make the man a mere helpless victim. His thought rather is, that as God rules all, so to Him must ultimately be traced all that happens in the world. In some sense all acts, whether good or bad, all agencies, whether beneficent or destructive, have their source in, and their power from, Him. But nevertheless men have moral responsibility for their acts, and are fully and justly conscious of ill desert. Consequently that hardening of spirit or of heart, which at one moment may be attributed solely to God, may at another be ascribed solely to the evil determination of man.'

REFERENCES.—III. 25-27.—J. A. Aston, *Early Witness to Gospel Truth*, p. 1. III. 25-29.—H. Bonar, *Short Sermons for Family Reading*, p. 424.

PRAYERS THAT MUST CEASE

'Speak no more unto Me of this matter.'—DEUTERONOMY III. 26.

'THE prayers of David the son of Jesse are ended.' There are prayers that must not be prolonged. We have wearied God, we are talking unwisely to Him; we think we are praying when we are only aggravating Divine providence; it would be the supreme mercy if we could only learn to hold our tongue. It is as if God had said, We have had enough of this matter; this is mere ignorance or selfishness; this is no piety, it is anything but piety; thou art now talking wordily and ineffectively, and nothing can follow such talk as this but bitter disappointment; drop it! This is a great and blessed mystery in the Divine sovereignty and providence of the world. Some people you cannot get to be still; your only hope of partial safety is in not allowing them to begin; by all

means prevent them from opening their lips; if you once permit them to begin, they will never imagine that it can be possible that you would wish them to end.

A remarkable instance is that of Moses. There was a longing in his courageous, kingly old heart to go over and to go into the land. 'I pray Thee let me go over and see the good land that is beyond Jordan, that goodly mountain and Lebanon; I have had a long hard time of it; who could repeat the miserable experience I have had with this wild, unchastened Israel? Do let me go over and see the end of it all, which shall also be the beginning of it all, as sunset seems to hide in its radiant heart white and glorious sunrise.' The Lord said in effect: Moses, we have had enough of this; let there be no whining and no continuance of this poor mean prayer; speak no more to Me of this matter; the arrangement is complete and final; fall into My hands, having first encouraged Joshua, thy successor, who has not done one-hundredth part of thy work; but I have a meaning in this; speak no more about it. Hence we come almost abruptly upon the subject of stifled prayers, prayers cut right in two, a most tragic and heart-paining bisection of our prayer. We thought we might talk always to God, but herein we are rebuked; we have been offering, mayhap, poor prayers, mean, worthless, superstitious, or superficial prayers; we have not gone deeply down into the root and life of the matter; and God seems to say, For My sake, drop it; speak no more about it. 'The Lord was wroth with me for your sakes, and would not hear me,' would not hear even me after this lifetime of priestly solicitude and fatherly intercession. Thus we are driven to consider whether there may not be some prayers that ought not to be prayed, and thus we are further driven to consider whether we may not have sinned in prayer; for if some people begin there is no getting rid of them any more.

I. What are the prayers which ought to be stifled, and of which God wishes to hear nothing more? They are selfish or self-considering prayers, which never find their way into heaven. No nail could carry them up so high, no eagle-nail so strong in pinion could lift up the burden of such worthless prayers to the threshold of heaven.

One of the things we shall have to repent of some day, when we are bigger and wiser souls, will be our prayers.

II. There are prayers that minister subtly but surely to intellectual or social vanity. A man will set himself to pray for knowledge of the future. The future has always been fascinating to a certain type of imagination. If we could only find out, without other people being also able to find out, what is coming to-morrow! There is a field for fancy! The Lord will not hear us; when He does admit anybody into His more secret chambers it is the babe. What babe ever took up any room, or were we not so fond of the babe that we imagined it occupied no place at all, but was just as welcome as a sunbeam and as little likely to incommode us in the matter of space?

III. There are prayers that do not involve thorough renewal and submission of heart; they are anecdote prayers, little pottering prayers about fine days and fine harvests and rain and divers little comforts that are specially and locally desired and needed; it will require all the grace of God to turn these whinings into real and effectual prayers. There is no prayer worth praying that does not aim at the submission of the human will to the Divine—'Nevertheless, not my will, but Thine be done'. That is true prayer, and prayer, we have often said, that is always and necessarily, when offered in the right spirit, answered and glorified.—Joseph Parker, *City Temple Pulpit*, vol. III. p. 40.

REMEMBERING THE PAST

(*For the Last Sunday of the Year*)

'Only take heed to thyself and keep thy soul diligently, lest thou forget the things which thine eyes have seen, and lest they depart from thy heart all the days of thy life.'—Deuteronomy IV. 9.

I. How far ought we to Remember the Past, and how far ought we to Forget it?—It may indeed be said that remembrance and forgetfulness are largely independent of our control. We are naturally endowed with strong or with weak memories, and ardent or placid temperaments, and our fortunes in life are only to a small extent within our own determination. Whether we shall pass through experiences which cut deeply into the mind, or whether our years shall flow on smoothly without anything happening in them which stirs the depths of our memory, is an alternative which is not within our choice. We enter into life as soldiers into a battle. What the day will bring to the several combatants none of them can tell till night falls on the stricken field. It is not less true that we have a very large power of directing our own thoughts, and can determine for ourselves whether we will cherish memories or banish them, brood over experiences of life, or lift our minds off them. We are concerned together with the treatment of memory which does lie within our own competence.

II. What, then, of Experiences?—It is the grand principle to remember them by virtue of the lessons they taught us, or at least were able to teach us. 'Only take heed to thyself, and keep thy soul diligently, lest thou forget the things which thine eyes have seen, and lest they depart from thy heart all the days of thy life.' Two great facts stood out in that reminiscence: on the one hand the favour of Jehovah, on the other the folly of deserting His service. Everything depends on the purpose with which, and the spirit in which, we read that volume of personal experience which carries the record of what we have done, what we have not done, what we have been, what we have endured, and what we have suffered. The recollection of past achievement may stir in us nothing more than an indolent complacence, and we may live in our own view on the limitless credit of our own record, but none of us can thus live

on credit. Past achievement must stir us to the honourable resolve not to fall below a standard already reached.

III. In the same Way, there is a Right and a Wrong Way of Remembering our Faults.—There is no moral advantage, there may be great moral danger, in continually remembering every particular sin, for such melancholy concentration of thought on failure induces the depression of spirit which takes the heart out of the spiritual conflict, and may even lead to a miserable acceptation of failure. Despondency and despair are close relatives, and when the one establishes itself in the mind, the other is on the way to follow. Such morbid dwelling upon sin is altogether contrary to the drift and spirit of Christ's religion. The forgiveness of sins is an article of the Christian Creed, and it stands in the forefront of the Apostolic teaching; but if sins, though forgiven, are still to hold dark dominion over the imagination, and destroy the peace of the mind, it is all one with their not being forgiven at all. The essence of forgiveness is no change in the disposition of the 'Father of lights, with Whom can be no variableness, neither shadow that is cast by turning,' but a change in the disposition of the sinner, which makes him renounce that which he indulged in. The moral invigoration which comes from the consciousness of being forgiven is weakened, if not altogether destroyed, when the dolorous remembrance of the failure is allowed to dominate the mind. We are to remember our faults for modesty and watchfulness. We are to learn, through them, what sins we ought most to guard against.

References.—IV. 9.—T. Arnold, *Christian Life*, p. 297. H. Woodcock, *Sermon Outlines*, p. 1. IV. 9, 10.—J. Bowstead, *Practical Sermons*, vol. ii. p. 329. IV. 21, 22.—R. Winterbotham, *Sermons*, p. 450. R. C. Trench, *Sermons New and Old*, p. 152.

THE JUDGMENT ON MOSES

'Furthermore the Lord was angry with me for your sakes.'—Deuteronomy iv. 21.

We cannot consider the close of the great prophet's life without feeling that there are manifold lessons of instruction presented by it.

I. A Life may Appear in some Leading Point of it to have been a Failure, and may for all this have been a life most acceptable to God, and consummated with a death very precious in His sight.

The lives of few men are rounded and complete; there is something wanting in almost all, and this quite as much in the lives of God's saints as in the lives of other men.

God writes His sentence of vanity upon *all* things here.

II. We see here an Example of the Strictness with which God will call even His own to Account, and while His judgments are in all the world, will cause them to begin at His own house.

Moses' sin seems to us to have been a comparatively small one, a momentary outbreak of impatience or unbelief, and yet it entailed this penalty upon him, this baffling of the dearest hopes of his life.

III. We are Wont to Regard the Death of Moses as Something Unlike the deaths of other men, and so in a sense it was.

Yet look at it in another point of view, and what was it but the solitude of every death-bed? *Je mourrai seul*, said the great Pascal, and the words are true of every man.

We may live with others, but we must die by ourselves.

IV. Observe the Way in which God so often Overrules the Lives of the Saints of the Elder Covenant that by them He may, in type and shadow, set forth to us the eternal verities of the Gospel.

Think not of Moses that he can ever be more than a schoolmaster to Christ; that he can bring thee a foot further than to the borders of the land of thine inheritance.

Another must lead thee in, if ever that good land shall be thine. Jesus, our Joshua, our Saviour—He must do this.

THE ADDRESS OF MOSES TO ISRAEL

'Take heed unto yourselves, lest ye forget the covenant of the Lord your God, which He made with you.'—Deuteronomy iv. 23.

This address by Moses was given 'on this side Jordan in the wilderness' (v. 46). He felt it was exceedingly necessary to remind the people of some of the mighty things the Lord had done for them in the land of Ham and other parts since they left it; and the place where they had now pitched their tents for a little while was well fitted for this important end. More: privileged with a brief rest, they were in a meet state for calm and holy thought; and hence it was both wise and good of their great leader to bring the past before them, to excite their spirit of steadfastness and diligence in the future. His address was long and loving; but God and His Law are the leading topics of the whole.

I. The Spirituality of the Divine Nature.—When God gave Israel His covenant, they heard His voice, but saw no form or figure of Him, so that they could have no ground for attempting to make any kind of image for the purpose of worshipping Him as exhibited by it. The truth is—God is without body or parts; yet the Bible speaks of 'the face,' 'the eyes,' 'the arms,' 'the feet' of God; these, however, are metaphors only, and represent the truth relating to Him as seen from a human standpoint.

1. *God is a Spirit.* Hence no form of materialism can represent His nature. Matter cannot possibly convey any right idea of the Divine attributes, such as eternity, omnipresence, wisdom, purity, love, joy. It is obviously inferior to spirit, and inseparable from imperfection; it consists of separate and ceaselessly reacting atoms, and therefore cannot be one, nor immutable, nor infinite. To say, then, that matter is united with spirit in God as in man, is to degrade Him, and bind Him fast under the limitations of

time and space. Yet some men have attempted the impossible (Is. xl. 19-25).

2. *Belief in the spirituality of God is indispensable to real worship.* An idol god is thought to be satisfied with the bended knee and the uplifted hand; but God, being a Spirit, will accept of no worship but that of the mind and heart—a pure, a holy, a spiritual worship. To offer merely the service of the body with a sapless spirit is a sacrilege of the same nature as that of the Israelites when they presented dead beasts to the Lord. 'God is a Spirit,' said Jesus to the woman of Samaria, 'and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth'. Such worship is enlightened; it perceives and rejoices in its object; it is the evidence of faith; and it is the fire kindled by the Holy Ghost on the altar of the heart.

II. The Perfection of the Divine Law.—Taken in connexion with the state of morals at the time of its publication, it is certainly Divine. No man or angel could have invented it: 'the finger of God' alone could write it.

1. *Its perfection is apparent from its order.* It consists of 'ten words,' and this number denotes the entire being; so that the law includes not only all that should be done, but all that should be left undone. Furthermore: God is first in it, as He should be; then His worship; then His name; then His day; and then those who stand next to Him. These things were engraven on the first table, according to Josephus and Philo; while the things on the second table relate to moralities of the highest and purest character.

2. *Its perfection is apparent from its teaching.* The Law not only gives instruction about outward conduct, but also about inward principle. No wrong is to be done to anyone either in thought, or word, or deed. And the Law recognizes love as the root of obedience, and the want of love as the cause of disobedience. How strongly the Great Teacher spoke on these points! (St. Matt. xxii. 35-40; v. 17-48). Love is verily the fulfilling of the Law.

3. *Its perfection is apparent from its permanency.* It was written on durable material, and was given to Israel for their observance alway. As the utterance of righteousness, Law is as unalterable as righteousness itself, and while everything human is perpetually changing, it remains as God's finger wrote it. The Gospel, therefore, has not set its obligations aside; nay, it has rather rendered them still more imperative. The Holy Spirit works and sanctifies in harmony with it. And the final judgment will be conducted by it as the standard of Divine approval or condemnation.

ENCOURAGEMENT TO RETURN TO GOD

'But if from thence thou shalt seek the Lord thy God, thou shalt find Him, if thou seek Him with all thy heart and with all thy soul.'—Deuteronomy iv. 29.

I. The State Supposed.—This is a state of deep apostasy and backsliding in a people who are professedly the people of God; and that aggravated by every circumstance increasing guilt, which can be found in the abundance of mercies which have formed the subjects of the rich experience of former years. On a survey of the particular case, you will find it to import—

(*a*) Apostasy and backsliding under circumstances of long experience of abundant mercies.

(*b*) A separation from all former privileges.

(*c*) A conformity to the world who know not God.

(*d*) An increase of tribulation.

II. The Return Anticipated.—The inspired writer anticipates a return unto God even from all the depths of apostasy which he had specified, when the Lord should visit His people with sanctified afflictions, and thus make manifest in them the spirit of adoption, while He caused them to turn to Him who had smitten them. Even previously to their fall, their recovery is predicted of sinners. This was particularly the case with Peter. The return of backsliding professors of godliness, if they be partakers of grace, is anticipated, expected, declared; the Lord has promised to heal all their backslidings, however great, or manifold, or aggravated they may be.

EVEN FROM THENCE

Deuteronomy iv. 29.

The book of Deuteronomy was designed not purely for those to whom it was first addressed by Moses, but for all the Jews of all after times. In the subsequent history of the Jewish nation, this promise was not unfrequently the only light that shone upon them in the cheerless night of their calamity, and guided by it they returned to the God of their fathers and obtained deliverance. Particularly was this the case in the time of their captivity in Babylon. But this book was not written for Jews alone, and the promise before us is not to be restricted to the seed of Abraham according to the flesh. It contains within it the principles of God's merciful procedure with men yet, and assures them that they shall find God if they seek Him with all their hearts.

I. Look at the Case Specified.—It is not that of the sinner who is hearing of God and of His mercy for the first time. The first reference of this promise is to the Jews who had been brought up in the knowledge of the oracles of God, but who, in spite of manifold privileges, had become idolaters. Now where shall we find the parallels of these sinners under the New Testament dispensation? Not in the heathen abroad, not in the heathen at home; but this promise speaks to those whose guilt is of deeper dye than theirs, because they have been favoured with far higher privileges and have disregarded them. It appeals to those who have been taught to pray beside a parent's knee, who have been members of the Church, but who have lapsed into one or other of the many forms of idolatry that have been set up in the land—as the worship of mammon, of fame, of power, of self, of pleasure—yet even to them this promise comes, the assurance that if they return God will pardon.

II. The Blessing Promised 'Thou shalt find Him'.—To many this promise would read very like a threatening, inasmuch as they know that they have sinned against God, and their guilty consciences associate Him with vengeance. But when it is said that the contrite souls shall find God, the meaning is not that He will reveal Himself to them in their punishment, but rather that He will make Himself known to them as He would have done if they had never wandered away from Him. They shall find the God whom they had lost, and they shall find Him toward them precisely as He was before they lost Him. Nor is this all: the contrite sinner shall find God restoring to him the title to the heavenly inheritance which he had forfeited.

III. The Qualification Annexed to the Promise.—'If thou seek Him with all thy heart and with all thy soul.' Now what is it to seek God? It cannot be a mere outward search. We need not look for Him in outward forms or ceremonies of worship; we need not seek Him in fasting, or in prayer or in almsgiving. We need not seek Him in mere external reformation of conduct. The search we make must be spiritual. Now God has told us that He is to be found in Jesus Christ, when we come to Jesus in simple confiding faith. Christ is the meeting-place of the sinner and his God. Jehovah has come in Christ seeking to reconcile us to Himself, and if we wish reconciliation we must go for it to God in Christ. There must be no half-heartedness in the search, no mental reservations; nothing but our unqualified submission of the soul to be saved on God's terms, and in God's way. This is seeking God with all the heart and soul.

IV. The Grounds Warranted that the Promise is to be Believed. 'Whereby shall I Know that I shall Inherit it?'—Remember that this is God's promise. But we have something more than the Word of God to rest on here, for He has made this promise over sacrifice. Go to Calvary and behold the confirmation given there to this precious promise. Then God has performed this promise in numberless instances. Manasseh, the penitent thief, Saul of Tarsus, the Philippian Jailer, all found God by seeking Him with all their heart. God is faithful who hath promised, and His word is as stable as His throne.—W. M. Taylor, *The Clerical Library*, vol. II. p. 43.

References.—IV. 29.—Parker, *Old Testament Outlines*, p. 43. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxii. No. 1283.

DAYS THAT ARE PAST

'The days that are past.'—Deuteronomy iv. 32.

I. Looking Back to the Sanctuary of the Past we gain strength for the future.

(*a*) So it is that *the past is our sanctuary;*
(*b*) *the present our opportunity;*
(*c*) *the future our hope.*

II. Never Despair of the Gospel of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.—There may be a temptation to you, knowing as you do the attacks which are made upon the foundations of the faith, to think, as men will tell you, that Christianity is fairly played out, and that the twentieth century will see the end of it. Let us, living in the sanctuary of the past, see God's hand for the future, and know that whenever and wherever and however Christ is lifted up men will come to Him. Wherever he is lifted up He will draw all men unto Him.

III. Do not Despair of the Future.—You who know that God has helped you ever since you drew breath, who see the golden thread of His love and providence all through your life till to-day, you can trust Him, you can die in His arms. It is true that you and I know nothing of the future. No man hath gone that way hitherto. It is unknown; but we may step out into the unknown bravely and boldly because we have seen God's goodness to us in the days that are past.

IV. If this is True of us Individually it is True of this Church.—We do not know what God is going to do with this Church. We do not know. We abandon it into His hands, and say plainly that He Who has been so good to this place and has held it up through all its vicissitudes and brought it to this day, can take care of His own. We abandon the future into His hands.

THE RELIGIOUS ASPECT OF HISTORY

'Ask now of the days that are past which were before thee.'—Deuteronomy iv. 32.

The word Deuteronomy means 'the second Law'. And much of the book which we are now reading is in effect a republication of the older law. But Deuteronomy is not a law book in the ordinary sense of the term. The voice that speaks to us in chapter after chapter is not so much the voice of a lawgiver formulating a code of rules as it is the voice of a prophet or preacher. The author of Deuteronomy was one who had thought deeply on that most serious of questions, What really makes for the permanent good of the people? And if there was one conviction that was dearer to him than others, it was that no people and no commonwealth can be in a state of well-being unless it is grounded on a great moral belief.

I. The groundwork of all obedience to human laws is knowledge of the fact, dwelt upon so emphatically all through this book, that God, in placing men under a Divine law and making them conscious of His invisible guidance, has bestowed upon them the greatest possible good? To know this, knew the prophet, was everything. This is why we are reminded all through this book of the uninterrupted continuity between what God is doing now and what He had done in the days of old.

II. We can never apprehend God's dealing with the nations and families in the present unless we study them in the light shed on them by the accumulated experience of the past. If we want to know man, and what causes make for his welfare or for his ruin, we must study man in history. We must ask of the

ages that have gone before, and be guided by their verdict. Further, we must do this in a religious spirit, with our minds prepossessed with the belief in a righteous God, who has discovered Himself to man. In the Bible we have not the dry bones of history. We have its living principles illustrated and enforced. In God's moral government of the world there is no caprice, no room for accident.

III. The special lesson of the book of Deuteronomy is the religious use of history or, what is much the same thing, the paramount need of studying history in a religious spirit. Apart from the illuminating idea of an orderly movement in human affairs, and of God as presiding over that movement, the whole past becomes a bewildering dream. The Bible is a record of moral progress, a record of the gradual triumph of spiritual over material forces, of reason and conscience and the sense of moral obligation over mere animal instinct, and the desire of every man to be a law to himself. 'In the unreasoning movements of the world a wiser spirit is at work for us.' Thus history is the study which shows a man the whole, of which he is a part, and throws a clear light on the great process of which his own life is but a brief moment. —J. W. Shepard, *Light and Life*, p. 49.

References.—IV. 32.—H. J. Wilmot-Buxton, *Sunday Lessons*, vol. i. p. 382. IV 39.—C Kingsley, *Gospel of the Pentateuch*, p. 222.

The Decalogue.—Deuteronomy v.

Luther wrote from Coburg on 30 June, 1530, to Justus Jonas: 'I have gone to school again here to the Decalogue. As if I were a boy once more, I learn it word for word, and I see how true it is that "His understanding is infinite" (Psalm cxlvii. 5). [et video verum esse, quod sapientiae ejus non est numerus.]' Enders, *Luther's Briefwechsel*, vol. viii. p. 48.

THE PEOPLE OF THE COVENANT

'The Lord our God made a covenant with us in Horeb.'—Deuteronomy v. 2.

The idea of covenant runs through the Bible. It was a very natural figure to use to express the relationship between God and His people. Men, even in the most primitive conditions, understood a covenant to be a mutual compact of some kind. The compact need not be between equals, but applied often to the mercy extended by a conqueror to a vanquished foe, as when Ahab, after his great victory over the Syrians, made a covenant with the King Ben-hadad to let him live. With a word of such wide and elastic meaning, we can see how appropriate it was to represent the relationship in which Israel believed herself to stand towards God. Indeed all religions are more or less in the form of a covenant. The most typical of all the covenants, the one which became the very centre of the religious life of Israel, was this one at Sinai, when God entered into relationship with the whole people as a people.

I. The essential features of the thought are—

(*a*) That God of His grace condescends to enter into this relationship. Every Divine covenant is of grace, the loving-kindness of a Father.

(*b*) The two parties to a covenant are free moral agents. If it is of the free grace of God, it is also of the free will of man.

(*c*) Since a covenant need not be between equals, and may be (as it must be when God is one of the parties to it) all giving on the one side, and all taking on the other, and yet nevertheless implies mutual freedom, it therefore implies obligation on both sides. Each party to the bargain has rights.

II. On the other side of the bargain were the conditions on which they received the Divine favours. These conditions are stated in the Ten Commandments, the words of the covenant. The people are to be separated, dedicated, consecrated. Their lives are to belong to God. It is this ethical aspect of the covenant relationship which saved it from the arrogance and national pride, and empty presuming on favour, which otherwise would soon have killed religion. Israel's privilege (the spiritual teachers never ceased to remind them) was Israel's penalty. Every right, every favour, meant a duty.

III. The fact of covenant is the very heart of religion. The Bible is the record of Divine covenant. This great figure has been too often stated merely forensically, as a legal contract. Because of this it has repelled men. But it is an eternal truth nevertheless; and you must in some way restate it spiritually to yourself before religion has its birth in you.

IV. What did this covenant relationship do for Israel? Without it there would have been no Israel. The assurance of a covenant with God brought strength to the national life. This assurance made them a nation, welded them into one, and carried them victoriously over difficulties.

V. The very real temptation which this sense of Divine favour engendered was the temptation to presumption. It overtook the Jews more than once in their later history. But that was the defect of the quality, or rather the natural temptation of the privilege. This state of presumption was common at the time of our Lord. Against this much of our Lord's teaching was directed. But He did not deny the fact upon which the presumption fed itself. He attacked the vain deduction which was drawn from the fact.

VI. Of the reality of fellowship with God every religious man is assured. Religion implies such a relationship of love and grace on the part of God. How such a consciousness brings strength and comfort to a human heart let every one who knows the power of salvation attest. Even in debased and vicious forms it can be seen to be powerful, making a man strong in a blatant land. It is seen in its debased form in such a man as Napoleon, with his faith in his own star, feeling himself to be the man of destiny. The faith, such as it was, carried him far.—Hugh Black, *Christ's Service of Love*, p. 292

THE TERMS OF THE COVENANT

'I am the Lord thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage. Thou shalt have none other gods before Me.'—DEUTERONOMY v. 6, 7.

IN the figure of covenant, which colours the whole Bible language of the relationship between God and man, there are three elements common to the idea. The first essential feature of the thought is that God of His free grace enters into this covenant relationship; and the second is that the two parties to the compact are free moral agents, that it is of the free will of man as well as of the free grace of God. The third feature which follows from that is that there is implied obligation on both sides. It is the last of these that specially concerns us in our text. In this covenant at Horeb, which is the typical covenant of the Old Testament, the covenant to which all the prophets appealed in the warnings and pleadings and threatenings, we have the two sides, the two contracting parties, the obligations which rest upon both God and His people—the terms of the covenant.

I. The Divine Side of the Covenant.—The terms of the compact are these: On God's side He promises to be to them the same gracious loving Providence which they and their fathers have known, 'I am the Lord thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage'. This is more than the statement of a fact, more than a succinct résumé of history. It is a statement of what God engages Himself to be and to do. It is a promise based first of all on His very nature, on what He has revealed Himself to be. The other side of the covenant, the Ten Commandments, takes its force from this, making an exclusive and almost stern appeal to fulfil the conditions implied in the covenant. Religion is absolutely determined by the character of the God worshipped.

II. The Human Side of the Covenant.—We see at once how the first commandment exactly balances that, 'Thou shalt have no other gods before Me'. That is the terms of the covenant on the human side. From that all the other commandments flow, of worship of God and of duty to men. The Divine promise is balanced by human obligation. This obligation is set forth in the Ten Commandments. But they are not arbitrary conditions imposed as tests of faith; they follow essentially from the revelation of the character of God made to them. Thus the Decalogue, which expresses the fundamental relationship between God and man, is grounded on a moral basis.

III. The History of Revelation is the history of the relationship between God and man, fitly pictured under the figure of a covenant; and so the relation of God in Christ is spoken of as the new covenant, a nearer, sweeter relationship. The terms of the covenant are the same as those of the covenant at Horeb, only of richer content. He is the Lord our Redeemer who delivered us from the house of bondage, who has shown Himself in the face of Jesus Christ as our Heavenly Father condescending to men, displaying the miracle of Divine sacrifice, redeeming us at the jeopardy of blood, loving us with an everlasting love. —HUGH BLACK, *Christ's Service of Love*, p. 304.

REFERENCES.—V. 6, 7—J. Oswald Dykes, *The Law of the Ten Words*, p. 19. V. 12.—J. Budgen, *Parochial Sermons*, vol. i. p. 12. H. J. Wilmot-Buxton, *The School of Christ*, p. 94. V. 12-15.—J. Oswald Dykes, *The Law of the Ten Words*, p. 37. V. 16.—*Ibid.* p. 105.

THE FINALITY OF THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

'And He added no more.'—DEUTERONOMY v. 22.

THESE words may be very sad or they may be very joyous. We cannot tell what they are merely from reading them—it is needful to go a little into the circumstances in order that we may catch their precise significance. Moses has first copied down the commandments as they were given to him by the Lord, and having gone through the whole Ten Words, as these commandments were anciently called, he says: 'He,' that is 'God,' 'added no more'. He did not give eleven commandments; He gave ten. Man must stop where God stops as he must begin where God began. The words would be sad if the Lord had turned away in anger, saying, 'I will not speak again to you'; but they may be very joyous, yea, musical after a heavenly sort, when God has said just enough to meet the necessity and the weakness of man, and when He forbears to add one word that would overtax his strength and throw his dying hope into melancholy and despair.

I. You have something like completeness of law in these Ten Commandments—a completeness adapted to the time in which they were delivered. God Himself puts the full stop to the legal literature which He has written on the two tables of stone. His delight is, as little as may be needful for proper discipline, and to secure loyal, loving and sufficient obedience. Has He written all the universe over with commandments? He has written the universe over with promises and blessings, and here and there His commanding word is written—for too many benedictions and promises, untempered by these severer words, might lead us into presumption, and might end in making us molluscous instead of strong and grand. This is a kind of authority which begets love and thankfulness. God never shows me His power merely for the sake of inspiring me with awe. When I see the universe I see the suppression of His almightiness, not its extent, not its abundance. God has given me a memory short and shadowed. He could have turned it into a daily plague by the multitude of His commandments and requirements; He gives me ten, it is enough; by and by He will shorten them to one. Here is the authority of gentleness, authority limited to my condition, stooping to my capacity.

II. What marvellous commandments these are when looked at in their simplicity. They are ten speeches to little children. These are not commandments for the manhood of the world, but for its child-

age. 'He added no more.' It was beautiful in its tenderness, it was Divine in its pathos. The commandments are not abolished, they are fulfilled, glorified, carried up their highest interpretation and most beneficent meanings. Jesus Christ said, 'Think not that I am come to destroy, I am not come to destroy the law but to fulfil it,' to carry it on to its higher meanings. Now how does He deliver the Ten Commandments? 'Thou shalt not steal' becomes 'If you would like to steal, you have stolen'. He digs down the outer wall and searches into the chambers of imagery and there, on the walls around, are seen symbols and images and faces and pantomimes of evil that the heart does and that the life would like to do. So we who are in Christ are not under the law, and yet we are under the law as Israel never was. Jesus Christ has given one commandment—will it be easier to keep one than ten. 'A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another,' and we must all confess 'I count not myself to have attained, but press towards the mark'.

III. How easy for Christ to lay down the law. No, He did not lay it down; He did it. He became obedient unto death, even the Cross-death, that He might redeem us. 'By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples,'—not if you utter the same theological Shibboleth, but by this 'if ye have love one to another'. Love is the highest exposition, love is the profoundest criticism, of Christianity. Love repeats the cross and sets the crown above its bleeding head. —J. Pulsford, *The Clerical Library*, vol. II. p. 49.

Reference.—V. 22.—J. Oswald Dykes, *The Law of the Ten Words*, p. 1.

Moses as mediator.—Deuteronomy v. 22-33.

'This representation of Moses,' says Prof. Harper, 'is not accidental. It is in complete accord with a characteristic of Israelite literature from beginning to end. In the earliest historical records we find that the chief heroes of the nation are mediators, standing for God in the face of evil men, and pleading with God for men when they are broken and penitent, or even when they are only terrified and restrained by the terror of the Lord. At the beginning of the national history we see the noble figure of Abraham in an agony of supplication and entreaty before God on behalf of the cities of the plain. At the end of it, we see the Christ, the Supreme Mediator between God and man, pouring out His soul unto death for men "while they were yet sinners," dying, the just for the unjust, taking upon Himself the responsibility for the sin of man, and refusing to let him wander away into permanent separation from God.'

HEARING FOR OTHERS

'Go thou near, and hear all that the Lord our God shall say: and speak thou unto us all that the Lord our God shall speak unto thee; and we will hear it, and do it.'—Deuteronomy v. 27.

'Go thou near, and hear for us.' That is an old and still abiding plea. It is born of an old and still abiding necessity. It has been the cry of the human heart in all ages in its endeavours to find God and worship Him and learn His will. As we look at Moses standing in the lurid shadow of the mountain that might not be touched, standing and listening in the place of thunder—whilst the people waited afar off not daring to draw nigh, we can see, if we will, not an incident of ancient history about which certain critical minds can grow brilliantly sceptical, but a great fact, too deeply grounded in human experience for any wise soul to doubt it. I mean the ever personal and persistent need for mediation.

God speaks to men through men. We are in this world, all resonant with His voice, to hear not only for ourselves but also for other people. Now hearing for other people suggests a task which some find by no means unpleasant or difficult, indeed a task to which they address themselves with enthusiasm and delight. 'Hearing for other people' sometimes means dodging the truth with a fervent hope that it will hit some one else. It means becoming an expert in so receiving the shafts of rebuke or warning coming straight for your own conscience that they glance harmlessly aside and bury themselves in your neighbour's conscience. It is the subtle art of misapplication. And it is essentially unprofitable. The gains thereof are a heart of pride and a starved soul. There is not one of us but can ill afford to miss one of those life-enriching pains God sends to teachable and listening souls.

I. But there is a way of hearing for other people that is wholly meet and right, and that plays a necessary part in the religious education of the race. Think for a moment of music. It is a mediated treasure. There are a few great names, and we call them the masters. I think we might call them the listeners. They heard for duller ears the choral harmony that is wherever God is. Did the great poets fashion their poems out of their own vibrant and sensitive souls? If we could ask them I think they would say 'No, we heard these things'. The musician and the poet have been men with ears to hear. The music of the 'Messiah' was waiting for Handel, the message of the hills and vales of Cumberland was waiting for Wordsworth. And through them he may hear who will.

II. Most people consider originality a very desirable thing. Strange to say, however, people often think that the short cut to originality is found by copying some one else. The attempt to be original invariably defeats itself. Yet originality is a very precious thing. It is worth a great deal to the world. And the one thing that truly develops and safeguards it in human life is the worshipping and the listening spirit. The most original man is the most devout man. The freshest thing any man can give to the world—the one thing the world can never have unless he does give it—is the word of God spoken in his own soul—the transcript of his personal experience of divinity. The hardest task a man can have in this world is to find himself. Indeed no man can make that all-important discovery unless God guides him to it.

III. The word that is given to a man thus is an authoritative word. The children of Israel said to Moses, Tell us what God shall say to you; and we will hear it, and do it. How did they know it would be God's word he would bring back to them, since they would not be present at that awful communion? Whence this readiness of theirs to obey a word not yet spoken? They knew that in this matter deception was impossible. A man can fashion many deceits, but he cannot speak God's word until he has heard it. It does not take a spiritual expert to detect a sham divinity. There is an instinct in the human heart that can always tell how far a word has travelled. Men can always tell whether your life message is an echo of the temporalities—a word picked up in the valley of time—or whether it has come through your hearts listening to the voice of the Eternal.—P. Ainsworth, *The Pilgrim Church*, p. 117.

References.—V. 29.—R. D. B. Rawnsley, *A Course of Sermons for the Christian Year*, p. 209. V. 31.—J. Keble, *Sermons for Easter to Ascension Day*, p. 182.

THE MESSAGE OF THE BOOK OF DEUTERONOMY

'Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is One.'—Deuteronomy vi. 4.

The book which lies before us is, in many ways, the most interesting and impressive of the Pentateuch. The message that this book brings us, coming as it does after the book of Numbers, is a most essential one. Numbers told us of the arrest in the deliverance of the nation; of the thirty-seven years of wandering sent as the punishment of unbelief. But it told us also how the people were brought back to obedience, and were made ready to go into and possess the land. Could anything be more fitting than that, ere they actually entered on the work, the great lawgiver should recapitulate in their hearing that law, in obedience to which lay their only hope of blessing?

I. First we have the laws which concern religion. These enjoined that only at one central sanctuary should offerings be offered. Further, all idol prophets, all who entice to idolatry, are to be destroyed, and all idolatrous practices utterly renounced. The distinction between clean and unclean animals is to be observed in the matter of food, tithes are to be paid, and the year of release and the feasts of the law are to be duly celebrated.

II. Next comes a section of laws regulating the conduct of the government and the executive. These laws define the authority of the judges and the judicial functions of the priests. They prescribe the method of demonstration in the courts of justice, they regulate the authority of the King, and exhibit the place that he is to fill in the Theocracy. They determine the position and privileges of the priests and Levites as members of the nation, and point the procedure to be followed in the case of the manslayer who flies to one of the cities of refuge. This section concludes with the chapter devoted to the laws of war, whether waged against nations generally, or specially against the inhabitants of the land.

III. From laws affecting public personages the writer passes to deal with the laws concerning the private and social life of the people. The discourse as a whole is a very remarkable one, and fitted to rebuke those who speak disparagingly of the Old Testament. Deuteronomy being a recapitulation of the law, and, in a certain sense, the summary of the preceding books, we might expect to find emphasized in it the lessons of those books; and this we do find. The Divine holiness implying national holiness, which is the theme of Leviticus, is kept constantly in view in the book before us, and this holiness is constantly held up before the people as the standard which is to determine their conduct ever in matters secular. The book was spoken to the people as they were ready to enter the land, to fill them with enthusiasm to obey the Lord, and it was fitted to do this. For it spoke of the land which was to be possessed, and of the law as a law to be obeyed in the land. There is much retrospect in the book, but the main outlook of it is forward.—G. H. C. Macgregor, *Message of the Old Testament*, p. 59.

'Hear, O Israel; the Lord our God is one Lord.'—Deuteronomy vi. 4.

On this verse Prof. Harper observes: 'The worship at the High Places had led, doubtless, to belief in a multitude of local Yahvehs, who in some obscure way were yet regarded as one, just as the multitudinous shrines of the Virgin in Romanist lands lead to the adoration of our Lady of Lourdes, our Lady of Étaples, and so on, though the Church knows only one Virgin Mother. This incipient and unconscious polytheism it was our author's purpose to root out by his law of one altar; and it seems congruous, therefore, that he should sum up the first table of the Decalogue in such a way as to bring out its opposition to this great evil.'

References.—VI.—A. G. Mortimer, *The Church's Lessons*, vol. ii. p. 398. J Johns, *Preacher's Magazine*, vol. xix. p. 354. J. Oswald Dykes, *Sermons*, p. 123; *The Law of the Ten Words*, p. 35. J. Vaughan, *Sermons* (10th Series), p. 6. VI. 4, 5.—J. Budgen, *Parochial Sermons*, vol. ii. p. 25. VI. 6, 7.—E. W Attwood, *Sermons for Clergy and Laity*, p. 369. W H. Hutchings, *Sermon Sketches*, p. 140. J. Budgen, *Parochial Sermons*, vol. ii. p. 254. VI. 6.—M. Briggs, *Practical Sermons on Old Testament Subjects*, p. 125.

'Thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children,' etc.—Deuteronomy vi. 7.

On the religious education contemplated in this passage, Prof. Harper says: 'To compensate for the restrictions which the Decalogue puts upon the natural impulses, Yahveh was to be held up to every child as an object of love, no desire after which could be excessive. Love to Yahveh, drawn out by what He had shown Himself to be, was to turn the energies of the young soul outward, away from self, and direct them to God, Who works and is the sum of all good. Obviously those upon whom such education had its perfect work would never be fettered by the material

aspects of things. Their horizon could never be so darkened that the twilight gods worshipped by the Canaanites should seem to them more than dim and vanishing shadows. Every evil, incident to their circumstances as conquerors, would fall innocuous at their feet.'

REFERENCE.—VI. 10-12.—Archbishop Benson, *Sermons Preached in Wellington College Chapel*, p. 1.

THE LAMP OF MEMORY

'Beware lest thou forget the Lord, which brought thee forth out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.'—DEUTERONOMY VI. 12.

DR. JOHNSON defined a patriot as 'one whose ruling passion is a love for his native country'. Jesus Christ showed Himself to be a profound patriot, and the Old Testament, which was His Bible, is the most patriotic book in the world.

I. The gift of memory is a strange and mysterious power which holds its seat in the very fortress and citadel of the inward man. We are persons, because we can remember. We English are anxiously unmindful of our own national past, though few people ever had such a past to be proud of and thankful for. Each green battlefield where English liberty was won, each crumbling castle and cathedral on English soil, is preaching its silent sermon, warning us, and teaching us how much God has done for us, and for our fathers.

II. 'The sense of greatness keeps a nation great.' Mr. William Watson's line comes true if 'greatness' be the greatness of our calling and election in God's will, of our high privileges by God's grace, of our sacred charge and duty to be the standard-bearers of liberty and mercy and truth in the world. But if the sense of greatness only inflates us with a conceit of ourselves and contempt for other peoples, if we use our privileges selfishly and recklessly, and boast ourselves like Nebuchadnezzar over our imperial state and power—then England's decay and downfall have begun already. For that insolent temper in any nation has its root in rottenness and its blossom in the dust.—T. H. DARLOW, *The Upward Calling*, p. 70.

REFERENCES.—VI. 16.—H. Melvill, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 2178. VII. 2.—M. Biggs, *Practical Sermons on Old Testament Subjects*, p. 134. VII. 2-4.—T. Arnold, *The Interpretation of Scripture*, p. 24. J. Keble, *Sermons for Easter to Ascension Day*, p. 192.

GROWING GREAT IDEAS

'A thousand generations.'—DEUTERONOMY VII. 9.

How to begin to teach the supreme ideas of time and space, and God and heaven, and eternity; that is the subject. We are familiar with these great words, so familiar indeed with them that we think nothing about them. We thus ruin ourselves by reading religious books and going to religious services. Nothing so ruinous as going to church, if we do not go in the right spirit and with adequate intelligence of the meaning of the act. I know nothing so really bad for the soul as religion, if not rightly comprehended and understood.

I. For instance, how to introduce the great word Heaven in its spiritual and ideal sense. It is introduced, therefore, first of all in its material sense. The Lord makes a great canopy—oh, so azure blue, and so written over with cloud parables—and He says, We will call that heaven. It is no heaven, but that would do as a toy-word, and that would be an excellent beginning in object-teaching. Said the Lord God Almighty in effect, This great space with all its great poem of light we will call heaven. It was not heaven as we understand the word now, but it would not have done to have introduced the truly spiritual heaven all at once. The Lord is a wise Father-Mother, so He begins with nouns and objects and shining lights and glittering points that want to show their bigness, but distance will not allow them.

There is a lesson to us poor preachers. We begin by thrusting eternity upon the attention of the people all at once. We should promise them something less but something typical, something that carries a parable in its heart and whose lips are warm with a poem. But we expect to get the people to understand the Trinity in one morning sermon.

II. How difficult it was for God to get the idea of philanthropy into the minds of the people! Philanthropy means love of man, love of human nature because it is human nature, and being human nature is allied to the Divine and all-redeeming personality of God. Did the Lord begin by telling the people to love everybody? He did not, He ignored 'everybody,' and fixed the attention of the people upon themselves and their wives and families and their tribes and their nation; and then the Lord dropped a word about another section of humanity. He said, You will now and then come upon the 'stranger'. That is a new word; we know ourselves and our households and the tribe to which we belong, but if we see a stranger we will slay him. Thus the Lord created an opportunity for Himself: He said, If you see a stranger, invite him into your house; he may be tired on his journey, let him sit down at least outside your door; the stranger may happen to come to you at sundown, at the preparation before the Sabbath; you will not think of allowing the poor wayfarer to go out on the Sabbath Day, you will therefore have a stranger within your gates and you must treat him as if he were one of the family. What a subtle method of proceeding; how remote the point of approach, yet how direct and sure! Thus the great Christianizing, which is also the great fraternizing, policy proceeded and expanded until it does seem now and then—with sad and terrible exceptions, which I trust are only momentary—as if the angel song would become the true song of the nations—'Peace on earth; goodwill toward men,'—goodwilling about one another, speeches in the parliament of man about benevolence and mutual trust.

III. Now we come to the third point of starting, which is the point of the text—'a thousand generations'. What is the Lord intending to teach now?

He has taught what the people can receive about a generation; in fact they have lived through a generation, they know that word very well, it is quite a simple word in their vernacular; a generation may be thirty years or thirty centuries, or whatever it is or whatever it was, it was a unit which could be in some sense realized by the people to whom the words were addressed. But God means more than this, and how can He begin to say what He means? If He said 'immortality' nobody would understand what He was talking about at that time of the world's history and at that period of spiritual vision. So the Lord met the people where they could meet Him; He stooped to their infancy, He spake their one-syllabled language. Having got the people to say that they knew the meaning of a generation, He proceeded thus; then two generations, then three generations, and the children smiled incredulously; four generations, then reason began to totter. There is a wonderful division of the generations; they now come before us in groups—fourteen generations, and fourteen generations, and fourteen generations—what is this? Thus the Lord introduced the notion of immortality, for ever and ever and ever; and at length the grand revelation was made that Christ brought life and immortality to light in the Gospel; so we do not talk about a generation in heaven but about God's for ever in the skies. We take the wrong way of reaching people; we begin with immortality, and nobody understands the word. That is a word into the full meaning of which we must grow.—Joseph Parker, *City Temple Pulpit*, vol. iv. p. 78.

DOES GOD HAVE FAIR PLAY?

'Know therefore that the Lord thy God, He is God, the faithful God.'—Deuteronomy vii. 9.

It is the declaration of the Scriptures from beginning to end that the Lord our God is a faithful God. Has God been faithful to us; and if so, are we justified in assuming that the same faithfulness is the experience of others?

I. Christ does not pledge the Divine faithfulness to our desires—it is pledged to our needs. The purpose of God in us is character, and once we have it, established in Divine grace and ensphered in the human will of a sufficient number of us, we shall soon make our new and better world. Without this character we may hope for nothing. With it we need despair of nothing. To say that there are experiences in the lives of individuals, and even of communities, which we cannot explain, is no proof that the universe is immoral.

II. Remember there are some things God cannot do for us and yet leave us men. He cannot make a better world without the consent of our individual obedience and the co-operation of our will. Instead of asking, how can God be God and permit wrong to be in the world, let us face the truth that wrong is in the world for this reason—that we permit it. God is faithful: therefore good must be possible. Evil is, as it were, embedded in our nature; and for that we are not accountable. It is the greatness of the Christian religion that it not only tells us what it were good to do, but it offers to us the power to do it.

III. We have to find out that we cannot serve two masters. However we fall short in practice, the intention must be all for God, or it will be none. Goodness is possible; and not to achieve it is to defeat the purpose for which we were born into this world. The lesson for us to learn is to labour and to wait; to give God and ourselves space to work in. Let us trust the faithful God, and we shall be taught to regard the troubles that test, and the limitations that perplex us, as the agents of His Providence through the courses of time.—Ambrose Shepherd, *Men in the Making*, p. 245.

References.—VII. 9, 10.—R. D. B. Rawnsley, *Village Sermons* (2nd Series), p. 21. VII. 12, 13.—J. Keble, *Sermons for Easter to Ascension Day*, p. 375. VII. 20.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xii. p. 673. VII. 21.—F. D. Maurice, *Sermons*, vol. vi. p. 145. VII. 22.—C. Vince, *The Unchanging Saviour*, p. 292. VII. 22-26.—F. D. Maurice, *The Patriarchs and Lawgivers of the Old Testament*.

THE WAY IN THE WILDERNESS

(First Sunday of the Year)

'Thou shalt consider all the way which the Lord thy God hath led thee . . . in the wilderness.'—Deuteronomy viii. 2.

(i) Let us emphasize the word all, for on that word the emphasis of the sentence truly lies.

(ii) The character of the path to be estimated not by the present difficulty or danger, but by the importance of the end.

(iii) The infinite variety of the way.

(iv) The beauty of the way. It is a goodly world which our God hath built and adorned for us, a world whose goodliness is ever around us.

(v) The bread of the wilderness. This miracle of the manna is repeated every day before our eyes.

(vi) The perils of the wilderness. Life is one long peril.

(vii) The sins of the wilderness. The past is best buried under a nobler present.

(viii) The chastisements of the way.

(ix) The Elims of the way, the sunny spots, the living verdure, the murmuring fountains, the rustling, shadowing palms.

(x) The end of the way. Each step the path will brighten as it nears the precincts of the Promised Land.—J. Baldwin Brown, *Contemporary Pulpit* vol. vi. p. 371.

References.—VIII. 2.—D. Burns, *Christian World Pulpit*, 1890, p. 88. John Mason, *Lord's Day Entertainments*, vol. ii. p. 297. Bradley, *Sermons*, vol. ii. p. 284. E. M. Goulburn, *Sermons*, p. 485. Simeon, *Works*, vol. ii. p. 299. John Venn, *Sermons*, vol. iii. p. 397. T. Binney, *Sermons* (1st Series), p. 362. Kingsley, *Discipline*, p. 40. A. Maclaren, *A Year's Ministry* (1st Series), p. 151. *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. iv. pp. 397 and 417. F. Bourdillon, *Plain Sermons for Family Reading*, p. 84. J. Vaughan, *Sermons* (14th Series), p. 156. A. Maclaren, *A Year's Ministry* (1st Series), p. 151. VIII.

2, 3.—C. M. Betts, *Eight Sermons*, p. 61. VIII. 3.—J. W. Walker, *A Book of Lay Sermons*, p. 133. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. vii. No. 418. VIII. 10, 11.—G. A. Sowter, *Sowing and Reaping*, p. 84. VIII. 11-18.—C. Kingsley, *Gospel of the Pentateuch*, p. 197. VIII. 15.—J. M. Neale, *Readings for the Aged* (4th Series), p. 175; *ibid. Sermons Preached in Sackville College Chapel*, vol. ii. p. 336. IX. 1.—T. Arnold, *Christian Life*, vol. v. p. 305. IX. 6.—Bishop Goodwin, *Parish Sermons* (5th Series), p. 78. IX. 26-29.—F. D. Maurice, *Sermons*, vol. ii. p. 53. IX. 29.—Bishop Lightfoot, *Contemporary Pulpit*, vol. ii. p. 63. T. Arnold, *Christian Life*, p. 305.

THE TEST OF NATIONAL PROSPERITY

'And now, Israel, what doth the Lord require of thee?'—DEUTERONOMY X. 12.

THE Old Testament is concerned with tribes and nations rather than with individuals. The Law of Moses deals with Israel collectively as a whole. The prophets utter their burdens of doom not against evil persons, but against wicked kingdoms like Babylon, and Moab, and Egypt, and their great messages of hope and warning and consolation are addressed to Judah or Jerusalem rather than any single Jew. In this sense it is true that no Scripture is merely of private interpretation. Redemption includes the race, or else it could not embrace the individual. The Gospel claims all mankind just as definitely as it appeals to you and me.

I. Recently Englishmen have been stirred up to discuss with new eagerness the problem of our national prosperity. Are we really prosperous? How can we safeguard and develop our mercantile success? What is the secret of its continuance and its expansion? The air is thick with controversy over such questions as these. Yet the answers given are confined for the most part to material considerations. At such a time we need more than ever to remind ourselves how the Bible tests and measures prosperity. If the Old Testament applies to individuals as well as to nations, the New Testament is true for nations as well as for individuals. A nation's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which it possesseth, nor in the extent of the empire which it rules. What shall it profit a nation if it gain the whole world and lose its own soul.

II. Let us be very certain that personal vices, however common and popular they become, can never be transmuted into public virtues. The same conduct which ruins an individual will in the long run wreck a state. To oppress and plunder the poor is equally accursed, whether it be perpetrated by a crowned tyrant, or carried out quietly under legal forms by a trust or a syndicate, a trade corporation or a vested interest.

III. The seal of a people's unity is a sense of the Divine calling and election. It remains true in England, as it was in Israel, that a covenant with God is the one sure ground of all covenants between man and man. National sincerity and veracity are bred in a people in proportion as they recognize the judgments and the mercies of the God of truth. National loyalty depends at last on common faithfulness to our immortal and invisible King.—T. H. DARLOW, *The Upward Calling*, p. 220.

GOD'S REQUIREMENTS

DEUTERONOMY X. 12.

THE vastness of God's requirements makes the despair of the morning of the Christian life, but it is the sure hope of its noon. Had He required less, this life could not be eternal. 'It is a prejudicial but too common error among Christians,' said Pascal, in a letter to Madame Perier, 'and even among those who make a profession of piety, to believe that there is a measure of perfection sufficient for safety, beyond which it is not necessary to aspire. It is an absolute evil to stop at any such point, and we shall assuredly fall below it if we aim not to advance higher and higher.'

REFERENCES.—X. 12.—H. J. Wilmot-Buxton, *Sunday Lessons for Daily Life*, p. 76. X. 14-16.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. vi. No. 303. X. 16.—J. Keble, *Sermons for Christmas to Epiphany*, p. 193. XI. 10-12.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. ii. p. 58. XI. 12.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xiii. p. 728. XI. 18.—Melvill, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 2580. XI. 19.—T. Arnold, *Sermons*, vol. iii. p. 131. XI. 21.—G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 326. XI. 26-28.—J. S. Boone, *Sermons*, p. 155. XII. 8, 9.—*Sermons for Ascension Day to Trinity Sunday*, p. 53.

THE FRIENDSHIP OF CHRIST

(A University Sermon)

'Take heed to thyself that thou offer not thy burnt offerings in every place that thou seest.'—DEUTERONOMY XII. 13.

'Behold, I stand at the door and knock.'—REVELATION III. 20.

YOUR college days are pre-eminently days when you open the doors of your hearts and let new friends in. In these years you are generous, and ready to hear a knock, and to respond to it.

I. Never has the history of any human life been truly and fully related. I fancy that if such a thing could be, the record would be mainly of those who at different stages and periods have come into it. Many of them have come and gone, but some have remained. To let another human being into your life means far more than you can possibly imagine now. Let us consider what a true friendship means and how blessed it is.

(*a*) First of all, there is in a true friendship a complete and joyous frankness. We go about disguised. Most of our intercourse with fellow-beings is altogether on the surface. In a true friendship all that we have dealt with in the outer court we take as ended. There the veils are torn; we are heart to heart.

(*b*) A true friendship means also sympathy and tenderness. In its high estate it fears nothing from life or even from death. The friends who are together in the class-room to-day are going out to their encounter with the world, and in that one may succeed and the other may fail. But it is not upon the hazards of fortune that a true friendship turns. A true friendship is to be for solace and for cheer in all the relations and passages of life and death.

(*c*) Also a true friendship is an education in trust,

in magnanimity. Great friendships are not to be broken on mere suspicion. They are not even to be broken by fault, for all of us err. There is something in a high friendship which survives all that, and if life is a lesson in magnanimity, we shall learn it best from the dearest and noblest of our friends. This friendship cannot be broken by death.

II. But as Emerson says, true friendship demands a religious treatment. We are not to strike links of friendship with cheap persons where no friendship is. We are not to offer our burnt offerings in every place we see.

III. Whoever comes or goes, there is one Friend who continually knocks at the door of our hearts, and His friendship is all-sufficing. There are many who even in the crowd are lonely and loveless. It was for them that Christ died. It is their love that Christ is seeking. Remember that no one who has let Christ into his life ever repented of it.

IV. There is no such great mystery about conversion. You know already what it is to let some human being enter into your life. Everything is changed by it more or less. What could be better, happier, wiser for you than to open the door to this Seeker, this Knocker, this Beseecher? Let him in. Say to Him, say it to Him now in the silence of your souls, Come in Thou Blessed of the Lord: why standest Thou without?—W. Robertson Nicoll, *The British Weekly*, vol. xlv. p. 353.

Deuteronomy xii. 13.—Exposition of this verse in Mark Rutherford's *Revolution in Tanner's Lane*, chap. xxiv.

References.—XIII. 1-3.—F. D. Maurice, *Patriarchs and Lawgivers of the Old Testament*, p. 274. XIII. 11.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons Preached in Sackville College Chapel*, vol. iv. p. 29. XIV. 21.—R. F. Horton, *The Hidden God*, p. 65. C. J. Vaughan, *Memorials of Harrow Sundays*, p. 138. XV. 11.—J. Keble, *Miscellaneous Sermons*, p. 41. J. M. Neale, *Sermons on the Prophets*, vol. ii. p. 218. XV. 15.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxiv. No. 1406. XVI. 1.—C. S. Robinson, *Simon Peter*, p. 53. E. White, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxv. p. 120. XII. 2.—H. J. Wilmot-Buxton, *Sunday Lessons*, vol. i. p. 416.

THE FEAST OF TABERNACLES

(*A Harvest Sermon*)

'Thou shalt observe the feast of tabernacles seven days, after that thou hast gathered in thy corn and thy wine; every man shall give as he is able, according to the blessing of the Lord thy God which He hath given thee.'—Deuteronomy xvi. 13-17.

The three great feasts of Israel—the Passover, the Feast of Weeks or Pentecost, and the Feast of Tabernacles—were not only commemorative of national blessings or prophetic of yet greater spiritual blessings to be bestowed, but they were conspicuously connected with the three great seasons of the tillage of Palestine—the barley and the wheat harvests and the vintage. This Feast of Tabernacles was the most joyous of them all. Above and beyond all other marks of joy and utterances of thanksgiving, the law laid stress on the thankofferings of love. Men were not to appear before the Lord empty. The law, 'Freely have ye received, freely give,' applies to the natural as well as to the spiritual life, and there can be no true fulfilment in the latter if it is neglected in the former. Harvest festivals are valuable in this age.

I. They tell us of the truth which we are constantly tempted to forget—that the God of grace is also the God of nature; that the Son of God is also the Divine Word, the Eternal Wisdom, by whom all laws of nature are ordained; that the Holy Ghost is also the Lord and giver of life, and that not only are all holy thoughts and desires His gifts, but that even the skill of the artist and the builder speak of a wisdom for all manner of workmanship which is His gift. Harvest thanksgivings help us to look out on the world of nature and of men with more large-hearted sympathies.

II. They bear their witness that we believe that the laws of nature are the expression of an Almighty Father's will, and that we accept its workings, not with simple submission, but with thankfulness and trust.

III. They bring us into fellowship with the old religious life of Israel. It adds to the interest with which we think of this feast, to remember that one large and important part of our Lord's teaching was connected with it. The history of one feast of Tabernacles occupies four chapters of St. John's Gospel. Its ritual was present to the eyes of men, and to His own thoughts, when He stood and cried, 'I am the Light of the world. If any man thirst, let him come unto Me and drink.'—E. H. Plumptre, *The Clerical Library*, vol. ii. p. 51.

References.—XVII. 16.—J. Laidlaw, *Studies in the Parables*, p. 217. W. M. Taylor, *Contrary Winds*, p. 93.

The prophet like Moses.—Deuteronomy xviii. 9-22.

'A Prophet.' How doth Christ execute the office of a prophet? In the following passages our Lord claims prophetic powers: 'My doctrine is not Mine, but His that sent Me'. 'Then shall ye know that I do nothing of Myself, but as the Father hath taught Me, I speak these things.'

'Like unto Moses.' Christ has the whole prophetic life in Himself, says a German writer. He has the pathos of an Isaiah, the melancholy of an Hosea, the meekness of a Jeremiah, the joy in nature of an Amos, the power of observation of the proverb-writers, the whole world of feeling of the Psalmists. In what particular respects, then, may we say that Christ was especially like unto Moses? First, He was a mediator between God and the people. Second, He is a deliverer from bondage as well as a revealer of God's will. Third, He was signally meek and supremely faithful.

Note how often in the New Testament this prediction is applied to Jesus. Philip refers to it when he says to Nathanael, 'We have found Him of whom Moses in the Law did write'. Our Lord Himself doubtless had it in mind when He said, 'Moses wrote of Me'. Peter quoted it when preaching to the crowd who had gathered when the lame man was healed. Stephen, in his defence, cited it also.

References.—XVIII. 15.—E. H. Gifford, *Twelve Lectures*, p. 151. J. H. Newman, *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, vol. vii. p. 118. XVIII. 15-19.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxv. No. 1487. XIX. 5, 6.—E. M. Goulburn, *Sermons in the Parish Church of Holywell*, p. 101. XIX. 32.—J. N. Norton, *Every Sunday*, p. 249. XX. 2-4.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons for the Church Year*, p. 167. XX. 8.—W. Ray, *Thursday Penny Pulpit*, vol. xi. p. 233. J. M. Neale, *Sermons for the Church Year*, p. 177.

YOUR RESPONSIBILITY FOR YOUR BROTHER

'Thou shalt not see thy brother's ox or his sheep go astray, and hide thyself from them: thou shalt in any case bring them again unto thy brother.'—Deuteronomy xxii. 1-3.

A recent writer in one of our religious papers has said, with all the omniscience and infallibility that attach to the press, that no one preaches from the Pentateuch in these days. By this he probably suggests that there is no Gospel in the Pentateuch, and in suggesting this he shows hopeless, unblushing ignorance. One of the best books Charles Kingsley wrote was *The Gospel in the Pentateuch*; and anyone who takes the trouble to look for it will find that he cannot read a couple of pages of the Pentateuch without finding therein Gospel truth and teaching.

Among many things that are stern and severe there is much that is tender and beautiful, much that breathes the spirit of Jesus. Notably there is tender and thoughtful care for weak things in nature, dumb creatures who serve men, and for children, for the outcast, the stranger, and the poor. There is also a great deal about brotherhood, enough I should think to satisfy the most ardent Socialist. The personal responsibility of man for man is constantly insisted on, and this passage is an example of it, 'Thou shalt not see thy brother's ox or his sheep go astray,' etc.

I. The teaching of this passage seems to me to be that we have a large share of responsibility for the wrongs which go on about us, and we are bound, even at cost and inconvenience to ourselves, to try to prevent and rectify them. Look at this picture again, and suppose that these cattle are being driven away. The man who sees it is bound to interfere. His interference may mean an altercation with the thief, it may mean that for some days he must find pasturage for his neighbour's sheep, it may mean a great deal of inconvenience and loss; but this is the law of God, and from it there is no appeal. He is bound to do his best to right the wrong.

II. The law obtains for us Christian people in the moral and spiritual realm. As a Christian man everything that concerns my brother should be a concern to me, even to his ox and ass and raiment, and I must, wherever possible, guard him against loss and damage. If I am to care for his ox and his ass, I am surely to care for his character. He will get over the loss of a sheep, but he will with difficulty recover a lost virtue.

There are three classes of people which come up to one's view, as one thinks of words like these and gives them their largest interpretation. They may be represented here as—

(i) The people who lead others astray and cause them loss, people who have wronged their brother.

(ii) People who have seen their brother wronged or suffering loss, and have hidden themselves; who have deliberately refused to take any trouble or pains.

(iii) The people who have suffered loss and who themselves are being led astray.—C. Brown, *Light of Life*, p. 151.

THE HOUSE AND ITS BATTLEMENT

'When thou buildest a new house, then thou shalt make a battlement for thy roof, that thou bring not blood upon thine house, if any man fall from thence.'—Deuteronomy xxii. 8.

The natural exposition of the text is a very simple one. Eastern houses were built with flat roofs for obvious reasons. As it was a hot clime people were glad to get to the top of the house for fresh air, and there would be little children, thoughtless—comparatively so—and if they were allowed at any time on the roof, where they would most likely wish to go, there would be a feeling of insecurity unless there was something to prevent a disaster. And so God in His infinite kindness, care, and thought for the welfare of the nation of Israel gives this special direction to those who had the building of houses, that they should not overlook this most necessary arrangement for safety, and build a parapet round the house that would prevent any one being placed in immediate peril, so that unless they presumptuously scaled that wall they would be as safe on the top as underneath.

The gracious and eternal God, who in His condescension, care, and pity for fallen sinners, sees fit to make a law for their temporal safety, in building His spiritual house is none the less careful.

I. The need of the battlement.

(*a*) The house top in the East would be frequently used as a watch-tower. The children of Israel were ofttimes surrounded by invading hosts. Now there would be a special danger without the battlement. In their undue anxiety for their own safety, in watching the on-coming foe they would most likely forget where they were, and in their excitement step right off and not know what they were doing. Here we have a spiritual lesson. What a difficulty it is to find that narrow pathway between a gracious and salutary solicitude for our safety and that undue anxiety which comes through seeing the strength of our enemies surrounding us.

(*b*) The house-roof in the East would also be used as a place of relaxation, exercise, and recreation; they would often repair there to view things proceeding around them in the ordinary way. Here we see the need of the parapet or battlement for safety. How this brings before us the dangers that surround the footsteps of the young. What a danger there is lest in spiritual glee and satisfaction they may tumble if there is not the battlement.

(*c*) The house-roof in the East was frequently used as a place of repose and sleep. A battlement would be necessary to enable one to take pleasant repose. When God says 'I will cause my flock to lie down' He means 'I will give them to realize such a feeling

of safety in My keeping, by strength and protection, that they shall be able to lie down comfortably'.

II. This battlement was to be a component or essential part of the building of the house. And so it is in reference to the securing love and mercy and faithfulness of God, it is a part of His own structure and never can be removed.

III. This battlement is to be used and not presumptuously abused. We shall either be looking upon the security of God's people as an impetus to encourage us to remember His keeping power, to cause us to hope in His mercy notwithstanding the sense of our failure, and to put the hand of our trembling faith into the hand of His great love, or we shall be found among those who have presumptuously climbed over God's restrictions.

References.—XXII. 8.—C. Perren, *Revival Sermons*, p. 234. XXV. 4.—R. F. Horton, *The Hidden God*, p. 65.

NATIONAL SAFEGUARDS

'Behold, I have brought the first-fruits of the land, which thou, O Lord, hast given me.'—Deuteronomy xxvi. 10.

Each young man takes an immense stride in experience when he discovers that God has made him not only the member of a family but also the citizen of a nation. Gradually he comes to realize how much the word 'nation' means. The earlier part of the Bible occupies itself not so much with individuals as with the fortunes of a chosen nation. We read in the Old Testament how God called and trained up and delivered and chastened and restored His people Israel. And these precepts in Deuteronomy xxvi. were given as safeguards to the nation after it had entered into possession of Canaan, and had become settled and peaceful and prosperous, for the real test and touchstone of any people or any individual are how they endure prosperity. The whole tenor of these verses implies that a people's security depends not on outward but on inward conditions. And hence we may infer what are those invincible powers which alone can garrison the heart of any nation.

I. The first of these great guardian angels is reverence for the nation's past. The previous chapter has recalled Israel's deliverance from Amalek, and ends with the warning words 'Thou shalt not forget'. And through the Old Testament God's warnings and promises and appeals are based on the actual facts of Hebrew history. That wonderful and glorious record must never fall out of mind. And it still remains true that a nation which ignores its history is like a man who has lost his memory.

II. Hand in hand with such understanding comes a sense of the nation's election. God's calling and discipline had been manifest throughout the long generations of Israel. God Himself had chosen them and sealed them for His own high ends, and moulded them by the secret counsel of His will, and made them His witnesses and standard-bearers in the world. And on our land also God's finger has stamped a manifest and marvellous destiny which should needs make us humble and sober in proportion as we realize what it means.

III. Beyond the sense of national responsibility there must also be gratitude for national blessings. If Israel could rejoice in every good thing which God had given them, we too are bound to praise Him for all His benefits to us. Young men and women who have never lived in less favoured lands fail to estimate the incalculable blessings of their own.

IV. A nation's supreme safeguard lies in the dedication of its youth. Those first-fruits laid on the ancient Jewish altar were but an allegory. And we fulfil the spirit of the ancient command only as we consecrate the flower and first-fruits of our own lives.
—T. H. Darlow, *The Upward Calling*, p. 80.

Reference.—XXVII. 15.—C. C. Bartholomew, *Sermons Chiefly Practical*, p. 464.

A BLESSING ON THE STOREHOUSE

'The Lord shall command the blessing upon thee in thy storehouses.'—Deuteronomy xxviii. 8.

The storing of the grain is the last of the processes of harvest. We may therefore take the blessing of God upon the housed and winnowed corn as including His blessing upon all previous stages of growth or ingathering.

I. The Sowing Time.—This is where industry comes in, and the gift of God is seen also to be His reward and blessing upon human diligence. The preparation of the soil and the choice of the seed—application to human life.

II. The Period of Growth, the Waiting Time.—With growth itself the farmer has nothing to do. It is the work of God, in which man has no part. But he has to weed and protect the crop. Carry the thoughts here suggested into the realm and province of life.

III. The Gathering Time.—We are all gleaners in the harvest-field of life. What use have we made of the season which God has given us?

IV. The Testing, the Winnowing Time—for 'every man's work' shall be tried 'of what sort it is'. Holy Scripture employs three figures to enforce and emphasize the strict and searching nature of this trial:—

(*a*) The process of winnowing.
(*b*) The process of the analyst.
(*c*) The process of burning, the trial by fire.
—Vivian R. Lennard, *Harvest-tide*, p. 101.

Reference.—XXVIII. 67.—T. Arnold, *The Interpretation of Scripture*, p. 32.

THE DESIRED MORNING

'Would God it were morning!'—Deuteronomy xxviii. 67.

This cry is going up from all the earth in all languages, and sometimes unconsciously. The heart is one, the passion, the vehemence of life is expressive of a common humanity.

In the first instance, all this refers to a great matter of punishment which the Lord was about to inflict upon His disobedient people. He would not leave them alone, night or day, He would make them feel the thong for every sin they had committed; for

every evil word and every evil deed there should be a lash as of a scorpion sting. 'Would God it were morning!' It is a great cry, the interpretation of the soul's dumb desire. The soul is weary, it is confused, confounded, perplexed, mocked, and the darkness itself becomes a whip wherewith the hand almighty scourges and chastises the soul.

I. The text may be regarded as an aspiration, a hopeful and vehement desire. 'Would God it were morning!' That is the aspiration of a puzzled student, a most perplexed and bewildered thinker. He is drooping towards atheism, down to the low dank levels of dejection if not despair. Why so? 'Because,' he replies, 'things are so mysterious; nothing ends in itself; the tuft of smoke has gone back to some primal fire; and all things are so confused, intermingled, and so deeply and tragically engaged in internecine conflict; and there is so much apparently needless suffering on this small globe.

II. This cry, 'Would God it were morning!' is occasioned by Sorrow, written with a large capital, as if it were personalized, turned into an eloquent but grim personality and figure. Yet how poor the world would be if all the books that Sorrow has written were taken out of it! What if sorrow be but the broken clouds of a very sunny day, helping us to see better into the depths of the sky and to feel more sensitively the meaning of interpreting light?

III. This cry for the true morning is the expression of struggling but hopeful faith. The soul can never give up that idea of the morning. Sometimes its grasp seems to be relaxed, but God will take care that the hope and promise, the sweet confidence of morning, shall not be taken out of the hand. Sometimes we can feel ourselves growing in wisdom; sometimes we are quite sure that we have made an advance upon yesterday. Now and again the old tone of confidence comes into the voice so long choked by tears and sobs, and takes part in some dropped hymn and makes it live again with the newness of its own life. These are mysteries, these are hopes and comforts; these constitute the morning we have been sighing for.

1. This cry for the morning has been sustained by saintly histories.

The answer to this aspiration is justified by saintly experience. Men have been delivered; souls have been saved; as a matter of fact, light has really and fully come, so that men have stood up when all other men seemed to be sitting down, and they have towered up to a great representative personality, and have said, 'This poor man cried unto the Lord, and the Lord answered him'.

2. The morning has come to many; it may come to all. It has come to the grave. One bold sentence in the holy book is, 'He hath abolished death!'—expunged it, rubbed it out of the world's language; there is no such word in any gruesome meaning now. The resurrection of Christ was the morning that came upon the death-land. Those who stand upon the Rock of Faith, upon the tomb of Christ emptied and angel-filled, are confident that the morning has come in some places and is coming in all places.—Joseph Parker, *City Temple Pulpit*, vol. v. p. 194.

Reference.—XXIX. 4.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxvii. No. 1638.

THE SECRET AND THE UNREVEALED THINGS

'The secret things belong unto the Lord our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us, and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law.'
—Deuteronomy xxix. 29.

There are some things respecting which we ought to be agnostics. They are the secret things which belong to God. There are other things concerning which we ought not to be agnostics. They are the revealed things which belong to us and to our children.

I. The things which concern us, which touch our life, lie within the realm of our knowledge; the things which do not touch us, which do not concern our life, concerning which we may hold one theory or another theory, and our life still remain right, do not belong to us. We may discuss them, but they are not part of the vital truths of religion.

II. In a similar manner there is the known and the unknown in religion. And the difficulty about religious discussion has been that most of it has been fighting about the unknown. 'Nothing is more certain,' says Herbert Spencer, 'than that we are ever in the presence of an infinite and eternal Energy from which all things proceed.' Now what can we know about that infinite and eternal Energy? We say that He is omnipresent. But we do not know. All we know is that everywhere in the universe He is operative.

III. But whenever God comes in touch with us, we do know. We know that there is a natural order in the universe; we know that there is somewhere a rule; and we know that these rules are absolute, unchangeable, immutable. We do not know in what way God operates on the mind. But we do know Christ's relation to us; and that is enough for us to know. What God is in His essence we cannot know. What is His method of manifesting Himself to others we cannot know; but we can open our hearts to His sunshine and receive His life. What the Christ is in His relation to the eternal Father we cannot know; but to us He can be the model which we follow and the revelation of God whom we adore.—Lyman Abbott, *Homiletic Review*, 1904, vol. xlviii. p. 291.

KNOWLEDGE: REVEALED AND SECRET

'The secret things belong unto the Lord our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us, and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law.'
—Deuteronomy xxix. 29.

I will first of all take the two terms of my text and then the declaration of the purpose lying behind the truth of the terms—revealed things; secret things.

I. First, the revealed things. The Hebrew word very literally means things denuded, laid bare. I

have said to you that a thing revealed cannot be perfect and complete; but it is a revealed thought. This hymn-book, for example, is a thing revealed to us by this imperfect manner of words. It is the same thing in the moral world. There are things revealed and things I know—a flower, a storm, light and heat, and the mystery of pain, the great affirmations of Christian truth.

II. Take the next term of the text: secret things. As the first word means things denuded, the second means things clothed, things hidden by a covering. The covering demonstrates the presence of the thing beneath. The covering is revealed, the thing is hidden. It is the intangible, impenetrable, illusive mystery that lurks at the back of everything revealed. I take up this book again. There is as much mystery in that hymn-book as there is in God. When you can fathom the mystery of this book, you can fathom the mystery of the universe.

III. It is the great declaration of revealed religion that everything that baffles the human intellect and bewilders the human heart because of its mystery is not a mystery with God. He knows it thoroughly. Carry this idea into the second half of the declaration. Everything revealed is revealed for us and is united to the secret and hidden forces and expresses so much of them as is for us to know. The truth is that everything of which I am certain is but the apparition of a heavenly thing and teaches a spiritual truth. Take away the secret things and you will lose God. It is the secret of Divine government that demonstrates the fact of Divine government.—G. Campbell Morgan, *Homiletic Review*, 1904, vol. xlviii. p. 451.

References.—XXIX. 29.—J. O. Davies, *Sermons by Welshmen*, p. 59. J. Bunting, *Sermons*, vol. i. p. 346. G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 193.

Loving and obeying God.—Deuteronomy xxx.

'The word is very nigh unto thee.' In one of his poems Lowell tells the story of an ancient prophet who made a pilgrimage into the wilderness until he reached Mount Sinai. God's presence had deserted him, and he thought that there, if anywhere, he should find it again. As he engaged in prayer on Sinai, expecting some strange and startling answer, the moss at his feet unfolded, and a violet showed itself through the moss. Then he remembered that just before he left home his little daughter had come running to him, offering him a nosegay of these very flowers. They grew at his own door; he saw them day by day; he had travelled all that distance for a message that had been very nigh unto him all the time.

Love and Obedience (v. 15-20). A poor, half-witted girl suffering from arrested brain-development, was taken into a school opened by a group of benevolent ladies. The leader of the enterprise was known as Mistress Mary, and the forlorn girl loved her dearly. One day in San Francisco the half-witted scholar was in one of the upper storeys of a cheap clothing factory when fire broke out. To come back down the staircase was impossible. The crowd shouted to her to leap into a blanket that they held out. But she looked down and was petrified by fright, for she knew not the voice of strangers. At length Mistress Mary appeared. She cried in a clear, sweet voice, 'Leap, darling, leap!' And the half-paralysed child, recognizing the voice she loved, obeyed. She leaped, swooning as she fell through the air, but was saved.

CHRIST'S NEARNESS TO HIS PEOPLE

(A Christmas Sermon)

'The word is very nigh.'—Deuteronomy xxx. 14.

Our Lord was known by many titles—The Christ or Messiah, Jesus or Joshua the Saviour, the Lamb of God, the Vine, the Door, the Good Shepherd, the Son of Man, and many others. Perhaps no title is more fitting than the 'Word,' for He came to reveal God to man, to reveal the will and mind of the Father, just as a word spoken reveals the thought which gave it birth and being. And the Word is very nigh. In other language, Christ is very near.

I. His Nearness to those whose Love and Desire is Set upon Him.—The idea of an actual and real presence of the Lord Jesus is a stumbling-block to some men. These men cannot receive such a doctrine, neither can they realize it. Now the presence of Christ to the Christian is no fancy of the imagination and no mere uncertainty, but it is a real and personal presence, with power to help and power to guide, and a presence to Whom we may speak with a reasonable certainty of being heard and helped and blessed.

II. A Christmastide Nearness.—In very deed the Word is nigh unto us on this day. A great opportunity is at hand. Loving hearts must open on Christmas Day with all the affection of which they are capable to receive Him; and stony hearts, and sinful hearts, and indifferent hearts, and selfish hearts, and hearts of all kinds, for there will be a blessing for them all. The Word is very nigh with life and hope and promise, and fair prospect, and the offer of a great future.

III. His Sacramental Presence.—Jesus is never nearer to us, perhaps, than when we are met together, with true hearts, at His holy table. And in no sense can we hold nearer or sweeter communion with Him than when we are at His Eucharist, filled with the sense of His presence. And we shall not begin our Christmas quite in the right way if we fail to come and partake in the Holy Ordinance. He will not be to us as nigh as He might. If we draw nigh to Him, He will draw nigh to us.

IV. His Nearness in His Second Advent.—It is nigh, even at the doors. But of this it is difficult to speak much. As to when it will be we know not. And is this to be wondered at? Hath not He Himself told us that of that hour knoweth no man, nor yet indeed the angels, nor the Son Himself, but the Father only? The thought of His Second Coming is an awesome and terrible one. But our terrors are

mitigated by a reflection that He Who shall come is none other than the Word, Christ Jesus our Lord.—J. A. Craigie, *The Country Pulpit*, p. 40.

'THAT THOU MAYEST DO IT'

'The Word is very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart, that thou mayest do it.'—Deuteronomy xxx. 14.

Human religions have prided themselves upon their profundity and mystery. The Divine religion professes to be intelligible to all men and adapted to all. Rightly regarded, this characteristic of religion, set forth in the text, is an evidence of its divinity. A little mind makes a mystery even of a trifle; a great mind brings down a mystery to its simplest form; the Divine Mind makes the most glorious truths accessible to the plainest understanding.

I. The Plainness of Religion.—(*a*) *The fact that God's communication with men is by means of the Word* is itself an element in its simplicity.

(*b*) *The Word is intelligible* to the human *understanding.* The language in which God speaks is human language, and His commandments are such as can scarcely be misunderstood.

(*c*) *The Word is impressive to the human heart.* The sentiments appealed to are common to all mankind, such as faith and gratitude and love.

(*d*) *There are providential circumstances* which render the blessings of the Gospel peculiarly accessible. The Scriptures are circulated in our own language, the Gospel is preached at our very doors, etc.

II. The Purpose for which Religion is made so very Plain and Accessible.—This is not simply that we may understand the Word. As the text expresses it, it is that 'thou mayest *do* it'.

(*a*) *Obedience is thus rendered more easy.*

(*b*) *Disobedience is thus rendered more culpable and inexcusable.*

Be it remembered that however plain the Word, this will not avail unless the heart be receptive, and in cordial sympathy with Divine truth and law, with Divine Gospel and promise.

References.—XXX. 15-22.—A. K. H. Boyd, *Graver Thoughts of a Country Parson* (3rd Series), p. 177. XXX. 19.—J. Vaughan, *Sermons* (15th Series), p. 157. F. D. Maurice, *The Patriarchs and Lawgivers of the Old Testament*, p. 289. H. Alford, *Sermons*, p. 1. XXX. 19, 20.—C. Kingsley, *Good News of God*, p. 80; *Westminster Sermons*, p. 271. XXXI. 14.—F. E. Paget, *Helps and Hindrances to the Christian Life*, vol. i. p. 44. XXXI. 23.—I. Williams, *Characters of the Old Testament*, p. 138.

Deuteronomy xxxi. 23.

Moses, in God's name, did counsel Joshua, *Be strong and of a good courage: for thou shalt bring the children of Israel into the land which I sware unto them.* God immediately did command him (Josh. i. 6), *Be strong and of a good courage;* and again (v. 7), *Only be thou strong and very courageous;* and again (v. 9), *Have I not commanded thee? Be strong and of a good courage.* Lastly, the Reubenites and Gadites heartily desired him (v. 18), *Only be strong and of a good courage.* Was Joshua a dunce or a coward? Did his wit or his valour want an edge, that the same precept must so often be pressed upon him? No doubt neither, but God saw it needful that Joshua should have courage of proof, who was to encounter both the froward Jew and the fierce Canaanite. Though metal on metal, colour on colour, be false heraldry, line on line, precept on precept is true divinity.—Thomas Fuller.

'Take this book of the law and put in the side of the ark of the covenant of the Lord your God.'—Deuteronomy xxxi. 26.

St. John of the Cross says that God commanded that nothing should be placed within the ark which contained the manna except the book of the law and Aaron's rod, 'which signifies the Cross'. 'Thus the soul which cares for no other thing except to keep perfectly the Law of the Lord and to bear the Cross of Christ, will be a true Ark which will have within it the true Manna, which is God.'—*Obras*, Vol. i. p. 22.

References.—XXXII. 11, 12.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons Preached in a Religious House*, vol. ii. p. 331. W. J. Brock, *Sermons*, p. 1. W. M. Taylor, *The Limitations of Life*, p. 73. XXXII. 20.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxx. No. 1784. XXXI.-XXXII.—*Ibid.* p. 341. J. Monro-Gibson, *The Mosaic Era*, p. 333. XXXII. 8, 9.—M. Dods, *Israel's Iron Age*, p. 172. XXXII. 31.—J. Barton Bell, *Christian World Pulpit*, 1890, p. 74. D. Moore, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 3342. P. McAdam Muir, *Modern Substitutes for Christianity*, p. 173. XXXII. 39.—Bishop Alexander, *The Great Question*, p. 30. XXXII. 47.—H. J. Buxton, *God's Heroes*, p. 226. XXXII. 48-50.—C. D. Bell, *Hills that Bring Peace*, p. 143. XXXII. 48-52.—J. W. Boulding, *Sermons*, p. 1. XXXII. 52.—R. Betts, *Christian World Pulpit*, 1890, p. 51.

THE LAW OF ANTAGONISM

'From His right hand went a fiery law for them. Yea, He loved the people.'—Deuteronomy xxxiii. 2, 3.

At first sight the text might seem to involve a contradiction, but closer consideration will show that it expresses a great truth, viz. that the severity of human life is an expression of the Divine goodness.

I. Consider the truth of the text as it finds expression in Nature. Nature is imperative, uncompromising, terrible. A lofty and unyielding commandment is written over all things, and behind the fiery law is a right hand capable of enforcing it to the utmost, of exacting the last farthing of the overwhelming penalty. In our day the severity of Nature has been recognized as the struggle for existence, and students have shown with great clearness and power how full the world is of antagonism and suffering; yet these same students distinctly perceive that the struggle for existence is at bottom merciful, and that whenever Nature chooses an evil it is a lesser evil to prevent a greater. (*a*) They see the advantage of severity as far as all sound and healthy things are concerned. The student of Nature knows well that the fiery law, the law which demands constant awareness, movement, tension, resistance, endeavour, is the law of salvation and perfecting to the whole animal world. (*b*) These students of Nature

see also the advantage of severity so far as defective things are concerned. It does indeed seem harsh that by the law of the world weak things go to the wall, and it is often difficult to reconcile ourselves to the grim fact. Yet the scientist sees truly that the fiery law which smites weakness into the dust is just as kind as the sweet light of the sun. It is better for the world at large that weak organisms should be eliminated, otherwise the earth would be filled with imperfection and wretchedness; it is better for the creatures concerned that they should perish, for why should a miserable existence be prolonged?

II. We consider the text as it finds expression in civilization. (*a*) Take the struggle of man with Nature. All climates and countries have their special inconveniences, inhospitalities and scourges, and everywhere men live in a more or less decided conflict with the elements and seasons. But is not this conflict with Nature part of the inspiration and programme of civilization? The law of life is truly severe which enjoins that men shall eat bread in the sweat of his face, but in this struggle for life our great antagonist is our great helper; we are leaving barbarism behind us, we are undergoing a magnificent transformation, we are becoming princes of God and heirs of all things. (*b*) Take the struggle of man with man. Society is a great system of antithesis. There are international rivalries, a relentless competition between the several races and nations for power and supremacy. But this social rivalry brings its rich compensations. It is so with the international rivalry. Our husbandmen will be compelled to put away all droning; they must go to school again, they must invent new methods, they must adopt new machines, sow choicer seeds, breed superior cattle; they must grub up the old canker-eaten, lichen-laden orchards and plant fresh fruit-trees of the best varieties.

III. We consider the truth of the text as it finds expression in character. The law concerning human character and duty knows nothing of accommodating itself to our weakness and infirmity, it does not invite or admit excuses for failure or fidelity, it is imperative and uncompromising—a fiery law. And yet we must contend that this severity is only another expression of eternal love. The scientist is reconciled to austere Nature by the consideration that she 'chooses a lesser evil to prevent a greater,' and the same consideration must reconcile us to life. For as the catastrophes of Nature are, after all, but partial and temporary, preventing immeasurably greater calamities, so our physical pain, impoverishment, social suffering, severe toil, bereavement, and all our terrestrial woes are the lesser evils, saving us from the infinitely greater one of the superficiality, corruption, misery, and ruin of the soul. —W. L. Watkinson, *The Transfigured Sackcloth*, p. 191.

References.—XXXIII. 7.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons Preached in a Religious House*, vol. i. p. 53. XXXIII. 12.—J. N. Norton, *Golden Truths*, p. 391. Bagnall-Baker, *Thursday Penny Pulpit*, vol. iii. p. 121. XXXIII. 16.—W. M. Taylor, *Contrary Winds*, p. 200.

WATCHWORDS FOR A NEW YEAR

'Thy shoes shall be iron and brass; and as thy days so shall thy strength be.'—Deuteronomy xxxiii. 25.

We stand at the threshold of another year. The past is irrevocable. The future is before us. How shall we prepare ourselves to go up into it?

I. There are tasks awaiting us; the life of a true disciple of Christ is not a sinecure. His prayer for us is that we may bear 'fruit,' 'much fruit,' 'more fruit'. Passive piety is scarcely better than none at all. If we are followers of the Christ we may not shrink from cares and burdens and responsibilities. Yet who is sufficient for these things? If we set out alone and unprepared the journey will be too much for us. My weakness—God's strength, these are the sandals wherewith we journey successfully along the path of duty.

II. There are temptations before us. This needs must be. The grapes must be pressed or there will be no wine, but we are never alone in the hour of trial unless we choose to be. A wrongdoer says: 'I couldn't help it; the temptation was greater than I could bear'. This is never true. The word of the Lord assures us to the contrary. 'Lo, I am with you alway; I will not leave you alone, I will come to you'. If we yield to temptation it is because we refuse His help, for He is not far from every one of us. And besides this present Christ we have the strong staff of the Written Word to lean on. A Bible Christian is a strong Christian.

III. There are sorrows before us. And where shall we find comfort? God knows. There is strength in that. God is not the author of our calamities. But there is a sense in which God is present always in the midst of pain and sorrow. It does not spring up out of the ground. It does not come to pass without His permission, decree. He controls it, restrains it, and in the long run makes all things work together for good to them that love Him. And our affliction after all is 'light, and but for a moment'. A glance at the starry heavens reveals ten thousand times ten thousand worlds, and the longer we gaze the more come whirling into view. How little this world seems: how infinitesimal. So is time in relation to eternity. So is the pain of to-day to the glory of to-morrow. —David J. Burrell, *Homiletic Review*, vol. lvii. p. 67.

References.—XXXIII. 25.—W. H. Brookfield, *Sermons*, p. 196. C. Bradley, *The Christian Life*, p. 191. J. Vaughan, *Fifty Sermons*, 1874, p. 256. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. iv. No. 210. H. W. Beecher, *Forty-eight Sermons*, vol. i. p. 1. XXXIII. 26-28.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xiv. No. 803.

THE EVERLASTING ARMS

'The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms.'—Deuteronomy xxxiii. 27.

This is the blessing wherewith Moses, the man of God, blessed the children of Israel before his death. Like the dying prophecy of Jacob, the aged patriarch, when he gathered his sons about him, and like the

last prayer of David the king when he bequeathed his throne to Solomon his son, this farewell of Israel's great leader and lawgiver rises into the music of a psalm.

I. There come times to every man and woman, even to the young who are sensitive and enthusiastic, when they are beset with a horrible sense of human futility. This evil mood of contempt for one's self curdles into a temper of scorn for one's brothers. They and we alike seem too ignoble, too fleeting, to be worth seriously troubling over.

II. Besides the dreadful sense of worthlessness and futility there is another horror of great darkness which sometimes oppresses the soul. You realize, in imagination, what it would mean to be literally 'lost' amid the infinite spaces and silences, without a path or a home or a helper.

III. We are not the puppets of evil fate, the playthings of blind forces. We are embraced in our father's arms. These very circumstances which we rebel against, these checks and limits which hedge us in, are really the clasp and pressure of His eternal tenderness carrying us along the way which He would have us go.—T. H. Darlow, *The Upward Calling*, p. 154.

THE ETERNAL GOD THY REFUGE

'The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms.'—Deuteronomy xxxiii. 27.

I. A Cry of the Human Spirit.—The text is not the utterance of an exceptional soul, but a genuine cry of the human spirit; not merely a line of sublime poetry, but a voice from distant ages, which still expresses to the world the most fundamental of human needs and becomes the personal and cherished confession of the confidence of every religious man, and of every man in his deeper and more religious hours. Sooner or later every son of man is taught the lesson of his own insufficiency, of his need of a strength he does not find in himself, and of a shelter and support which his fellows cannot give, and no earthly interest or object can yield. The truly religious man is just the man to whom God is no mere name, tradition, or opinion, but his one sure refuge and support—the man who has proved in his own experience that God is here and now to the children what He was long ago to the fathers—no less mighty to protect, uphold, and save, and no less abounding in loving kindness and tender mercy.

II. The Law of Mediation.—We are set within a system of mediation. It is the office of the natural to lead us to the spiritual, and of the temporal to lead us to the eternal. The whole material universe is a system of mediation by which God would draw us to Himself. The creation is but the Divine thought clothing itself in visible form, and it comes forth into form not only because self-manifestation is a necessity of deity, but in order that the children of God may be led by it nearer to Him Who is the source of their being, and the unseen Power of all good.

III. The Refuge from Unsearchable Mystery.—The eternal God is our refuge from the unsearchable mystery of life. In all ages men, bewildered by the vision of great changes, have pronounced the doom of the world because they were not able to see or understand the process of its salvation. Let us not be fearful even if the worst happens. The worst that can happen is often the best for the world. 'From evil good ever evolving,' is perhaps the best description we can give of the Divine method. Human life in its evolution has its end as it had its beginning in God. There can be no evil, therefore, in any of the permanent forces which are shaping human society.

IV. The Refuge of Sufferers and Sinners.—In times of critical strain and trial to ourselves, and changes in our days which make us feel as if there were nothing steadfast, in the hour of disappointment and unforeseen calamity and loss, in the darkness of temptation and sin, sickness and death, let this be our confidence: 'The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms'—'thy refuge' from the world without and the tumults of thine own spirit; 'thy refuge' from all the dark shadows which haunt thee, from sleeplessness, tormenting memories of evil done, and from all invisible terrors; 'thy refuge' when thy thoughts baffle thee, and thy faith fails thee; 'thy refuge' from the loneliness of life and in the hour of thy final passion and conflict.—John Hunter, *The Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxx. 1906, p. 401.

References.—XXXIII. 27.—A. M. Fairbairn, *City of God*, p. 190. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xi. No. 624. A. R. Henderson, *God and Man in the Light of To-day*, p. 263.

THE SEARCH FOR HAPPINESS

'Happy art thou, O Israel.'—Deuteronomy xxxiii. 29.

It has often been noted that we bestow least thought upon our greatest blessings. When a man is healthy he thinks very little of health. Now as it is with health so it is with happiness. The happy man seldom thinks how happy he is. But the heart that is happy is rarely introspective. There is a childlike unconsciousness in its enjoyment. I think then that all the world's talk of happiness is a proof that unhappiness is abroad. Now it is one of the strange contradictions of our faith that the Gospel should have proved itself so unquestionably a powerful factor in creating happiness; and yet the central figure of the Gospel was a Man of Sorrows and acquainted with grief.

I. It is commonly admitted that happiness is only gained as a by-product. If a man makes it the business of his life to extract happiness from any ore he is almost certain to have his toil in vain. It is when we do *not* seek happiness that we find it. Make it your all in all, it vanishes. Forget it, then in the passion for sublimer things it comes. The Gospel of Jesus Christ deals with happiness along these very lines. The Gospel of Jesus never says 'Be happy'; but the Gospel of Jesus says 'Be holy'; aim at the highest, and happiness will come.

II. It has been commonly recognized that human happiness has two great enemies. The one is anxiety, and the other is ennui, or listlessness. The Gospel of

Jesus is marvellously equipped to fight these foes. I cannot conceive how any Christian can be a listless character. With a soul to save and a character to build, with passions to master and virtues to achieve, with men to help, and with a Christ to know, I think there is work enough for the idlest.

III. It has been commonly admitted that happiness is to be found among life's common things. It is not the rare gifts, the possessions of the few; it is not great gifts, great genius, or great power that make the possessors happy. It is health, it is friendship, it is love at home, it is the voices of children, it is sunshine. And now comes in the Gospel of Jesus with its great power to consecrate the commonplace. A Christian, as one has said, is not a man who does extraordinary things; he is a man who does the ordinary things, but he does them in an extraordinary way. He links his commonest joy on to the chain that runs right up to the throne of the Eternal.

References.—XXXIII. 29.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxiii. No. 1359. XXXIII.-XXXIV.—J. Monro-Gibson, *The Mosaic Era*, p. 345. XXXIV. 1-12.—*W.* M. Taylor, *Moses the Lawgiver*, p. 434.

THE DEATH OF MOSES

Deuteronomy xxxiv. 1-12.

'Unto the mountain of Nebo, to the top of Pisgah' (v. 1). There were other Old Testament death-scenes transacted on the mountains. It was on Mount Gilboa that Saul leaned upon his spear and slew himself. And it was on the summit of Hor that Aaron died. It was near the top of Pisgah that Balaam said, 'Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his'. Compare these two. Very near the place where Balaam was Moses died. Yet what a difference! There are many, says Matthew Henry, who desire to die the death of the righteous, but do not endeavour to live the life of the righteous.

According to the word of the Lord (v. 5)—literally, according to the mouth of the Lord; whence grew the popular belief that God kissed Moses and he died.

LIFE'S UNFINISHED TASKS

'But thou shalt not go over thither.'—Deuteronomy xxxiv. 4.

Moses, after so many years of toil and suffering, stands at the border of the Promised Land, but is not allowed to cross that border. One sin kept him out. Very few of us are allowed to finish the work to which we have set our hand, and we are called from our work just when the reward of completed labour is almost within our reach.

I. These words come to the thinker, to the man who seeks an answer to the questions of the reason, to him who would read the riddle of the painful earth. What do our greatest scientists know of matter? What matter is in itself they cannot tell. Or the thinker may ask what is space? What is time? Again we ask, Is there a Divine and Sovereign Will in the universe? Is there some far-off Divine event to which the whole creation moves? These are but a few of the questions thinkers have been discussing for nearly three thousand years. To every thinker, who struggles to reach the region of metaphysical or scientific certitude, there come the words that came of old to Moses.

II. But these words come not only to the man of thought, but also to the man of action—the reformer, the statesman, the philanthropist, the inventor, the artist. Livingstone devoted thirty years of his life to Africa, and travelled thirty thousand African miles, that he might not only bring to that dark Continent the blessings of the Christian religion, but also that he might open it up to legitimate traffic, but he died before his task was done. It is said of Opie, that great painter, that despairing of reaching his ideal of artistic perfection, he one day flung down his brushes and cried, 'I never, never shall be a painter'. Why, we ask, are men snatched away thus prematurely? It is something to have seen the land as Moses did, even from afar. Saint Columba, ere he died, had a vision of the fame and the influence of the little island of Iona. Those who have lived like Moses and Saint Columba died assured that their labours were not in vain.

III. These words also come to the saint. The Christian is one who is always looking forward to an ideal, to complete conformity to the image of Christ, to moral likeness to God in a human being. But that ideal the true Christian knows he has never attained. —T. B. McCorkindale, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxxiv. p. 75.

Illustration.—Max Müller, the great German philologist, while a young student in Paris, conceived the ambition of being enrolled amongst the members of the French Academy. He received that coveted honour and many another besides, for he was made a member of almost every learned society in Europe. When his youthful ambition was realized, he entered in one of his letters the words so full of pathos, coming from the pen of a man whose life was singularly fortunate: 'The dream of the reality was better than the reality of the dream'.

References.—XXXIV. 4.—J. M. Neale, *Readings for the Aged* (3rd Series), p. 9; *Sermons Preached in Sackville College Chapel*, vol. i. p. 160. Bishop Woodford, *Sermons*, p. 27.

A DEATH IN THE DESERT

'So Moses the servant of the Lord died there in the land of Moab, according to the word of the Lord. And He buried him in a valley in the land of Moab. But no man knoweth of his sepulchre unto this day.'—Deuteronomy xxxiv. 5, 6.

The lessons of that death may best be learned if we bring them into contrast with another death and another grave—those of the Leader of the New Covenant.

I. The Penalty of Transgression.—A little sin done by a loftily endowed and inspired man ceases to be small. The smallest sin has in it the seeds of mortal consequences; and the loftiest saint does not escape the law of retribution. Turn to the other death—His death was 'the wages of sin' too, and yet it proclaims 'the gift of God,' which is 'eternal life'.

II. The Withdrawal, by a Hard Fate, of the Worker on the very Eve of the Completion of his Work.—It is the lot of all epoch-making men that they should toil at a task the full issues of which will not be known until their heads are laid low in the dust.

III. The Lesson of the Solitude and Mystery of Death.—Moses in that solitude had the supporting presence of God. There is a drearier desolation, and Jesus Christ proved it when He cried 'My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?'

IV. The Uselessness of a Dead Leader to a Generation with New Conflicts.—Moses did his work and was laid aside. Christ, and Christ alone, can never be antiquated.—A. Maclaren, *The Freeman*, 4 May, 1888.

References.—XXXIV. 5, 6.—J. W. Boulding, *Sermons*, p. 1. J. E. Walker, *The Death of Aaron, and the Hidden Grave of Moses*, No. 12. C. Kingsley, *The Gospel of the Pentateuch*, p. 222.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE BURIAL OF MOSES

'And God buried him in a valley of the land of Moab; but no man knoweth of his sepulchre unto this day.'—Deuteronomy xxxiv. 6.

I. I have often put to myself the question: Suppose this fragment of the Bible had been lost, should we drop any flower from the garland of revelation? I think we should. I think there is one thing revealed here which is quite unique and which is planted here alone; I mean the fact that there is such a thing as burial by God.

II. Some of the deepest distresses of bereavement come from the denial of funeral rites. Where the body is buried in the mine, where the body is engulfed in the sea, where the body is stretched on the battle-field indistinguishable amid the mutilated slain, there is a deeper tone added to the heart's knell. It is a note which Christianity has rather increased than diminished, for the doctrine of resurrection has consecrated the body and made its very dust dear. To such a state of mind what comfort this passage brings! Here is an explorer lost in the mountain snow. His friends know he is dead; and it adds to their pain that no human lips have consecrated his dust. And to them there comes this voice: Ye that weep for the dead, ye that lament the burial rites denied, know ye not that there are graves which are consecrated by God alone! Where the prayer is breathed not, where the Book is opened not, where the wreath is planted not, where the human tear is shed not, there may be a burial of unsullied solemnity—a burial by the hand of your Father. There are consecrated graves where priest never stood, where mourners never knelt, where tear never fell. There are spots hallowed by your Father which to you are barren ground. God's acre is larger than the churchyard. Out on yon bleak hillside He wrapped your friend to rest in a mantle of spotless snow. Is not that bleak hillside God's acre evermore? Is it not as holy to you as if you had brought sweet spices to the tomb? It has no chant but the winds, no book but the solemn silence, no bell but some wild bird's note, no wreath but the wreath of snow; yet there is no more sacred spot in all the diocese of God.—G. Matheson, *Messages of Hope*, p. 50.

'No man knoweth of his sepulchre unto this day.'—Deuteronomy xxxiv. 6.

Prof. Harper thinks that the fact that the grave of Moses is unknown is indicative of truth: 'Though it would be absurd to say that wherever we have the graves of great men pointed out, there we have a mythical story, it is nevertheless true that in the case of every name or character which has come largely under the influence of the myth-making spirit, the grave has been made much of. The Arabian imagination here seems to be typical of the Semitic imagination; and in all Moslem lands the graves of the prophets and saints of the Old Testament are pointed out, even, or perhaps we should say especially, if they be eighty feet long. Though a well-authenti ated tomb of Moses, therefore, would have been a proof of his real existence and life among men, the absence of any is a stronger proof of the sobriety and truth of the narrative.'

References.—XXXIV. 6.—H. J. Buxton, *God's Heroes*, p. 52. Bishop Goodwin, *Cambridge Lent Sermons*, p. 253. XXXIV. 10.—J. H. Jellett, *The Elder Son*, p. 77. XXXIV. 10-12.—W. M. Taylor, *Moses the Lawgiver*, p. 451.

JOSHUA

JOSHUA ENCOURAGED

JOSHUA I. 1-11.

'BE strong and of a good courage' (v. 6). When Luther was summoned before the Diet of Worms, his friends did all that they could to dissuade him from going. They were afraid that his safe-conduct would not be respected. But nothing would keep the brave Reformer back, and what was thought of his courage is shown in the words which a great captain is said to have addressed to him: 'Little monk! little monk! you are venturing to-day on a more hazardous march than I or any other captain ever did. But if your cause is right, and you are sure of it, go on in God's name, and be of good comfort. He will not forsake thee.' And it was in the same spirit that in the presence of his enemies Luther himself uttered the famous words: 'I cannot do otherwise. Here I stand; God help me! Amen.'

'IN a large party at the Grand Master's Palace in Malta, I had observed,' says the poet Coleridge, 'a naval officer of distinguished merit listening to Sir A. Ball, whenever he joined in the conversation, with a mixed expression of awe and affection that gave a more than common interest to so manly a countenance. This officer afterwards told me that he considered himself indebted to Sir Alexander for that which was dearer to him than his life. "When he was Lieutenant Ball," said he, "he was the officer I accompanied in my first boat expedition, being then a midshipman, and only in my fourteenth year. As we were rowing up to the vessel which we were to attack, amid a discharge of musketry, I was overpowered by fear, and seemed on the point of fainting away. Lieutenant Ball, who saw the condition I was in, placed himself close beside me, and still keeping his countenance directed towards the enemy, pressed my hand in the most friendly manner, and said in a low voice, 'Courage, my dear boy; you will recover in a minute or so. I was just the same when I first went out in this way.' Sir," added the officer to me, "it was just as if an angel had put a new soul into me."'

THE CHARACTER OF JOSHUA

DR. W. G. BLAIKIE writes: 'We must earnestly desire . . . to draw aside the veil that covers the eight-and-thirty years and see how he [Joshua] was prepared for his great work. . . . A religious warrior is a peculiar character; a Gustavus Adolphus, an Oliver Cromwell, a Henry Havelock, a General Gordon; Joshua was of the same mould, and we should have liked to know him more intimately; but this is denied to us. He stands out to us simply as one of the military heroes of the faith. In depth, in steadiness, in endurance his faith was not excelled by that of Abraham or of Moses himself. The one conviction that dominated all in him was that he was called by God to his work. If that work was often repulsive, let us not on that account withhold our admiration from the man who never conferred with flesh and blood, and who was never appalled either by danger or difficulty, for he "saw Him who is invisible".'

REFERENCES.—I. 1-11.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—Deuteronomy, Joshua*, etc., p. 87. I. 2.—J. F. Cowan, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxxii. 1907, p. 355. I. 2, 3.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxxv. No. 2086.

THE MESSAGE OF THE BOOK OF JOSHUA

'Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that have I given unto you.'—JOSHUA I. 3.

IN the book of Joshua we have three sections; the first containing the story of the *conquest of the land;* the second containing the story of the *distribution of the land;* while the third gives us an account of the *great leader's farewell* to his beloved people.

I. *The story of the conquest* is contained in the first twelve chapters.

1. In the story of the conquest there are, I think, three keynotes; the first of these is *Prepare.* The account of the preparation is given in the opening chapters, and given in such a way as to teach us the solemn lesson that God's soldiers must be right with God before they can fight God's battles.

2. The second is *Pass over.* This is the note specially sounded at Jordan, when the people drew their swords and flung away their scabbards, and by crossing the river committed themselves in face of gigantic odds to victory or death. It teaches us that ere God's soldiers are fit to fight there must be in their lives a definite decisive consecration of themselves to the Lord.

3. And the third is *Possess;* and this note we have sounded throughout that brilliant series of campaigns which began with the fall of Jericho, and, proceeding from the South to the North, ceased not until the whole of the land was subdued.

To the story of the conquest of the land follows:—

II. *The story of the distribution of the land.* This is the second section of the book, and extends from chapter XIII. to chapter XXI. It has been aptly compared to the *Domesday Book* of the Norman conquerors of England.

At the twenty-third chapter begins:—

III. *The story of the leader's farewell.* This section contains two addresses, and is one of the most touching and impressive parts of the whole book. While the first address was delivered specially to the heads of the people—the leaders, the judges, and

the officers—the second address was delivered specially to the people themselves.

From this book we learn :—

(*a*) *God gives, but we must take possession.*

As it was with Israel so it is with us. As God gave Canaan to Israel, so He gave Jesus Christ to us. And as the gift of Canaan meant the gift of all that Canaan contained, so the gift of Jesus Christ means the gift of all that He is, and of all that He has. But our enjoyment of all this is conditioned by the claim of our faith. Christ is to us actually what we trust Him to be.

(*b*) *In taking possession of what God has given us our strength is of God.* This is the lesson taught by what is in some respects the most singular section of the whole book, the section containing the story of the captain of the Lord's host. Joshua knew that victory lay before him, but he thought that it lay with him to compass this victory. But on the plains of Jericho he learned that as it was *God's grace* which had given them Canaan, so it was *God's power* which was to enable them to take possession. For us, in our strength, to live up to our privileges is as impossible as to win the privileges up to which we long to live.

(*c*) *There is always power enough at our disposal for taking possession of what God has given to us.* When we have honestly set out to subdue the land we shall see the vision of the Captain of the Lord's host. Every place on which the sole of our feet treads becomes ours.—G. H. C. Macgregor, *Messages of the Old Testament*, p. 73.

References.—I. 5.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxi. No. 1214. H. J. Wilmot-Buxton, *God's Heroes*, p. 71; see also *Sunday Sermons for Daily Life*, p. 404. I. 5, 6.—Edward King, *Outlines of Sermons on the Old Testament*, p. 55. J. Matthews, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxxix. p. 300. I. 6.—G. Jackson, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxviii. 1905, p. 75. I. 6, 7, 9, 18.—T. Parr, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lviii. 1900, p. 74. I. 7.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xiv. No. 796. H. Montagu Butler, *Harrow School Sermons*, p. 73. I. 7, 8.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—Deuteronomy, Joshua*, etc., p. 91. I. 8.—J. Stalker, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lvi. 1899, p. 43. I. 9.—A. H. Shaw, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lvi. 1899, p. 56. A. Jessopp, *Norwich School Sermons*, p. 97. I. 10, 11.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxxiv. No. 2039. II. J. McNeill, *Regent Square Pulpit*, vol. iii. p. 361. II. 21.—H. J. Wilmot-Buxton, *Common Life Religion*, p. 205.

'Be strong and of a good courage.'—Joshua I. 6; Psalms xxvii. 14; Psalms xxxi. 24; 2 Chronicles xxxii. 7.

Courage, my soul! now learn to wield
The weight of thine immortal shield;
Close on thy head thy helmet bright;
Balance thy sword against the fight;
See where an army, strong as fair,
With silken banners spreads the air!
Now, if thou be'st that thing Divine,
In this day's combat let it shine,
And show that Nature wants an art
To conquer one resolvèd heart.—Marvell.

'Jordan divided.'—Joshua III.

'In the mosaics of the earliest churches of Rome and Ravenna,' says Dean Stanley, 'before Christian and pagan art were yet divided, the Jordan appears as a river-god pouring his streams out of his urn. The first Christian Emperor had always hoped to receive his long-deferred baptism in the Jordan up to the moment when the hand of death struck him at Nicomedia. . . . Protestants, as well as Greeks and Latins, have delighted to carry off its waters for the same sacred purpose to the remotest regions of the West.'

THE FUTURE ALL UNKNOWN

(*For the New Year*)

'Ye have not passed this way heretofore.'—Joshua III. 4.

What a thought for the New Year! We have here a great statement, and this statement is given as a reason for a certain kind of action. The circumstances were these: The Israelites had spent forty long, wearisome years away from the Promised Land to which God had said He would bring them, and now they found themselves on the very threshold of the land of promise. They have to go into that land of promise by a strange, mysterious, fearful way. They have to pass through the very bed of the River Jordan, and God, Who has brought them thus far, is to pile up the waters on either side of them while they go through on dry ground. If you will picture them about to cross the river you will realize how fully this statement is true—that they had never passed that way before. It was totally new, absolutely strange. Before they reached the Promised Land they had many difficulties to face. They had victories to win and foes to conquer, and had they not the initial difficulty of crossing that great dividing river which separated them from that great, mysterious land of promise beyond?

I. There is a Strange Parallel between the Position of the Israelites and that of Ourselves To-day.—Have we not, by God's grace, been brought to the threshold of another year? A new year, an unknown year, an untrodden path. And in this new year that lies before you and me we must serve God's great purpose. There is fresh land to occupy; there are victories, through God's strength, to win; there are foes; there are sins which, by God's grace, we are meant to conquer. 'Ye have not passed this way heretofore,' and in entering upon this new year we are treading on new ground, consecrated ground, which our foot has never yet defiled.

II. Guidance Vouchsafed.—What was the plan arranged for their guidance? We read it in the third verse. 'When ye see the ark of the covenant of the Lord your God and the priests the Levites bearing it, then ye shall remove from your place and go after it.' What a comforting thing for these Israelites that the ark of God was to lead them! All through their strange difficulties they had before them that old ark that they had followed all the time and which they loved, which kept them in touch, as it were, with God. What a difference it must have made!

III. Let us See that the Ark of God's Presence Goes Before Us—takes us into our difficulties and

out of our difficulties, so that through the presence of God we may conquer our sins and gain from Him our strength in this life. If this be so, we need not fear; we can face the year with confidence. Let us see that Jesus still leads on till our rest be won. We need to know the way in which we must go. There will be many times of difficulty in this new year. We shall sometimes want to know what words to use and what position to take up in the various incidents of our daily lives; what course of action we ought to follow. There are bound to be difficulties in the way, and the only way to fight them with anything like hope, with anything like assurance, is that God be asked to help us, that God be asked to make His way clear before our face. 'O God, set watch on my mouth, keep the door of my lips.' Let us trust in Christ to lead us in the right way.

IV. The Ark of God never Led them Wrong.—And so it will be if Jesus leads us on, and we are following Him and asking Him to teach us what to say and what to do, He will never lead us wrong.

REFERENCES.—III. 4.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xviii. No. 1057. A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—Deuteronomy, Joshua*, etc., p. 99. C. S. Robinson, *Sermons on Neglected Texts*, p. 224. W. M. Taylor, *Outlines of Sermons on the Old Testament*, p. 56. W. R. Inge, *All Saints' Sermons*, 1905-7, p. 49. J. M. Neale, *Sermons Preached in Sackville College Chapel*, vol. iv. p. 34. F. B. Cowl, *Straight Tracks*, p. 41. J. Laidlaw, *Studies in the Parables*, p. 217. J. Parker, *Ark of God*, p. 26. III. 5.—E. R. Conder, *Outlines of Sermons on the Old Testament*, p. 57. III. 5-17.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—Deuteronomy, Joshua*, etc., p. 107. III. 11.—A. G. Mortimer, *The Church's Lessons for the Christian Year*, part iii. p. 49. III. 15, 17.—R. J. Campbell, *Sermons Addressed to Individuals*, p. 89. IV. 6.—P. T. Forsyth, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lix. 1901, p. 415. IV. 7.—W. H. Hutchings, *Sermon-Sketches*, p. 162. IV. 9.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons for Some Feast Days in the Christian Year*, p. 183. IV. 10-24.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—Deuteronomy, Joshua*, etc., p. 115.

THE CEASING OF THE MANNA

'The manna ceased on the morrow after they had eaten of the old corn of the land.'—JOSHUA v. 12.

THERE was a deep doctrine in the giving of the manna. There was a doctrine not less deep in its withdrawal.

I. The ceasing of the manna should teach us that there is inevitable loss in all our gains. It was a great thing for Israel to gain the plains of Jericho, but when they had done so, they lost the bread of angels.

We talk sometimes about the gains of our losses, and it is true that we often gain by what we lose. But remember that if we gain by what we lose, it is also true that we lose by what we gain. And he alone is wise and brave and cheerful who recognizes that inevitable law, and presses forward, undaunted, to the best with the courage to forget what is behind. We gain the promised land and lose the manna. We gain experience and lose the morning dew.

II. The ceasing of the manna teaches us to be very cautious in asserting that anything is indispensable. If there was one thing graven upon the heart of Israel it was that without the manna they could not live at all. They had to learn their lesson from that failure that God fulfils Himself in many ways. The manna ceased, but the harvesting began.

III. The ceasing of the manna gave to Israel new views of the presence and providence of God. It taught them to see God in common things, and to realize His presence in the fields. The manna ceased—they were cast back on nature to find in nature the same care of God. And so they learned, what is so hard to learn, that providence had a wider reach than once they dreamed, and that the common field may be as full of heaven as the manna which is the bread of angels.

It is not very hard for any man to feel that God is near in the great hours. When there is nothing startling or arresting, what do you make of the providence of God? It is a great thing to see God in the miracle. It is a greater to see Him in the usual.

IV. There is one other lesson which I love to link with the ceasing of the manna. It is how God, as we advance in life, brings us back to the food of long ago. That was the path by which God led His people. He brought them back to the old, and it was new. That is the path by which God leads us all if we are in earnest to know and do His will.—G. H. MORRISON, *The Wings of the Morning*, p. 44.

REFERENCES.—V. 12.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons on the Blessed Sacrament*, p. 143. W. Boyd Carpenter, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lii. 1897, p. 113.

THE ARMOUR OF GOD

'And it came to pass, when Joshua was by Jericho, that he lifted up his eyes and looked, and, behold, there stood a man over against him with his sword drawn in his hand.'—JOSHUA v. 13.

I. THIS ancient book of Joshua, while its simple purpose is to set forth the providence of God in one great episode of a nation's history, is yet by common consent of the succeed ng generations of men looked on, not merely as an historical record of the conquest of Canaan, but as a continual allegory of Christian life. Such was the conception of life, based on individual and general experience, in the minds of those who, when the sign of Christ's cross was marked on our brow in baptism, pledged us thereby to a loyal soldiership in an unceasing warfare with evil. Such is the conception thrust upon us by the facts of life, which, as thought deepens and knowledge widens, confronts every son of God. Over against us there stands a man with his sword in his hand, unsheathed, drawn for the using, for offence, for action, for achievement. Over against us there lies a Jordan to be crossed, a Jericho to be assaulted, a Promised Land to be won, only in many an arduous campaign—our weapon the sword of the Spirit, our strength the strength of Him Who has girt that sword upon us, Whose abiding Presence in our life is our sole promise and hope of successful soldiership.

Gathering the whole teaching together, who can deny the undoubted call to leave the wilderness of

wandering, unpurposeful life, of cold-hearted, listless stagnation, and cross the river of resolve, to the place of effort and the country of combat?

II. A man with a drawn sword—a weapon of offence for and with others. True, we need, and have given us, armour of defence as well; a shield of faith to guard us from our own fears and doubts and cares and sorrows, from the evil we see in nature and in man; a helmet of salvation — the hope which strengthens the weak-hearted, which guards the place where thought abides, and where plans of battle and of work are formed; a breastplate to protect the heart, where lie the issues of life, the treasures of pure passion, the loves, the sorrows—round these we are to bind the armour of righteous habit; and for the loins, where lies the strength of man, woven in and out in knitted muscle and sinew, there is the safeguard of truth—the inevitable necessity of sincerity.

III. These for defence. But our motto is not defence, but defiance; and for this there is the sword of the Spirit—the Word, the thought of God, all the Divine ideas expressed through the words and lives of men. Let it be drawn, and bright and clean, that so we may wage a continuing and a conquering warfare with evil around and within. Not defence alone, but defiance.

References.—V. 13-14.—W. H. Simcox, *The Cessation of Prophecy*, p. 89. V. 13-15.— Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xiv. No. 795. A. F. Winnington Ingram, *Under the Dome*, p. 254. C. Stanford, *Symbols of Christ*, p. 89. S. A. Tipple, *Sunday Mornings at Norwood*, p. 215. V. 14.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—Deuteronomy, Joshua*, etc., p. 123. VI.—J. McNeill, *Regent Square Pulpit*, vol. ii. p. 161. VI. 2, 3.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xi. No. 629. VI. 10, 11. —A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—Deuteronomy, Joshua*, etc., p. 132. VI. 17.—W. H. Hutchings, *Sermon-Sketches* (2nd Series), p. 183. VI. 10.—C. Leach, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xl. 1891, p. 262. VI. 25.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—Deuteronomy, Joshua*, etc., p. 140. VII. 1-12.—*Ibid.*, p. 145. VII. 3.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxiii. No. 1358. VII. 19, 20.—J. T. Bramston, *Sermons to Boys*, p. 40. VII. 20.—J. Vaughan, *Sermons Preached in Christ Church, Brighton* (7th Series), p. 94. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. iii. No. 113.

The valley of Shechem.—Joshua viii.

By general consent the valley of Shechem holds the distinction of being one of the most beautiful in the country. 'Its western side,' says Stanley, 'is bounded by the abutments of two mountain ranges, running from west to east. These ranges are Gerizim and Ebal; and up the opening between them, not seen from the plain, lies the modern town of Nablous [Neapolis = Shechem]. . . . A valley green with grass, grey with olives, gardens sloping down on each side, fresh springs running down in all directions; at the end a white town embosomed in all this verdure, lodged between the two high mountains which extend on each side of the valley—that on the south Gerizim, that on the north Ebal; this is the aspect of Nablous, the most beautiful, perhaps it might be said the only very beautiful, spot in Central Palestine.'

References.—VIII. 1.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxiii. No. 1358. VIII. 30-34.—K. Moody-Stuart, *Light from the Holy Hills*, p. 75.

'Sun, stand thou still upon Gibeon,' etc.—Joshua x.

Dr. W. G. Blaikie remarks that some commentators look on these words as akin to the prayer of Agamemnon (Iliad II, 412 sq.) that the sun must not go down till he had sacked Troy. He goes on: 'But whatever allowance we may make for poetical licence of speech, it is hardly possible not to perceive that the words as they stand imply a miracle of extraordinary sublimity; nor do we see any sufficient ground for resisting the common belief that in whatsoever way it was effected, there was a supernatural extension of the period of light to allow Joshua to finish his work.

References.—X. 6.—R. E. Hutton, *The Crown of Christ*, vol. i. p. 39. X. 12.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—Deuteronomy, Joshua*, etc., p. 153. W. Walsham How, *Plain Preaching for a Year*, vol. i. p. 339. X. 12, 13.—E. C. S. Gibson, *Messages from the Old Testament*, p. 55. X. 12-14.—W. Ewen, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xli. 1892, p. 294. X. 22-26.—R. E. Hutton, *The Crown of Christ*, vol. i. p. 239. XI. 18.—C. Jerdan, *Pastures of Tender Grass*, p. 17. XI. 23.—W. Alexander, *The Conquest of the Earth, Sermons*, 1872-73.

VICTORIES IN OLD AGE

'And the Lord said unto him, Thou art old . . . and there remaineth yet very much land to be possessed.'—Joshua xiii. 1.

God often speaks very plainly. Few care to be told to their face that they are old. But the Almighty recognizes these awkward facts and bids men recognize them. He is sometimes almost blunt, as He was in addressing Joshua. His is the directness of loving faithfulness. Matthew Henry says: 'It is good for those who are old . . . to be put in remembrance of their being so'. And it was for Joshua's highest good that God now puts him in memory of this unwelcome fact.

The Bible renders us the great service of introducing us to numerous aged or ageing people. They are not the least interesting figures of its fascinating and often pathetic gallery. Abraham, Sarah, David, Zacharias, and Elizabeth, have honoured place among the venerable saints of Scripture. It is to be observed that old age is associated in the Bible, I think invariably, with the saints. The tragedy of godless old age is not alluded to. Only the old age which is a crown of glory, because found in the way of righteousness, is honoured in the sacred treasury of honour.

I. Achievement.—Jehovah cheers His aged servant by a great and inspiring implication. It lurks delightfully in that 'yet'. Thank God for that delectable adverb. 'Yet' carries the idea of 'in addition,' and addition implies something already in existence. 'There remaineth yet very much land to be possessed.' Much land had already been possessed. Great victories had been won. The territory of the enemy had been heroically acquired. Joshua had not lived in vain. His greyed head had won its laurels and won them worthily and well. There is a gospel of sweet reminiscence and kindly hope in that gracious 'yet'.

The Lord, the great Encourager, delights to remind his old warriors of the battles they have by His grace fought and won. He gives them light at evening time in many ways, and not least by recalling to them the 'land' they have already 'possessed'. Divinely inspired memories are among the treasures of old age.

1. When we are old we, in many cases, have the recollection of *temporal* achievement.

2. It is a great thing to come to age and know that we have achieved *doctrinally*. Blessed are they who have possessed themselves of 'much' of this Emmanuel's Land!

3. *Experimentally* some of God's children achieve grandly ere they are old. They become experts in believing prayer. They abound in thanksgiving. They delight themselves in the Law of the Lord. They hate every evil way. They have fellowship with all such as love Jesus Christ in sincerity. Happy souls that in old age can give glory to God because they have possessed themselves of 'much land' in the Canaan of Christian experience!

4. It appertains to some to recognize in their old age that they have achieved *altruistically*.

II. Omission.—When God said to Joshua, 'Thou art old . . . and there remaineth yet very much land to be possessed,' there was kindly reproof in the faithful word. If there had been achievement, there had been omission. 'There remaineth yet'—much had been left undone. He and his braves had possessed themselves grandly, but imperfectly. Jerusalem, Gezer, Bethshean, were but instances of the 'very much' that was still unaccomplished. Those forts were still untaken.

What a parable of life! Age reveals, and increasingly reveals, our omissions. Oh, the Jerusalems, Gezers, Bethsheans, of our soldiership! Why did we not take those proud fortresses, when we had boundless vigour? 'There remaineth yet very much land to be possessed.'

III. Opportunity.—Even though Joshua was old, he had spacious opportunity before him. 'Very much land remained' 'to be possessed'. He had not the opportunity of earlier days, but it was an opportunity relatively very great. The 'very much' was the measure of his possibilities.

Age always has its opportunity, greater or lesser. What land may not veteran victors possess! Do not regard old age as defeat; make it a triumph. God can strengthen Joshua to possess 'very much land,' albeit he be 'old'. Bishop Creighton said, 'We can scarcely recognize as one of the problems of life how to grow old happily'. But it is one of life's hardest and yet most hopeful problems.

IV. Endeavour.—'The Lord said unto him, Thou art old . . . and there remaineth yet very much land to be possessed.' Then Joshua must make immediate endeavour. 'You are not dangerously ill,' said a physician to a patient; 'but you are *dangerously old*.' Ah, that is the spiritual peril of some. At once such must bestir themselves. There is no time to be lost if the 'very much land' is not to be lost. Arise, my friend, and call earnestly upon thy God and go forth to the battle and to the victory! ''Tis time to live if I grow old' was a favourite exclamation of John Wesley in his closing years. And it is well for all old people to soliloquize thus if they would be victors whilst the shadows lengthen.

Very trustful such may well be as they war their good warfare. Philip Henry declared, 'Christ is a Master that does not cast off His old servants'. No! He never does. And He will not cast you off in the time of old age! The comforter shall still be with you. The Risen Lord shall empower you. You shall possess the land.—DINSDALE T. YOUNG, *The Gospel of the Left Hand*, p. 43.

REFERENCES.—XIII. 1.—C. Vince, *The Unchanging Saviour*, p. 120. John McNeill, *Regent Square Pulpit*, vol. iii. p. 393. XIII. 1-6.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—Deuteronomy, Joshua*, etc., p. 158. XIV. 6.—*Ibid.* p. 160. D. T. Young, *Neglected People of the Bible*, p. 59.

Joshua and Caleb.—JOSHUA XIV. 6-15.

'IT is beautiful,' says Dr. Blaikie, 'to see that there was no rivalry between them. Not only did Caleb interpose no remonstrance when Joshua was called to succeed Moses, but he seems all through the wars to have yielded to him the most loyal and hearty submission. God had set His seal on Joshua, and Caleb was too magnanimous to allow any poor ambition of his, if he had any, to come in the way of the Divine will and the public good.' Dr. Blaikie remarks also that there is something singularly touching in Caleb's asking as a favour what was really a most hazardous but important service to the nation. The driving out of the Anakim was a formidable duty, and the task might have seemed more suitable for one who had the strength and enthusiasm of youth on his side. But Caleb, though eighty-five, was yet young.

REFERENCES.—XIV. 8.—H. G. Edge, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxxiv. 1908, p. 183. XIV. 8 and 12.—J. T. Forbes, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxxiii. 1908, p. 186. XIV. 12.—K. Moody-Stuart, *Light from the Holy Hills*, p. 68. XVII. 14.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxxii. No. 1882. XVII. 18.—*Ibid.* vol. xxxiv. No. 2049. C. Herbert, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxiv. 1903, p. 378. XX. 1-5.—Dr. Barnardo, *Penny Pulpit*, vol. xiv. No. 816, p. 209. XX. 1-9.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—Deuteronomy, Joshua*, etc., p. 168. XXI. 43-45; XXII. 1-9.—*Ibid.* p. 175. XXII. 10.—T. Bowman Stephenson, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xl. 1891, p. 305. XXIII. 1.—J. H. Newman, *Sermons Bearing on Subjects of the Day*, p. 170. XXIII. 8.—F. E. Paget, *Sermons for Special Occasions*, p. 115. XXIV. 4.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxix. No. 1718. XXIV. 10.—B. J. Snell, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. li. 1899, p. 153.

THE ETERNAL CHOICE

'Choose you this day whom ye will serve.'—JOSHUA XXIV. 15.

JOSHUA here calls Israel to decide between Jehovah's service and the service of other gods, such as their fathers served in Mesopotamia, or such as the neighbouring Amorites served. They were no longer to give a half-hearted service, but to choose whom they would serve wholly. The call did not imply neutral-

ity, or that they were not bound to serve Jehovah; but it was meant to arouse the indifferent, and those who thought they could combine Jehovah's service with that of other gods. A similar call comes to men in the Gospel.

I. God's Call to Us.—God demands real and actual service; not the intention, profession, or appearance, but the thing itself. He is entitled to service as our Creator, Benefactor, Redeemer. In a sense we are all servants. There is no escape from service. We serve that to which our whole heart is given. God's call is to serve Him.

II. The Choice.—It is for ourselves to choose whether our service shall be the holy and blessed one of Jehovah or that of other gods. That we may choose is implied in the call to choose; while it is true that man cannot choose God's service without being made willing by God's grace. God expects us to choose; offers help to our choosing; counts us responsible for our choice. In point of fact we must choose, and do actually choose, one service or another. No neutrality is possible, and God will not have a constrained service.

III. The Urgency of the Call.—The call is imperative for 'to-day'. The decision is to be immediate; not certainly rash and reckless, without due calculation of the cost, yet certainly prompt on a sufficient view of what the service involves. God's urgency is gracious; He knows the danger of delay and the evil of indecision, and how men let slip, through carelessness and procrastination, their most precious opportunities.

(*a*) *We may choose now.* There is no need to postpone the decision from ignorance of the objects of choice, from their number, from their distance, or from the difficulty of the act of choosing. The information for guiding the choice is ample and varied, and yet capable of being condensed into simple and exhaustive terms. The objects of choice are practically two, Jehovah or other gods; two services that cannot be mistaken for each other, and that cannot be combined. There is no embarrassing multiplicity or distracting similarity.

(*b*) *We shall find the choice more difficult the longer it is delayed.* Delay in doing a thing that is felt to be disagreeable always increases the repugnance, enfeebles the resolution, paralyses the will. Some things need to be done at once if they are to be done at all. Sinful habits, making the choice of God's service seem painful, grow in power. Delayed repentance is difficult repentance.

(*c*) *The time for choosing is limited.* We cannot reckon on a longer or another time than *this day.* Divine patience even has its limits. The day of grace is not running on for ever, and indecision may provoke its abrupt termination.

Therefore choose this day. Indecision is contemptible and dangerous. You are as unsafe in indecision as if you had decided boldly not to serve the Lord.

References.—XXIV. 15.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxi. No. 1229. A. H. Bradford, *Sermons*, vol. xliv. 1903, p. 104. A. Murray, *The Children for Christ*, p. 124. Henry Alford, *Quebec Chapel Sermons*, vol. iii. pp. 423, 439, 456. XXIV. 19.—J. Ker, *Sermons*, p. 56. XXIV. 19-28.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—Deuteronomy, Joshua*, etc., p. 183. XXIV. 25.—W. M. Punshon, *The Covenant of Joshua*, p. 913; see also *Outlines of Sermons on the Old Testament*, p. 59.

LISTENING STONES

'This stone . . . hath heard.'—Joshua xxiv. 27.

And Joshua wrote these words in the book of the law of God, and took a great stone—if not great in size, yet in its purpose and symbolism—'and set it up there under an oak'—well matched—'that was by the sanctuary of the Lord'; the sanctuary is an oak, and the oak is a sanctuary. 'And Joshua said unto all the people, Behold, this stone shall be a witness unto us'—or a witness against us, it may be both—'for it hath heard all the words of the Lord which He spake unto us.' Curious, exciting, incredible, certain. 'It shall be therefore a witness unto you, lest ye deny your God,' lest you shake off the memory of your own prayers, lest you break your own covenants, ye men of bad faith, for your history is against you. We want to apply this, not only on the Divine side, but on the human side. Sometimes poetry is the only reality. How often have we quoted the word, that fiction is the greater fact. The kingdom of heaven is represented in parables, and the parables mean that we do not half-understand yet what the kingdom of God is.

I. Christ had a good deal to say about stones. Said He once to people who were boasting of themselves and boasting of their ancestry, 'God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham'. Jesus once said to the devil, to the black face of the universe when that face tempted the Christ to make bread out of stones, 'Man shall not live by bread alone'—there is no bread of your kind in eternity. God made man come up from eternity, and you could live, if God so willed it, on a word, a syllable, a tone. On another occasion the people said, 'Hearest Thou not this crying and tumult? can this be permitted?' He said, If these little children and young folks were to hold their peace, the very stones would cry out, they are listening, and they will not permit too much neglect of Christ. The prayerless house may one day rush down, because the stones will stand no longer in protection of atheism so blank and horrible.

II. Our very footprints may preach. Some poor forlorn and shipwrecked brother coming and seeing them on the wet sand, they may preach to him a gospel of hope and renewed courage and spiritual blessing. We cannot tell what we are doing, no man can follow the range of his own influence. When did any farmer ever foresee a harvest that would be worth the sickle? 'There will be no corn this year: such and such was the condition of affairs in March, such and such were the conditions climatic in April, that there will be no harvest this year: there is no prospect of our having any need to wield the scythe or the sickle; there is a poor look-out this year.' The

stones heard it, and the soil registered it, and lo, August was aflame with the gifts of God. The stars were listening to what we said, good or bad. They are a long way off, they are quite near at hand. Why, the sun is within whisper-reach, if we knew things really as they are: and all the stars coming out, trooping forth, to bear witness for us or against us to God. And when we begin to say, 'If we had heard the Gospel we would have believed it,' the stones will say, You did hear it, you know you heard it. The stones are full of the words that God spake in your hearing. The stone caught it, the sermon you forgot it treasures in its stony heart.

III. There were other listeners. Your little child heard when you thought it was not listening. When is a child not listening? The little child there, four to five years of age, heard that oath you spoke under your breath, and that oath may follow the dear little pilgrim all the days of its life; it may not be able to explain why, but the oath that fell from your livid lips struck that little creature, and ever after it will hear something, and memory may help the little one to remember what was spoken that day when you thought nobody heard you curse your wife, or husband, or fortune, or life.

IV. God hears, God listens, Christ hears, Christ hears everything, nothing can escape the attention of the Divine Hearer; the whole Trinity is a listening Trinity! And the stones listen, and the things we call inferior animals have wonderful uses. Let us take care! The stone heard the words of the Lord, and the stone also heard our replies. Be no longer fools and wasters of time, but heed the living God, and let no opportunity pass.—Joseph Parker, *City Temple Pulpit*, vol. v. p. 262.

References.—XXIV. 27.—Henry Alford, *Quebec Chapel Sermons*, vol. v. p. 63. Phillips Brooks, *The Mystery of Iniquity*, p. 260. XXIV. 29.—H. J. Wilmot-Buxton, *God's Heroes*, p. 61.

JUDGES

JUDGES—DELIVERANCES

The book of Judges historically covers the period from the conquest of the land and the death of Joshua to the judgeship of Samuel and the introduction of the monarchy. The chronological history of the book ends with chapter xvi., which connects naturally with the first book of Samuel. That history properly begins in chapter iii. The book has three divisions: Conditions after Joshua (i.-iii. 6); the Period of the Judges (iii. 7-xvi.); Appendix (xvii.-xxi.).

I. Conditions after Joshua.—The first act of the people after the death of Joshua was that of seeking to know the will of God as to who should commence the final work of conquest. Judah, the kingly tribe, was appointed. The story is told of the coming of the messenger from Gilgal. A brief retrospect follows of the condition of affairs under Joshua, and then a synopsis of the history which is to be set out in greater detail.

II. The Period of the Judges.—This division of the book contains the story of seven consecutive failures, punishments and deliverances and details the history of Israel under the seven judges. Here ends the history of the book. It is taken up again in the first book of Samuel. The remaining chapters and the book of Ruth have their chronological place in the period already dealt with.

III. Appendix.—The events here chronicled may have taken place closely following the death of Joshua. They give us a picture of the internal condition of the people, and it is most probable that they were added with that as the intention of the historian.—G. Campbell Morgan, *The Analysed Bible*, p. 115.

'Who shall go up for us against the Canaanites first?'—Judges i. 1.

'Clarkson, in so far as that question regarded *time*, was the inaugurator of the great conflict' against the slave-trade, as De Quincey observes. 'That was his just claim. He broke the ground, and formed the earliest camp, in that field; and to men that should succeed, he left no possibility of ranking higher than his followers or imitators.'

The exploit in which no one will consent to go first remains unachieved. You wait until there are persons enough agreeing with you to form an effective party. And how many members constitute the innovating band an effective force? . . . No man can ever know whether his neighbours are ready for change or not. He has all the following certainties at least: That he himself is ready for the change; that he believes it would be a good and beneficent one; that unless some one begins the work of preparation, assuredly there will be no consummation; and that if he declines to take part in the matter, there can be no reason why every one else in turn should not decline in like manner, and so the work remain for ever unperformed.—John Morley.

We are afraid of responsibility, afraid of what people will say of us, afraid of being alone in doing right; in short, the courage which is allied to no passion—Christian courage, as it may be called—is in all ages and among all people one of the rarest possessions.—Sir Arthur Helps.

The initiation of all wise or noble things comes, and must always come, from individuals—generally at first from some one individual. The honour and glory of the average man is that he is capable of following that initiation; that he can respond internally to wise and noble things.—J. S. Mill, *Liberty*.

SIMPLICITY IN PRAYER

'The children of Israel asked the Lord.'—Judges i. 1.

I. 'The children of Israel asked the Lord,' whispered to Him, hailed Him, arrested His condescending attention by some sign of necessity. They whispered to the Lord, they told Him plainly the condition in which they were placed, and brought the whole need under His attention; they wanted leadership and captaincy and guidance, and they said, Who shall do this? If any man lack wisdom, let him ask. That is the old word, 'ask,' short but deep, easy to pronounce, impossible to measure. We have changed all that; we now are in danger of approaching the Lord as if He were an infinite Shah, and must needs be approached with long words and logical sequence.

II. 'The children of Israel asked the Lord.' That was the plain way, that was the simple way, that is the intensely rational way. We have got rid of some men by putting them into an atmosphere which is fatal to healthy thinking and to resonant and emphatic speaking. We have given them coronets that they may hold their tongues; we may have promoted them that we may get rid of them. It may be so in its spiritual significance with the Lord; we have polysyllabled Him and addressed Him in long formal speeches; we have lost the old way of asking Him, talking to Him, breathing upon Him, kissing His hand, and whispering to Him just what we want. Our hope, and the hope of the whole Church, is in simplicity. Such was the method of the text, such the method of Jesus Christ, and of Paul and of James and of all the great historic suppliants on whose girdle has hung the key of the upper sanctuary.

III. Asking God, talking to God, communing with God, elevates the mind.

Talking to God, asking God, laying the whole case before God, sometimes laying it before Him without words, sometimes simply looking into His face, sometimes letting our throbbing, aching misery look into the infinite peace of the Divine tranquillity, will lift a man to a new status and clothe him with a new influence and enrich him with an abiding benediction. Let your misery seek the face of the King.

IV. 'The children of Israel asked the Lord.' They did not dictate to Him. Prayer is not dictation; prayer is not always even suggestion, and when prayer is suggestion it is offered with halting breath and with a most reverent faith, lest a suggestion should be not only a sophism but an expression of selfishness. God does permit us to say what we would like; He is so condescendingly gentle that He sometimes asks us what we would like to have, and when we have told Him He has oftentimes said, No.

V. Observe, the people in question were 'the children of Israel'. Character is implied; character is not only implied, it is recognized and held up as a lesson. They belong to a praying host, to a covenanted ancestry, they were involved in the baptism of an oath. Do not imagine that a man can leap out of atheism and begin to pray for some selfish purpose, and have his answer on the spot. Character determines prayer; the simple heart suggests the right petition; the sincere spirit, praying at the Cross and in the name of Christ, can alone pray with lasting and ennobling effect.—Joseph Parker, *City Temple Pulpit*, vol. I p. 169.

'And Judah said unto Simeon his brother, Come up with me . . . and I likewise will go with thee.'—Judges I. 3.

The spring of virtuous action is the social instinct, which is set to work by the practice of comradeship. The union of men in a common effort for a common object—*bandwork*, if I may venture to translate co-operation into English—this is and always has been the true school of character.—Prof. W. K. Clifford.

A man, be the Heavens ever praised, is sufficient for himself; yet were ten men, united in Love, capable of being and of doing what ten thousand singly would fail in.—Carlyle.

'So Simeon went with him.'—Judges I. 3.

Boston, in his *Memoirs*, describes the friendship between himself and a Mr. Wilson as 'having arrived at an uncommon height and strictness. Whatever odds there was in some respects betwixt him and me, there was still a certain cast of temper by which I found him to be my other self. He was extremely modest, but once touched with the weight of a matter, very forward and keen, fearing the face of no man: on the other hand I was slow and timorous. In the which mixture, whereby he served as a spur to me, and I as a bridle to him, I have often admired the wise conduct of Providence that matched us together.'

Reference.—I. 6, 7.—G. A. Sowter, *From Heart to Heart*, p. 20.

'Threescore and ten kings, having their thumbs and their great toes cut off, gathered their meat under my table.'—Judges I. 7.

Besides these evils, another springing out of the long-continued wars betwixt the French and English, added no small misery to this distracted kingdom. Numerous bodies of soldiers, collected into bands, under officers chosen by themselves, from among the bravest and most successful adventurers, had been formed in various parts of France out of the refuse of all other countries. These hireling combatants sold their swords for a time to the best bidder; and, when such service was not to be had, they made war upon their own account, seizing castles and towers, which they used as the places of their retreat—making prisoners and ransoming them—exacting tribute from the open villages, and the country around them,—and acquiring, by every species of rapine, the appropriate epithets of *Tondeurs* and *Écorcheurs*, that is, *Clippers* and *Flayers*.—Scott, *Quentin Durward* (chap. I.).

'As I have done, so God hath requited me. And they brought him to Jerusalem, and there he died.'—Judges I. 7.

In *The French Revolution* Carlyle describes how Foulon as 'a man grown grey in treachery, in griping, projecting, intriguing and iniquity: who once when it was objected, to some finance-scheme of his, "What will the people do?"—made answer, in the fire of discussion, "the people may eat grass": hasty words, which fly abroad irrevocable—and will send back tidings.' When the Bastille fell, Foulon was one of the first victims of the popular vengeance. 'Merciless boors of Vitry unearth him; pounce on him, like hell-hounds: Westward, old Infamy; to Paris, to be judged at the Hôtel-de-Ville! His old head, which seventy-four years have bleached, is bare; they have tied an emblematic bundle of grass on his back.' Finally he is dragged to be hung, and his mouth, after death, 'is filled with grass: amid sounds as of Tophet, from a grass-eating people. Surely if Revenge is a "kind of Justice," it is a "wild" kind! They that would make grass be eaten, do now eat grass, in *this* manner? After long dumb-groaning generations, has the turn suddenly become thine?'

References.—I. 12-15.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxxix. No. 2312. I. 13-15—J. M. Neale, *Sermons Preached in a Religious House*, vol. ii. p. 494. I. 19, 20.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxviii. No. 1690.

'They let go the man and all his family.'—Judges I. 25.

The last virtue human beings will attain, I am inclined to think, is scrupulosity in promising and faithfulness in fulfilment.—George Eliot.

'Israel did not utterly drive them out.'—Judges I. 28.

If foolish pity be a more humane sin, yet it is no less dangerous than cruelty. Cruelty kills others, unjust pity kills ourselves.—Bishop Hall.

'And Ephraim drove not out the Canaanites that dwelt in Gezer.'—Judges I. 29.

With the French it was a settled thing that battles must not be decisive. They fought in a half-hearted

way, not because they wanted courage, for braver men than Chadeau de la Clocheterie or D'Albert de Rions, or a hundred others, never walked a quarter-deck; not because they wanted skill in tactics, for more ingenious manœuvrers than Acté or Guichen or even Grasse, never hoisted a flag; but because they had always something other in view than the fighting of a battle. It was taken for granted with them that they must 'fulfil their mission'. The phrase is incessantly turning up in their histories. What it meant was, that when an admiral was sent to take this island or relieve that town, he must avoid getting his fleet crippled in a yard-arm to yard-arm fight. . . . The wish to charge home was strong with our men, and the effort incessant, but until Rodney showed the way on April 12, 1782, it was never effectually done.—Mr. David Hannay, *Rodney*, p. 117.

References.—I. 11.—M. Dods, *Israel's Iron Age*, p. 3. II. 1-5.—R. Winterbotham, *Sermons*, p. 59. R. S. Candlish, *Sermons*, p. 155. II. 1-10.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—Judges*, p. 192.

'And it came to pass, when the angel of the Lord spake these words unto all the children of Israel, that the people lifted up their voice and wept.'—Judges II. 4.

There are few of us that are not rather ashamed of our sins and follies as we look out on the blessed morning sunlight, which comes to us like a bright-winged angel beckoning us to quit the old path of vanity that stretches its dreary length behind us.—George Eliot, *Mr. Gilfil's Love-Story*.

Reference.—II. 4, 5.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxviii. No. 1680.

'There arose another generation after them, which knew not the Lord, nor yet the works which he had done for Israel.'—Judges II. 10.

'Our case,' said Luther once, 'will go on, so long as its living advocates, Melanchthon and friars and learned men, who apply themselves zealously to the work, shall be alive; but, after their death, 'twill be a sad falling off. We have an example before us, in Judges II. 10: "And also all that generation were gathered to their fathers; and there arose another generation after them, which knew not the Lord, nor yet the works which he had done for Israel".'

GOD WITH THE JUDGES

And when God raised them up judges, the Lord was with the judge.'—Judges II. 18.

There is a great principle here, which runs far. That great principle is, God will not forsake the work of His own hands. Only be assured with adequate proof that this or that matter is Divine, and leave the rest. 'When the Lord raised up judges, the Lord was with the judge,' because they were the work of His own hand. God never dies. But if any man makes himself a judge the Lord will not be responsible for that man. That is the whole scheme of life. We cannot build out God; though we pile our judges high and lay them in great breadths like walls meant to be impregnable, it is all of no use; whatever it is, it is a poor thing, and not worthy of our notice, and as for our trust, woe to the man who thinks that straw, loose dry straw, can stand against the lava-flood.

I. This puts God in His right place; this asserts and illustrates the sovereignty of God. That is one of the terms that I should not like to become obsolete. Once it was quite a great instrument in the hand of the Church; the Church was strong in the possession of that conviction, the conviction, namely, that there is one God, one throne, one Providence, and that any who would set himself or themselves against God's eternal providence and sovereignty would simply be carried away as with a flood, and the sea would reject them, and they would be without a place. Why do we not rest upon these great rock truths? why are we always in panic and in fear? how is it that men will build upon bog and sand, and not upon the rock? What is the rock? The sovereignity of God; the nearness of the Sovereign, the beneficence of His rule, the love that runs through and accounts for His great ministry of redemption.

II. Secondly, the judge recognized the fact that God was with him. He did not live a life of vanity and ambition; he set a proper value upon his seat. If all our great men and leaders would know that they are where God has put them, many great and beneficent results would come out of that conviction. The judge recognized that he was sent.

Being sent, the judge or the representative of God is qualified. The qualification is in his being sent. God chooses no unsuitable instruments; God is not responsible for the tools and the working of those whom He never called to the judgeship, or sent into the pulpit, or conducted into parliament, or set in high places in the cities of commerce. If we realized that we were sent we should have no fear; the Lord does not send us without going with us; there will be no cowardliness, saying, There is a lion in the way. We shall not see the lion because of the glory of the Lord in whose shining all beasts and reptiles are lost as if they never existed. We need some such tonic as this.

III. In the third place, all true public appointments and true social economies and policies, prove their divinity by their real prosperity. That is a dangerous doctrine if treated roughly, if not qualified and commended by some severe reservations. We must first of all know what prosperity is.

IV. The reverse of the text is true. When the Lord did not raise up the preacher, teacher, legislator, statesman, merchant, leader, the Lord never went a step on the road with the man. If the Lord did not make the preacher, the Lord will never appear in a single sermon; if the Lord did raise up the preacher, all the opponents that righteousness ever had cannot put him down.—Joseph Parker, *City Temple Pulpit*, vol. iv. p. 232.

Reference.—II. 23.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—Judges*, p. 196.

'These are the nations which the Lord left . . . that the generations of the children of Israel might know, to teach them war, at the least such as before knew nothing thereof.'—Judges III. 1, 2.

Wherever temptation is, there is God also. . . . Nothing is at random, as if temptation were hurry-

ing here and there like bullets in the air of a battle-field.—F. W. Faber.

'And served their gods.'—Judges iii. 6.

'The conduct of the negotiations,' between the Christian and Moslem powers in Palestine, 'fell to the Templars, and between them and the Saracens there grew up some kind of acquaintance. Having their home in the East they got to know the Eastern character. It was alleged afterwards that in this way their faith became corrupted.'—Froude.

THE MESSAGE OF THE BOOK OF JUDGES

'When the children of Israel cried unto the Lord, the Lord raised up a Deliverer.'—Judges iii. 9.

The book of Judges is a book of deliverance, a deliverance from backsliding. It teaches us:—

I. The danger of a faith which stands in the wisdom of man rather than in the power of God. Israel always relied too much on her leaders. The nation of Israel all along was like a nation of children—they had to be kept in the right path by authority. What was then felt in Israel is a very grievous fault among ourselves. Christian people in our churches look far too much to their spiritual teachers, and far too little to God.

II. No past experience of blessing removes the liability to sin, or dispenses with the need of watchfulness against temptation. Israel had trusted God and found Him true. She had seen His power to save, and she was living in the Promised Land; yet that did not remove her liability to sin. No matter how wonderfully God deals with our souls, no matter how close the fellowship that He grants us, so long as we are in the flesh we are beset by temptation, and temptation is always dangerous because of our liability to give heed to it.

III. No position of honour or favour entitles one to sin with impunity. Israel thought that because she was the people of Jehovah He was bound to take care of her. And she had to be taught that Jehovah's favour was conditional on her obedience. She had to learn that simply because she was the people of God, her sin would be punished more severely than the sin of others. No man can sin with impunity. The clearer the knowledge, the intenser the zeal, the more awful is the fall of him who, presuming on these things, dares to tamper with sin.

IV. For recovery from backsliding, however terrible, there is provision made in the mercy of God. The book of Judges shows not only that none of the Lord's children may presume, but also that none of them might despair, it shows how God made provision to ensure their being kept faithful to Him. The Lord raised them up by judges by whom they were delivered from the hand of their enemies, and brought back to serve the Lord. For us, if we have backslidden there is the Saviour who is able to save to the uttermost because He ever liveth to make intercession for us.—G. H. C. Macgregor, *Messages of the Old Testament*, p. 87.

'And Othniel the son of Kenaz died. And the children of Israel did evil again in the sight of the Lord.'—Judges iii. 11, 12.

A man that is at once eminent in place and goodness, is like a stake in a hedge; pull that up, and all the rest are but loose and rotten sticks easily removed; or like the pillars of a vaulted roof which either supports or ruins the building.—Bishop Hall.

'Lucretius, like Nævius a century and a half before,' says Mr. J. W. Mackail, 'might have left the proud and pathetic lines on his tomb that, after he was dead, men forgot to speak Latin in Rome.'

References.—III. 15, 16.—Herbert Windross, *The Life Victorious*, p. 83. III. 16.—S. Baring-Gould, *Village Preaching for a Year*, vol. i. p. 270.

'And Ehud said, I have a message from God unto thee. And he arose out of his seat.'—Judges iii. 20.

I cannot but wonder at the devout reverence of this heathen prince: he sat in his chair of state; the unwieldiness of his fat body was such, that he could not rise with readiness and ease: yet no sooner doth he hear news of a message from God, but he rises up from his throne, and reverently attends the tenor thereof. Though he had no superior to control him, yet he cannot abide to be unmannerly in the business of God.

This man was an idolater, a tyrant: yet what outward respect doth he give to the true God? External ceremonies of piety, and compliments of devotion, may well be found with falsehood in religion. They are a good shadow of truth when it is; but when it is not, they are the very body of hypocrisy. He that had risen up in arms against God's people, and the true worship of God, now rises up in reverence to His name. God would have liked well to have had less of his courtesy, more of his obedience.—Bishop Hall.

'And Deborah, a prophetess, the wife of Lapidoth, she judged Israel at that time.'—Judges iv. 4.

Compare Knox's courteous farewell to Queen Mary, at their first interview: 'I pray God, Madam, that you may be as blessed within the commonwealth of Scotland, if it be the pleasure of God, as ever Deborah was in the commonwealth of Israel'.

The story of Deborah, indeed, forms a frequent difficulty in the writings of Knox, particularly in *The First Blast of the Trumpet against the Monstrous Regiment of Women*, which is designed to prove, from Scripture and nature, that the authority wielded by women is contrary to God and order. As R. L. Stevenson points out, 'The cases of Deborah and Huldah can be brought into no sort of harmony with his thesis. Indeed, I may say that, logically, he left his bones there; and that it is but the phantom of an argument that he parades thenceforward to the end. Well was it for Knox that he succeeded no better; it is under this very ambiguity about Deborah that we shall find him fain to creep for shelter before he is done with the regiment of women.' The reference in the last sentence is to Knox's subsequent retractation of this thesis, in his letter to Queen Elizabeth, in which he admits that if 'in God's pres-

ence she humbles herself, so will he with tongue and pen justify her authority, as the Holy Spirit hath justified the same in Deborah, that blessed mother in Israel'.

REFERENCE.—IV. 4.—W. J. Dawson, *The Comrade Christ*, p. 151.

'And Barak said, If thou wilt go with me, then I will go; but if thou wilt not go with me, I will not go.'—JUDGES IV. 8.

NOTWITHSTANDING all we may fondly fancy, we can scarcely be called a generation of 'Uebermenschen'. We are doubters, scoffers, grumblers; but we have not the stuff of which 'Uebermenschenthum' is made. For that, we should first of all need to believe in ourselves—and who does that nowadays?—From *The Letters Which Never Reached Him*, p. 34.

REFERENCES.—IV. 8.—J. Keble, *Sermons for the Christian Year*, p. 279; *Sermons for Sundays after Trinity* (part i.), p. 64. IV. 8, 9.—S. Leathes, *Truth and Life*, p. 99. IV. 9.—M. S. Glazebrook, *Prospice*, p. 132. J. M. Neale, *Sermons for Some Feast Days in the Christian Year*, p. 167.

'And Deborah said, Up; for this is the day in which the Lord hath delivered Sisera into thine hand.'—JUDGES IV. 14.

THE poorest being that crawls on earth, contending to save itself from injustice and oppression, is an object respectable in the eyes of God and man.—BURKE.

'Is not the Lord gone out before thee?'—JUDGES IV. 14.

IT was most especially in the graver moments of its history that Israel awoke to the full consciousness of itself and of Jehovah. The name 'Israel' means 'El doth battle,' and Jehovah was the warrior El, after whom the nation styled itself. The camp was, so to speak, at once the cradle in which the nation was nursed and the smithy in which it was welded into unity; it was also the primitive sanctuary. Jehovah went forth with the host to battle, and in its enthusiasm His presence was seen.—WELLHAUSEN.

'Then Jael went softly unto him, and smote the nail into his temples, and fastened it into the ground: for he was fast asleep and weary.'—JUDGES IV. 21.

IN *Old Mortality* Scott introduces the same incident in the conversation between Morton and Mistress Maclure, the old, charitable, covenanting widow. '"Ae night," said the latter, "sax weeks or thereby afore Bothwell Brigg, a young gentleman stopped at this puir cottage, stiff and bloody with wounds, pale and dune out wi' riding, and his horse sae weary he couldna drag ae foot after the other, and his foes were close ahint him, and he was ane o' our enemies. What could I do, sir? You that's a sodger will think me but a silly auld wife—but I fed him, and relieved him, and keepit him hidden till the pursuit was ower." "And who," said Morton, "dares disapprove of your having done so?" "I kenna," answered the blind woman, "I gat ill-will about it amang some o' our ain folk. They said I should hae been to him what Jael was to Sisera. But weel I wot I had nae Divine command to shed blood, and to save it was baith like a woman and a Christian."'

REFERENCES.—IV. 21.—H. Melvill, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 1677, p. 455; *ibid.* No. 1677. IV. 22.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. vi. No. 337.

'Then sang Deborah.'—JUDGES V. 1.

OF the three main branches of poetry, the only feminine one is the lyrical, not the objective lyrical poetry, like that of Pindar and Simonides, and the choric odes of the Greek tragedians, but that which is the expression of individual, personal feeling, like Sappho's. Of this class we have noble examples in the songs of Miriam, of Deborah, of Hannah, and of the Blessed Virgin.—HARE, *Guesses at Truth* (2nd Series).

REFERENCE.—V. 1.—H. Henley Henson, *The Value of the Bible*, p. 53.

'The people willingly offered themselves.'—JUDGES V. 2.

WHAT does the character of a citizen involve? That he will deliberate about nothing as if he were detached from the community.—EPICTETUS.

REFERENCE.—V. 2.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons for the Church Year*, vol. ii. p. 229.

'My heart is toward the governors of Israel, that offered themselves willingly among the people.'—JUDGES V. 9.

IN 1637 Samuel Rutherford wrote to Lord Boyd, one of the Scotch nobles: 'If ye, the nobles, refuse to plead the controversy of Zion with the professed enemies of Jesus, ye have done with it. Oh! where is the courage and zeal now of the ancient nobles of this land, who with their swords, and hazard of life, honour, and houses, brought Christ to our hands?'

WE want public souls, we want them. I speak it with compassion. When every one is his own end, all things will come to a bad end. Blessed were those days, when every man thought himself rich and fortunate by the good success of the public wealth and glory.—BISHOP HACKET.

COMPARE Sydney Smith's eulogium upon Grattan:—'He was so born, so gifted, that poetry, forensic skill, elegant literature, and all the highest attainments of human genius were within his reach; but he thought the noblest occupation of a man was to make other men happy and free; and in that straight line he kept for fifty years, without one side-look, one yielding thought, one motive in his heart which he might not have laid open to the view of God or man.'

REFERENCES.—V. 9-11.—J. Bowstead, *Practical Sermons*, vol. ii. p. 296. V. 11.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xiii. No. 763.

DEBORAH

'Awake, awake, Deborah; awake, awake, utter a song; arise, Barak, and lead thy captivity captive, thou son of Abinoam. Then he made him that remaineth have dominion over the nobles among the people: the Lord made me have dominion over the mighty. Out of Ephraim there was a root of them against Amalek; after thee Benjamin, among thy people; out of Machir came down governors, and out of Zebulun they that handle the pen of the writer. And the princes of Issachar were with Deborah; even Issachar and also Barak: he was sent on foot into the valley. For the divisions of Reuben there were great thoughts of heart. Why abodest thou among the sheepfolds, to hear the bleatings of the flocks? For the divisions of Reuben there were great searchings of heart. Gilead

abode beyond Jordan: and why did Dan remain in ships? Asher continued on the sea-shore and abode in his creeks. Zebulun and Naphtali were a people that jeoparded their lives unto the death in the high places of the field.'—Judges v. 12-18.

Not a few difficulties we have created for ourselves by that mischievous and often fatal habit of importing into the text of Scripture more than it actually and necessarily, or even by implication contains. From the simple fact that Deborah is called a 'prophetess' some tremendous but unwarrantable inferences have been drawn. It has been assumed that all her words were God's words, and that all her acts had a Divine sanction prompting and justifying them. And that even the fierce and ruthless spirit of her song was one that God inspired. I would only offer for your consideration two remarks in connexion with these difficulties.

I. It is adopting a perilous principle to argue that an action must be right because, as we suppose, God commanded it. It is a safer rule of interpretation to infer that if an action, of which we know the details, or so far as we know them, is manifestly wrong—opposed to the instinctive sense of right, or goodness, or truth, or holiness, which, if the world were rocking beneath our feet, we still should feel to be inimitable—it could not have been an act commanded by Him Whose essential characteristics are equity, goodness, holiness, truth.

II. Deborah's prophetic gift was, so far as we have materials for estimating it, rather an afflatus of poetic inspiration than anything deeper or more Divine. Nor even if we were sure that Deborah was gifted with predictive powers, would that necessitate, or even justify the conclusion that all her utterances, when not claiming to be spoken under special guidance of the Holy Spirit, were utterances of infallible truth or of inimitable morality. And so her words have no claim to supersede that standard of right and wrong which we believe to be implanted in our conscience by God; and by which even words professing to be Divine must, in the case of each individual responsible man, be ultimately tested and weighed.

III. The prophetess, even in her moment of highest exultation, cannot forget those who, in their country's critical hour, when freedom, honour, independence—everything that constitutes the real life and force of a nation—was in jeopardy, and one bold, united effort might achieve deliverance, stood apart in the isolation of rivalry, or selfishness, or in the inglorious love of ease, and 'came not to the help of the Lord against the mighty'. May I venture to apply the lesson to our own circumstances. No one can be blind to the fact that Christianity is confronted all over the civilized world by a gigantic foe. I know not by what better name to call it than 'the spirit of unbelief'. A moral unbelief in the existence of truth rather than an intellectual unbelief, staggered and perplexed by speculative difficulties. Religion is not, as it has been called, the produce of credulity and poetry. It is the product of the profoundest and truest instincts—at least if their universality is any test of their truth—of our nature. All that constitutes the true nobility of human nature is proportionate to the influence of this sense in man. Are we doomed never to realize this temper under which alone higher results are possible? Shall we, broken up into miserable sets and parties, stand selfishly and suspiciously by, while Zebulun and Naphtali—the more generous spirits of the age—are jeoparding their lives unto the death in the high places of the field? Oh! how one longs to gather into one camp, or to mass together in supporting columns on the great battle-field, all those who, however differing on points of lesser detail, are yet united in this—the great uniting influence—that they love the Lord Jesus Christ in all sincerity!—J. Fraser, *University and Other Sermons*, p. 137.

References.—V. 12.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. vi. No. 340. V. 12-23.—J. Bunting, *Sermons*, vol. i. p. 167.

'There were great searchings of heart.'—Judges v. 16.

'In the greatest war-song of any age or nation,' says Mr. R. H. Hutton, 'the exultation of Deborah over Sisera's complete defeat, and subsequent assassination by the hand of Jael, the wife of Heber the Kenite—no doubt, personal revenge might seem to blaze high above Deborah's faith in her nation and her God, as the kindling or exciting spiritual principle which brings the scene in such marvellous vividness before her eyes. But though this feeling may add perhaps some of the fire to the latter part of the poem, it is clear that her faith in the national unity, and God as the source of the national unity, was the great binding thought of the whole. The song dwells, first, with the most intense bitterness on the decay of patriotism in the tribes that did not combine against the common foe. . . . And the transition by which she passes to her fierce exultation over Sisera's terrible fate shows distinctly what was the main thought in her mind.'

THE APOLOGIA OF THE COWARD

'Why abodest thou among the sheep-folds, to hear the bleatings of the flocks? For the divisions of Reuben there were great searchings of heart.'—Judges v. 16.

Israel was in bondage, Jabin, King of the Canaanites, ruled the captive nation with a rod of iron. In Israel's land there was a gifted woman, who nursed the fires of her own patriotism and that of her countrymen, and waited but for the opportunity to strike the blow for liberty. Deborah—prophetess and poetess—never doubted the time would come when Israel's God would remember His former loving-kindness and restore His people freedom, forfeited by their sin. And the men of Israel rose at the call, and under the lead of Barak they made a grand and successful attempt to regain their liberty. But amongst those who did not come to the help of the warrior-prophetess was the tribe of Reuben. They had great heart-searchings but it only led to a policy of masterly inactivity.

I. Thousands of men miss the best life has to offer because they can never rise to a great occasion.

They never train themselves to make a great decision. They are debating when they ought to be fighting. They are searching their own hearts when they should be smiting the enemy. Life's prizes are for the brave. God gives no guerdon to the coward. The names enshrined in the muster-roll of His Ironsides, in the chapter of the roll-call—the 11th of Hebrews—are all men who dared to do. By faith they stopped the mouths of lions. And the man who would ever do anything must make his reckoning with the lions.

II. Like father, like son, never received a more powerful illustration than in the case of the Reubenites. The head of their tribe was a moral weakling, Reuben was a human jelly-fish. The Reubenites are one of the lost tribes, as a tribe, but you will find them dispersed in every place under the sun. He is a very nice man, the modern Reuben, but woe to you if you trust him in a moral crisis. He will offer you sugar plums when it is shot you need. He has no opinions he cannot change and no principles he is not prepared to forswear, if they stand in the way of his getting on.

III. If Deborah and Barak had waited until the heart-searchings of the Reubenites found expression in military action, Israel would never have been delivered. All great movements have been the work of one strong will. There are times when one Deborah, with the light of a great purpose in her eyes, is worth all the men of the tribe of Reuben put together. The practical lesson in the study of this tribe of moral invertebrates is first of all that every man should train his will to act quickly and decisively in great questions. There are those, for example, who all their life keep Christ at the bar of their judgment, and are perpetually asking: 'Art thou He that should come, or do we look for another?' They are not Christians. They are not anti-Christians. They are amongst those who are always seeking but never find the truth.

IV. Is not the text an illustration of the fact that to nations and Church there come times of great moral testings, when they need to throw aside the counsels of a timid opportunism, and dare to do right and follow the flag of duty at whatever cost.

REFERENCE.—V. 16.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—Judges*, p. 206.

'Why did Dan remain in ships? Asher continued on the seashore.'—JUDGES v. 17.

ALL human life, we may say, consists solely of these two activities: (1) Bringing one's activities into harmony with conscience, or (2) hiding from oneself the indications of conscience, in order to be able to continue to live as before.—TOLSTOY.

COMMENTING on Cromwell's letter from Ely, in which his ardent, heroic spirit breathes, Carlyle asks: 'Brother, hadst thou never, in any form, such moments in thy history? Thou knowest them not, even by credible rumour? Well, thy earthly path was peaceabler, I suppose. But the Highest was never in thee, the Highest will never come out of thee. Thou shalt at best abide by the stuff; as cherished house-dog, guard the stuff—perhaps with enormous gold-collars and provender; but the battle, and the hero-death, and victory's fire-chariot carrying men to the Immortals, shall never be thine. I pity thee: brag not, or I shall have to despise thee.

'Zebulun and Naphtali were a people that jeoparded their lives unto the death in the high places of the field.'—JUDGES v. 18.

I LIKE battle-fields; for, terrible as war is, it nevertheless displays the spiritual grandeur of man who dares to defy his most powerful hereditary foe—Death.—HEINE.

REFERENCES.—V. 18.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons for Some Feast Days in the Christian Year*, p. 113. E. J. Hardy, *Faint yet Pursuing*, p. 85. V. 20.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of the Holy Scripture—Judges*, p. 209.

'Curse ye Meroz, said the angel of the Lord, curse ye bitterly the inhabitants thereof; because they came not to the help of the Lord against the mighty.'—JUDGES v. 23.

WHEN truth is in danger, the conduct of many is to wash their hands in Pilate's basin of weak neutrality, but they only soil the water and do not cleanse their hands. Of how much nobler a spirit is the favourite text of the old Covenanters: 'Curse ye Meroz, saith the angel of the Lord, curse ye bitterly the inhabitants thereof; because they came not to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty!' —DR. JOHN KER, *Thoughts for Heart and Life*.

IT was the companionship of that other virtue of valour in a good cause which made so bright the moderation of Aristides and of Athens, the spirit in which the city of Pallas had arisen to face the invader alone, when in the other states of Hellas 'there were great searchings of heart,' when some of the mightiest quailed, and shrank more from danger than from the coward's curse—the curse pronounced by the Hebrew Deborah against the men of Meroz, 'because they came not to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty'.—ERNEST MYERS in *Hellenica*, p. 24.

CURSE ye Meroz, said the angel of the Lord; curse ye bitterly the inhabitants thereof—sang Deborah. Was it that she called to mind any personal wrongs—rapine or insult—that she or the house of Lapidoth had received from Jabin or Sisera? No; she had dwelt under her palm-tree in the depth of the mountain. But she was a *mother in Israel;* and with a mother's heart, and with the vehemency of a mother's and a patriot's love, she had shut the light of love from her eyes, and poured the blessings of love from her lips, on the people that had *jeoparded their lives unto the death* against the oppressors; and the bitterness, awakened and borne aloft by the same love, she precipitated in curses on the selfish and coward recreants who *came not to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty.* As long as I have the image of Deborah before my eyes, and while I throw myself back into the age, country, circumstances of their Hebrew Boadicea, in

the not yet tamed chaos of the spiritual creation;—as long as I contemplate the impassioned, high-souled, heroic woman in all the prominence and individuality of will and character—I feel as if I were among the first ferments of the great affections—the proplastic waves of the microcosmic chaos, swelling up against—and yet towards—the outspread wings of the Dove that lies brooding on the troubled waters.—Coleridge, *Confessions of an Enquiring Spirit.*

FELLOW-LABOURERS WITH GOD

'They came not to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty.'—Judges v. 23.

I. Fellow-labourers with God.—The Almighty God needs the help of His creatures, of us and of our fellows. God has been pleased to use His own human children to help Him in the work which He desires to be done. We see in the Old Testament and in the New that God absolutely limits His own power by the will of His creatures. It is recorded that when God would overthrow the cities of the plain, the angel said to Lot: 'Haste thee, escape thither; for I cannot do anything till thou be come thither'. And of our Lord Himself it is said, speaking of His own country, that He 'could there do no mighty works, because of their unbelief'. Man can refuse if he will to come 'to the help of the Lord'. And more than that, he can even take an antagonistic line to God. Gamaliel warned his hearers to 'refrain from these men, lest haply ye be found even to fight against God'. St. Paul, writing to the Philippians, spoke of 'the enemies of the Cross of Christ'.

II. What is our Position?—What is to be our position in this matter? Are there not many who say, 'It is the last thing in the world I should desire to be, an enemy of the Cross of Christ, I should abhor above all things to be fighting against God; but I am not quite prepared to take vigorous action on His behalf. Cannot I remain neutral?' In the old laws of the lawgiver, neutrals were ordered to be put to death, and though the penalty is not so severe under the Christian dispensation, yet we cannot but remember those words of our Blessed Master: 'He that is not with Me is against Me, and he that gathereth not with Me, scattereth'. Have we no cause to band ourselves together to come 'to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty'?

III. How We can come to the Help of the Lord.—If you ask, How can *I* come to God's help? What can *I* do? then surely in the very forefront of our marching orders is 'Pray'. (1) Prayer is in the power of every one of us, and how potent that is we know, not alone from the history of the Church, but from the Scriptures themselves. It was said by St. Augustine in his sermon on St. Stephen's Day: 'If Stephen had not thus prayed the Church had not had Paul'. It was the prayer of Stephen for his murderers that gave to the Church the great Apostle of the Gentiles. And when we think of St. Augustine, we are reminded how his holy mother, Monica, prayed long and earnestly for him, prayed for him while there seemed to be no hope of his conversion, while he was living in heathen philosophy and licentiousness; and the prayers of that saintly woman won for the Church the great Augustine. And that same power of prayer is within the possibility of the meanest; the commonest, the poorest, the least educated may yet pray, and pray with a power which shall rule the world. Let us take care that day by day, morning by morning, evening by evening, we lift up our heart to God, praying not only for ourselves, but for all those in need and necessity. (2) It is not only our prayers, and our time and talents, but our substance the Lord will accept from us. All of us are able to do something. Those who are given much can give plenteously; those who have little can still do their diligence gladly to give of that little. And if we are thus taking our part in God's work, thus doing that which we can to help Him in this mighty work in which He makes us fellow-labourers with Himself, then that word will be spoken to us that Abigail spoke to David: 'The Lord will certainly make my lord a sure house: because my lord fighteth the battles of the Lord' (1 Sam. xxv. 28).

CHRIST AND THE NATIONAL LIFE

'Curse ye Meroz, said the angel of the Lord, curse ye bitterly the inhabitants thereof: because they came not to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty.'—Judges v. 23.

Deborah identifies the cause of Israel with the cause of Israel's God. Identification of patriotism and religion belongs to an early phase of religious development, and is unquestionably associated with the crudest notions of the Diety

I. These fierce words enshrine a conception of human affairs which is profoundly true, and apparently Christian. That human affairs are the scene of a true conflict between the will of God and of pugnant forces, that every individual must have his place therein for or against the will of God, that no individual is so without illumination on the supreme issue as not to be able, if he will, to ally himself with the Divine cause—these are the very assumptions of morality, and they are taken for granted in the Gospel.

II. Can we simply accept the national interest in the conventional and obvious sense of the phrase as competent to interpret for us our religious duty? We shall all agree that Christianity cannot be satisfied by those suggestions. The religion of Christ is not, in the old sense of the phrase, a national religion. God still speaks to us as in the old prophetic age, most authoritatively and intelligibly within ourselves. This interior guidance, as it is ministered in the solitude of the individual spirit, so it is incompetent for the purposes of general direction.

III. What then ought to be the effect on our political conduct of our accepting the prophetic notion of human affairs as the arena of a conflict? Three consequences seem to follow directly from such a doctrine:—

(*a*) We shall inevitably take a larger view of public duty.

(*b*) We will have a high estimate of personal responsibility.

(*c*) There will be an intimate relation maintained between politics and religion.—H. Hensley Henson, *Christ and the Nation*, p. 73.

References.—V. 23.—H. P. Liddon, *University Sermons*, (2nd Series), p. 264. W. Baird, *The Hallowing of Our Common Life*, p. 70. C. Hook, *Contemporary Pulpit*, vol. vi. p. 42. Phillips Brooks, *The Candle of the Lord*, p. 287. Bishop Winnington Ingram, *Mission of the Spirit*, p. 83.

'Blessed above women shall Jael, the wife of Heber the Kenite, be.'—Judges v. 24.

The types of female excellence exhibited in the early period of Jewish history are in general of a low order, and certainly far inferior to those of Roman history or Greek poetry; and the warmest eulogy of a woman in the Old Testament is probably that which was bestowed upon her who, with circumstances of the most aggravated treachery, had murdered the sleeping fugitive who had taken refuge under her roof.—Lecky, *History of European Morals*, II. p. 337.

In one of Richard Cameron's most violent sermons, during the 'killing' days of the seventeenth century in Scotland, he employs this verse to justify the assassination of tyrants and oppressors:—

'I know not if this generation will be honoured to cast off these rulers, but those that the Lord makes instruments to bring back Christ, and to recover our liberties, civil and ecclesiastic, shall be such as shall disarm this king and set inferiors under him, and against whom our Lord is denouncing war. Let them take heed unto themselves, for though they should take us to scaffolds, or kill us in the fields, the Lord will yet raise up a party who will be avenged upon them. And are there none to execute justice and judgment upon these wicked men who are both treacherous and tyrannical? The Lord is calling men of all ranks and stations to execute judgment upon them. And if it be done we cannot but justify the deed, and such are to be commended for it as Jael was. "Blessed above women shall Jael, the wife of Heber the Kenite, be."'

Even in the Reformation age, the killing of tyrants was held to be a worthy task. Thus Melanchthon, in one of his letters, wishes that some good man would kill the "English Nero," Henry VIII. A saying of similar import is quoted by Loesche in his *Analecta Lutherana et Melanthoniana*, p. 159.

References.—V. 24.—T. Arnold, *The Interpretation of Scripture. Ibid. Sermons*, vol. vi. p. 57. Bishop Woodford, *Occasional Sermons*, p. 161. H. P. Liddon, *Contemporary Pulpit*, vol vi. p. 65.

'With the hammer she smote Sisera, she smote off his head.'—Judges v. 26.

A full meal is like Sisera's banquet, at the end of which there is a nail struck into the head.—Jeremy Taylor.

I did long achingly, then and for four-and-twenty hours afterwards, for something to fetch me out of my present existence, and lead me upwards and onwards. This longing, and all of a similar kind, it was necessary to knock on the head; which I did, figuratively, after the manner of Jael to Sisera, driving a nail through their temples. Unlike Sisera, they did not die: they were but transiently stunned, and at intervals would turn on the nail with a rebellious wrench: then did the temples bleed, and the brain thrill to its core.—Charlotte Brontë in *Villette*.

'At her feet he bowed, he fell, he lay down; at her feet he bowed, he fell; where he bowed, there he fell down dead.'—Judges v. 27.

We see the mournful contrast between life and death, which all poetry has lingered over. Greatness, as struck down at one blow, in the midst of its honours and the tribute paid to it, produces a passing emotion of sympathy even in the mind of the Jewish prophetess, while her main thoughts follow her country's rescue: and the mighty foe is laid low in that grand solemnity of verse, and in that sad picture of death, in which a high compassion speaks: 'At her feet he bowed, he fell, he lay down; at her feet he bowed, he fell; where he bowed, there he fell down dead'.—Mozley.

'To Sisera a prey of divers colours, a prey of divers colours of needlework, meet for the necks of them that take the spoil.'—Judges v. 30.

The sentiment even of the woman's delight in the dresses won in the spoils transpires through the warlike rejoicing: the pieces of embroidery are counted over in imagination as they are torn away from the mother and the harem of Sisera for the women of Israel.—Stanley.

'So let all thine enemies perish, O Lord: but let them that love Him be as the sun when he goeth forth in his might.'—Judges v. 31.

The exultation with which the poet dwells on the treachery of the act, on the helpless prostration of the great captain's corpse before a mere woman's knees; the terrible minuteness with which she gloats over the raised expectations of the mother of the murdered soldier; the picture of the 'wise ladies' in attendance suggesting triumphant reasons for the delay, and of the anxious eagerness with which she even suggested these reasons to herself—no doubt indicate fierce personal as well as fierce patriotic triumph. But the whole tenor of this grand poem and the conclusion, 'So let all thy enemies perish, O Lord; but let them that love Thee be as the sun when he goeth forth in his might,' at all events prove that the personal hatred was so closely bound up with the representative feelings of the writer as a judge of Israel, and with her trust in the Lord of Hosts, that the latter lent a kind of halo to the unscrupulous ferocity of the former.—R. H. Hutton.

Compare Cromwell's description of the battle of Marston Moor. 'Truly England and the Church of God hath had a great favour from the Lord, in this great Victory given unto us, such as the like never was since this War began. It had all the evidences of an absolute Victory obtained by the Lord's blessing upon the godly party principally. We never

charged but we routed the enemy. . . . The particulars I cannot relate now; but I believe, of twenty thousand the Prince hath not four thousand left. Give glory, all the glory, to God.'

'And the land had rest forty years.'—JUDGES v. 31.

SPEAKING in 1657 of his own Protectorate, Cromwell declared: 'I profess, I think I may say: Since the beginning of *that* change—though I should be loath to speak anything vainly—but since the beginning of that change to this day, I do not think there hath been a freer procedure of the Laws, not even in those years called, and not unworthily, the "Halcyon Days of Peace"—from the Twentieth of Elizabeth to King James' and King Charles' time. I do not think but the Laws have proceeded with as much freedom and justice since I came to the Government, as they did in those years so named "Halcyon".'

JEWISH ZEAL, A PATTERN TO CHRISTIANS

'So let all thine enemies perish, O Lord; but let them that love Him be as the sun when he goeth forth in his might. And the land had rest forty years.'—JUDGES v. 31.

A CERTAIN fire of zeal, showing itself, not by force and blood, but as really and certainly as if it did—cutting through natural feelings, neglecting self, preferring God's glory to all things, firmly resisting sin, protesting against sinners, and steadily contemplating their punishment, is a duty belonging to all creatures of God, a duty of Christians, in the midst of all that excellent overflowing charity which is the highest Gospel grace, and the fulfilling of the second table of the Law.—J. H. NEWMAN.

REFERENCES.—V. 31.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—Judges*, p. 217. V. 31.—J. H. Newman, *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, vol. iv. p. 173. V.—M. Dods, *Israel's Iron Age*, p. 173.

GIDEON THE HUMBLE

JUDGES VI.

I. AT first sight the character of Gideon is a very inconsistent one. It seems to be composed of two opposite sides—towering aspiration and drooping humility. Was there not imposed upon him a great, a responsible destiny—a destiny which he must not seek to evade. Was he not bound to become the Saviour of Israel. So speaks the one side of his nature—the aspiring side. But there is another side. This same Gideon is the most humble of men, the most shrinking, the most cowering, the most timorous. That a man capable of lofty aspirings should be as mistrustful of himself as if he were a village rustic—this seems an unaccountable thing. But is the village rustic distrustful of himself. The rustic, in proportion as his rusticity is deep, is increasingly removed from humility. Humility is incompatible with absolute ignorance. There is then no contradiction but a beautiful harmony between the two sides of Gideon's character. So far from interfering with his humility his aspirations are the cause of his humility. It is the brightness of his ideal that makes him shrink in dismay.

II. When Gideon has set himself right he proceeds to set right his people. Where does he begin? By changing their ideal of God. A man's religion is the root of his whole conduct. The first step to Gideon's success is effected not by material force, but by the power of spirit. When the worshippers of Baal come to the shrine in the morning, they find this sanctuary in ruins. They have no doubt that the perpetrator of the sacrilege is Gideon. Why then do they not put him to death? It is the very ruin of the shrine of Baal that makes them despise their idol. They cannot adore weakness even in their God. The effect of this silencing of Baal is the assembling of multitudes round the banner of Gideon. His ranks swell from day to day, till his adherents number thirty-two thousand. He reduces them to three hundred. He is jealous for God, jealous for the manifestations of the Divine power. He will not suffer human agencies to bear the credit of that help which he refers to God alone.

III. Every religious man wants to have the experience of strength from above. Gideon wished to have this experience. It was this that made him reduce his thirty-two thousand to three hundred. Here is a great paradox—humility made a source of confidence! but it is a paradox that has its ground in truth. Timid men are humble; but humble men need not be timid. There is a humility which makes us bold—Christian humility.—G. MATHESON, *Representative Men of the Bible*, p. 150.

'Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, I brought you up out of the house of bondage.'—JUDGES VI. 8.

IT is not merely for being redeemed that we are called on to feel thankful, but for being redeemed by the blood of the God-man Jesus Christ, which He poured out for us on the cross. So it was not simply as God that Jehovah was to be worshipped by the Jews; but as the God of their fathers, who had brought them out of the house of bondage, whose voice they had heard and lived, who had chosen them to be His people, and had given them His laws, and a land flowing with milk and honey.

The last sentence has suggested a query of some importance. *Out of the house of bondage:* What says the advocate of colonial slavery to this? That the bondage was no evil? That the deliverance of a people from personal slavery was not a work befitting God's right hand? . . . To those religious men who are labouring for the emancipation of the negroes, amid the various doubts and difficulties with which every great political measure is beset, it must needs be an inspiring thought that to rescue a race of men from personal slavery, and raise them to the rank and self-respect of independent beings is, in the strictest sense of the word, a God-like task; inasmuch as it is a task which, God's book tells us, God Himself has accomplished.—HARE, *Guesses at Truth* (1st Series).

'Gideon threshed wheat by the winepress, to hide it from the Midianites.'—JUDGES VI. 11.

WHAT shifts nature will make to live! O that we could be so careful to lay up spiritual food for our

souls, out of reach of those spiritual Midianites! We could not but live in despite of all adversaries.—Bishop Hall.

References.—VI. 11.—J. Sherman, *Penny Pulpit*, vol. v. p. 313. VI. 11-13.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons for the Church Year*, vol. ii. p. 171.

'And the angel of the Lord appeared unto him.'—Judges vi. 12.

Though a great and momentous truth is involved in the saying, that *when need is highest, then aid is nighest*, this comfort belongs only to such as acknowledge that man's waywardness is ever crossed and overruled by a higher power.—Hare, *Guesses at Truth* (2nd Series).

'We are therefore,' writes Burke in his 'First Letter on a Regicide Peace,' 'never authorized to abandon our country to its fate, or to act or advise as if it had no resource. There is no reason to apprehend, because ordinary means threaten to fail, that no others can spring up. Whilst our heart is whole, it will find means or make them. The heart of the citizen is a perennial spring of energy to the state. Because the pulse seems to intermit, we must not presume that it will cease instantly to beat. The public must never be regarded as incurable.'

References.—VI. 12, 13.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons Preached in a Religious House*, vol. ii. p. 374. VI. 14.—*Ibid.*, *Sermons for the Church Year*, vol. i. p. 130.

'Oh my Lord, wherewith shall I save Israel? behold, my family is poor, and I am the least in my father's house.'—Judges vi. 15.

How the good man disparages himself! Bragging, and height of spirit, will not carry it with God. None have ever been raised by Him, but those which have formerly dejected themselves: none have been confounded by Him, that have been abased in themselves.—Bishop Hall.

After his return from India, as a young officer, in ill-health and depression, Nelson declares that, 'I felt impressed with a feeling that I should never rise in my profession. My mind was staggered with a view of the difficulties I had to surmount, and the little interest I possessed. I could discover no means of reaching the object of my ambition. After a long and gloomy reverie, in which I almost wished myself overboard, a sudden glow of patriotism was kindled within me, and presented my king and country as my patron. "Well, then," I exclaimed, "I will be a hero! And, confiding in Providence, I will brave every danger."'

References.—VI. 19.—J. W. Atkinson, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 1052. VI. 22-24.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxviii. No. 1679.

'And the Lord said, Peace be unto thee. Then Gideon built an altar there unto the Lord, and called it Jehovah-shalom.'—Judges vi. 23, 24.

Peace may be sought in two ways. One way is as Gideon sought it, when he built his altar in Ophrah, naming it, 'God send peace,' yet sought this peace that he loved, as he was ordered to seek it, and the peace was sent in God's way:—'The country was in quietness forty years in the days of Gideon.' And the other way of seeking peace is as Menahem sought it, when he gave the King of Assyria a thousand talents of silver, that 'his hand might be with him'. That is, you may either win your peace or buy it—win it, by resistance to evil; buy it, by compromise with evil.—Ruskin in *The Two Paths*.

References.—VI. 24.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—Judges*, p. 225.

'Thy son hath cast down the altar of Baal. . . . And Gideon made an ephod, and put it in his city.'—Judges vi. 30, and viii. 27.

Where thou findest a Lie that is oppressing thee, extinguish it. Lies exist there only to be extinguished; they wait and cry earnestly for extinction. Think well, meanwhile, in what spirit thou wilt do it: not with hatred, with headlong selfish violence; but in clearness of heart, with holy zeal, gently, almost with pity. Thou wouldst not *replace* such extinct Lie by a new Lie, which a new Injustice of thy own were; the parent of still other Lies? Whereby the latter end of that business were worse than the beginning.—Carlyle, *French Revolution*.

And he sent messengers throughout all Manasseh; who also was gathered after him.'—Judges vi. 35.

They thronged after him and now professed themselves believers in Jehovah. They were not hypocrites. They really believed now, after a fashion, that Baal could not help them. Their fault was that they believed one thing one day and another thing the next.—W. Hale White, *Miriam's Schooling*, p. 7.

References.—VI. 36-40.—E. Paxton Hood, *Sermons*, p. 430. VI. 37.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—Judges*, p. 233. VII. 1-8.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—Judges*, p. 236.

'By the three hundred men that lapped will I save you.'—Judges vii. 7.

Nothing is done effectually through untrained human nature; and such is ever the condition of the multitude. . . . Every great change is effected by the few, not by the many; by the resolute, undaunted, zealous few. Doubtless, much may be *undone* by the many, but nothing is *done* except by those who are specially trained for action.—Newman.

THE THREE HUNDRED MEN THAT LAPPED

(A Church Guild Sermon)

'And the Lord said unto Gideon, By the three hundred men that lapped will I save you, and deliver the Midianites into thine hand; and let all the other people go every man unto his place.'—Judges vii. 7.

Here is one of these battles of God which are being waged in century after century, crisis after crisis, by the armies of Truth against the hordes of unrighteousness.

I. Gideon, trusting manfully in his Divine commission, sets himself to deliver Israel from the Midianites. Cheered himself by God's manifest goodness he succeeds, as men count success, in gathering together a strong army. And what is the first

message that reaches him from God as he has encamped before the Midianites? 'The people that are with thee are too many.' So Gideon has to submit there in the presence of the enemy with a tradition of disgrace behind him; he, a leader of reputed cowards, has to submit to the departure of twenty-two thousand men, leaving his splendid band reduced to a pitiable ten thousand. The fearful and the heavy-hearted go away and more than half his host has vanished. But what is this? 'The people are yet too many,' is the inexorable decree of God. They must yet submit to another test. They are brought down to the water of Harod, near where they were encamped, to be tried with the test of thirst which has so often proved the value of disciplined troops. Some of them, the great majority, stooped down in their great eagerness to drink the water, the rest, a bare three hundred with splendid self-control, and a habit which showed that their minds were elsewhere, and that the coming battle was first in their thoughts, took up the water in their hands and lapped hurriedly, as if anxious not to lose a moment in self-indulgence. And the decree went forth 'By the three hundred that lapped I will save you'.

II. (*a*) 'The three hundred men that lapped.' These are the sort of members that we want for a Church guild, for they represent in the first place a band of men who have learnt the great lesson of self-control. I know your trials here. I know that sparkling well of pleasure which runs through London, and I say that no member of any guild can take his place in the army of God who has not learned to taste with absolute self-control and resolute steadfastness of purpose that which suffices for recreation, that which will supply him with the strength of joy.

(*b*) 'The three hundred men that lapped.' They represented to Gideon also a band of enthusiasts. Only second in importance to the moral basis is the enthusiasm of right in the member of a guild. The guild member is serious, he is active, he is useful, because he has the enthusiasm of life, and even more because he has the enthusiasm of Christianity. He longs to help others, to be a centre of good, and a rallying point for the forces of the Lord.

(*c*) 'The three hundred men that lapped.' Gideon might rely on these as determined men. A battle of three hundred against a host would need determined men, and the battle of the Lord needs determined men now.

III. People tell us that the great battle is approaching when on the one side will be ranged all that call on the Lord Jesus Christ as God, and on the other all who do not. But short of this, the conflict for each of us needs strength and determination of character. The real aim of a guild is to supply you with a rule of life, and a sense of fellowship in keeping that rule. You will want all the grimness of your will in the combat of life which lies before you. Moab lies in ambush with all his countless hosts, the battle will be hard and long, your strength will be to go into it pledged, pledged by your baptism, and vows made years and years ago over your unconscious infancy; pledged by the same vows renewed by your own lips at the moment of your solemn confirmation, and now pledged by the rule of your guild.—W. C. E. Newbolt, *Words of Exhortation*, p. 339.

References.—VII. 7.—J. Baldwin Brown, *The Sunday Afternoon*, p. 202. VII. 10.—J. W. Burgon, *Servants of Scripture*, p. 24.

'Behold, I dreamed a dream.'—Judges vii. 13.

The machinery for dreaming planted in the human brain was not planted for nothing. That faculty, in alliance with the mystery of darkness, is the one great tube through which man communicates with the shadowy. And the dreaming organ, in connexion with the heart, the eye, and the ear, compose the magnificent apparatus which forces the infinite into the chambers of a human brain, and throws dark reflections from eternities below all life upon the mirrors of that mysterious *camera obscura*—the sleeping mind.—De Quincey.

Only lightly and seldom did the Greeks and Romans dream: a distinct and vivid dream was with them an event to be recorded in their historical books. Real dreaming is first found among the ancient Jews.—Heine.

A CAKE OF BARLEY BREAD

'Behold, I dreamed a dream, and lo, a cake of barley bread tumbled into the host of Midian, and came unto a tent and smote it that it fell.'—Judges vii. 13.

Here we have a tiny nation oppressed by powerful neighbours. They have been maltreated by the oppressors, and at this, the darkest moment in the fortunes of Israel, a deliverer arises, not from among the leaders of the people, nor from those who stand in high places, but as has often been the case in history, from the lower ranks themselves. Gideon is the hero in question. A man of the same stature and quality as Wallace and William Tell. Some one must have the courage to speak and to do something more than speak, some one must have the intrepidity to act, and Gideon thinks it may as well be he as any one else. So one morning credulous, self-indulgent Israel rises to see the God Baal hurled from his pedestal and helpless to avenge the affront. His next step is to consider whether Israel won back to the purer worship of Jehovah might not be delivered from the sword of the oppressor. His resolution once taken, this man arrives at the conclusion that he himself is the chosen of the Lord to do this work. But on the eve of the conflict he hesitates. He is self-distrustful. He goes down to listen and to spy within the camp of Midian itself and he hears one man tell his fellow a dream. A cake of barley bread tumbles into the camp of Midian, and smites a tent, and it falls and lies ruined before it. Gideon returns without a word. He takes it as a symbol, a sign that he, the chosen of the Lord, is already victor in the counsels of the Most High, and his decision and his act were one and the same. Why did this hero attach so much importance to this symbol? It was

the symbol of obscurity—Gideon himself was as a cake of barley bread, a labouring man called to be the instrument of God for the deliverance of his country.

I. We have here a case in which a man with nothing to aid him but his sense of God and right essayed a seemingly hopeless task, and accomplished it. Such men are rare in history, but they have always been forthcoming when God wanted them. John Wycliffe, a poor scholar, 'The morning star of the Reformation,' when princes and great nobles, not to speak of the common people, dared not raise their voice against the iniquity of Rome; Martin Luther, the simple monk of Wittenberg, who tore half Christendom away from the See of St. Peter; Hugh Latimer, an English yeoman, Reformation bishop, and martyr for all time; John Wesley, the son of a clergyman, himself a clergyman of the Church of England, too poor, sometimes, to pay his way almost, but the author of the greatest revival of modern times, whose followers have belted the globe with the story of the Gospel, was even refused a hearing in the Church he loved so well—a cake of barley bread against an army.

II. I doubt not; though perhaps they have never thought of it, there are some here who are the chosen of the Lord as much as Gideon, Luther, Wesley, only you were chosen for the day of small things. Is your vocation of any less value on that account? Not in the least. You stand now as plainly outlined before the gaze of God and heaven as ever stood a John Wycliffe or a Martin Luther when fronting the inquisitors and persecutors of old. You are fighting as great a battle as Gideon fought, as true a battle, and in the purpose of God it may be as worthy a conflict as ever he carried to a successful issue.—R. J. Campbell, *Sermons Addressed to Individuals*, p. 243.

References.—VII. 13.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons Preached in a Religious House*, p. 244; *ibid. Sermons Preached in Sackville College Chapel*, vol. iii. p. 372. S. Baring-Gould, *One Hundred Sermon Sketches*, p. 77. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxxi. No. 1873. VII. 13-23.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—Judges*, p. 244.

'It shall be that, as I do, so shall ye do.'—Judges vii. 17.

Is example nothing? It is everything. Example is the school of mankind, and they will learn at no other.—Burke.

'And of Gideon.'—Judges vii. 18.

Set it downe to thyselfe, as well to create good Presidents as to follow them.—Bacon.

For an extended popular movement a great name is like a consecrated banner.—George Meredith.

References.—VII. 18.—Bishop Woodford, *Sermons on Subjects from the Old Testament*, p. 54. VII. 19.—*Christian World Pulpit*, 10 Dec., 1890. G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 413. Spurgeon, *Morning by Morning*, p. 264. VII. 19-25.—*Ibid. Sermons*, vol. xl. No. 2343. VIII. 1-27.—*Ibid.*

'Then their anger was abated toward him, when he had said that.'—Judges viii. 3.

Sometimes men of great strength of will and purpose possess also in a high degree the gift of tact. . . . In nearly all administrative posts, in all the many fields of labour where the task of man is to govern, manage, or influence others, to adjust or harmonize antagonism of race or interests or prejudices, to carry through difficult business without friction and by skilful co-operation, this combination of gifts is supremely valuable.—W. E. H. Lecky.

'Faint, yet pursuing.'—Judges viii. 4.

In his Life of Coriolanus, Plutarch tells how the Roman troops rallied round M. Coriolanus in the attack upon the Volscians and drove the latter off in confusion. 'As they began to pursue them, they begged Marcius, now weary with toil and wounds, to retire to the camp; but he, saying that "it was not for victors to be weary," joined in the pursuit. The rest of the Volscians were defeated, many were slain, and many taken.'

Strength of endurance is worth all the talent in the world.—Byron.

References.—VIII. 4.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xl. No. 2343. E. Blencowe, *Plain Sermons to a Country Congregation* (1st Series), p. 83. J. Baldwin Brown, *The Higher Life*, p. 288.

'I will tear your flesh with the thorns of the wilderness and with briers.'—Judges viii. 7.

If a *Te Deum* or an *O, Jubilate* were to be celebrated by all nations and languages for any one advance and absolute conquest over wrong and error won by human nature in our times—yes, not excepting

The bloody writing by all nations torn—

the abolition of the commerce in slaves—to my thinking that festival should be for the mighty progress made towards the suppression of brutal, bestial modes of punishment.—De Quincey.

Reference.—VIII. 18.—A. Gray, *Faith and Diligence*, p. 124.

'And he said unto Je her his firstborn, Up, and slay them. Then Zebah and Zalmunna said, Rise thou, and fall upon us: for as the man is, so is his strength.'—Judges viii. 20, 21.

This passage is curiously applied by Cromwell in his fourth speech to the English Parliament of 1655, when bitterly denouncing the Anabaptist Levellers and their intrigues. These men, the Protector complains, 'have been and yet are endeavouring to put us into blood and into confusion; more desperate and dangerous confusion than England ever yet saw. And I must say, as Gideon commanded his son to fall upon Zebah and Zalmunna, and slay them, they thought it more noble to die by the hand of a man than of a stripling—which shows there is some contentment in the hand by which a man falls; so it is some satisfaction if a Commonwealth must perish, that it perish by men, and not by the hands of persons differing little from beasts!'

AS THE MAN IS, SO IS HIS STRENGTH

'As the man is, so is his strength.'—Judges viii. 21

It is a strange and tragic history that of Gideon, the fifth, and for many reasons the greatest of all the

judges of Israel. Like many a wise saw of the olden times, the text contains much truth in small bulk.

I. Plainly, the first meaning of it is, that as a man is physically so is his strength. Now, it is perfectly true that we cannot give to ourselves a handsome mien, nor add one cubit to our stature; nevertheless, it is equally true—and of none more true than young men—that we can do much to promote our health, to build up our constitution, and even to give dignity to our physical presence. Given a smart and gentlemanly exterior, a young man's chances of preferment are decidedly greater, and the axiom generally holds good that, as a man is, even in outward physique, so is his success and strength.

II. Take it in another way: as a man is intellectually, so is his strength. I use the word 'strength' here as meaning power of work, capacity for accomplishing the ends of life, and making the world the better for his existence. You want to have your eyes open and your wits awake; to be sharp, and ready, and active. The quick-witted Jack will generally have the advantage over the slow-witted giant. The commerce of England is not indeed in the hands of scholars; but it is, for the most part, in the hands of shrewd, clear-headed practical men, who understand their business, and know how to push it. Thus intellect becomes an equivalent of strength, mind means money.

III. This old adage admits of a yet higher application. Indeed, in no sense is it more widely and markedly true than this; as a man is morally and spiritually, so is his strength. Character and faith, more than anything else, determine your power of overcoming difficulty and of accomplishing good. This is the sure gauge of your personal force in society and in the world. Without a moral backbone you may as well be a jelly-fish, for any real, solid good you will accomplish. There must be a foundation of stern principle, or you will be weak as water. A man with a resolute conscience will always be a power.—J. Thain Davidson, *The City Youth*, p. 68.

'And it came to pass, as soon as Gideon was dead, that the children of Israel turned again.'—Judges viii. 33.

Writing to Mr. Cotton, a Boston minister, in 1651, Cromwell, after recounting the Puritan successes, adds significantly: 'We need your prayers in this as much as ever. How shall we behave ourselves after such mercies?'

'And the children of Israel remembered not the Lord their God, who had delivered them.'—Judges viii. 34.

In his account of a Mr. Rowlandson, the old, avaricious, and intemperate curate of Grasmere, Wordsworth describes how 'one summer's morning, after a night's carouse in the vale of Langdale, on his return home, having reached a point near which the whole of the vale of Grasmere might be seen with the lake immediately below him, he stepped aside and sat down on the turf. After looking for some time at the landscape, then in the perfection of its morning beauty, he exclaimed—"Good God! that I should have led so long a life in such a place!" This, no doubt, was deeply felt by him at the time, but I am not authorized to say that any noticeable amendment followed.'

A man would wonder to heare Men Professe, Protest, Engage, Give Great Wordes, and then Doe just as they have Done before.—Bacon.

'And he slew his brethren, being threescore and ten persons, upon one stone.'—Judges ix. 5.

Where ambition hath possessed itself thoroughly of the soul, it turns the heart into steel, and makes it uncapable of a conscience. All sins will easily down with the man that is resolved to rise.—Bishop Hall.

Reference.—IX. 8-15.—A. Raleigh, *From Dawn to the Perfect Day*, p. 132.

'The fig tree said unto them, Should I forsake my sweetness, and my good fruit, and go to be promoted over the trees?'—Judges ix. 11.

A tallow dip, of the long-eight description, is an excellent thing in the kitchen candlestick, and Betty's nose and eye are not sensitive to the difference between it and the finest wax; it is only when you stick it in the silver candlestick, and introduce it into the drawing-room, that it seems plebeian, dim, and ineffectual. Alas for the worthy man who, like that candle, gets himself into the wrong place!—George Eliot, *Amos Barton*.

Does he not drink more sweetly that takes his beverage in an earthen vessel, than he who looks and searches into his golden chalices, for fear of poison, and looks pale at every sudden noise, and sleeps in armour, and trusts no body, and does not trust God for his safety?—Jeremy Taylor.

> Verily, I swear 'tis better to be lowly born,
> And range with humble livers in content,
> Than to be perk'd up in a glistering grief,
> And wear a golden sorrow.
>
> Anne Bullen in *King Henry VIII.*

Reference.—IX. 14, 15.—C. F. Aked, *The Courage of the Coward*, p. 205.

'My father fought for you, and adventured his life far . . . and ye are risen up against my father's house this day.'—Judges ix. 17, 18.

As I re-read the chapter of Judges—now, except in my memory, unread, as it chances, for many a year—the sadness of that story of Gideon fastens on me, and silences me. *This* the end of his angel visions, and dream-led victories, the slaughter of all his sons but this youngest—and he never again heard of in Israel.

You Scottish children of the Rock, taught through all your once pastoral and noble lives by many a sweet miracle of dew on fleece and ground—once servants of mighty kings and keepers of sacred covenant; have you indeed dealt truly with your warrior kings and prophet saints?—Ruskin in *Proserpina*.

Reference.—IX. 48.—S. Baring-Gould, *Village Preaching for a Year*, vol. i. p. 270.

'And a certain woman cast a piece of a millstone upon Abimelech's head, and all to break his skull.'—JUDGES IX. 53.

THERE now lies the greatness of Abimelech!—upon one stone had he slain his seventy brethren, and now a stone slays him.—BISHOP HALL.

'And the children of Israel did evil again in the sight of the Lord . . . and the children of Israel cried unto the Lord.'—JUDGES X. 6 and 10.

THE dark and the bright sides of the history shift with a rapidity unknown in the latter times of the story—'The children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord,' and 'The children of Israel cried unto the Lord'. Never was there a better instance than in these two alternate sentences, ten times repeated, that we need not pronounce any age entirely bad or entirely good.—STANLEY.

'We have sinned: do Thou unto us whatsoever seemeth good unto Thee: deliver us only, we pray Thee, this day.'—JUDGES X. 15.

IT is possibly to this passage that Luther was alluding loosely in the following fragment of his *Table-Talk*: 'As I sometimes look through my fingers, when the tutor whips my son John, so it is with God; when we are untruthful and disobedient to His word and commandments, He suffers us, through the devil, to be soundly lashed with pestilence, famine, and such-like whips; not that He is our enemy, and to destroy us, but that through such scourging He may call us to repentance and amendment, and so allure us to seek Him, run to Him, and call upon Him for help. Of this we have a fine example in the book of Judges, when the angel, in God's person, speaks thus: I have stricken you so often, and ye are nothing the better for it. And the people of Israel said, Save Thou us but now: we have sinned and done amiss. Punish Thou us, O Lord, and do with us what Thou wilt, only save us now. Whereupon He struck not all the people to death.'

'And they put away the strange gods from among them, and served the Lord: and his soul was grieved for the misery of Israel.'—JUDGES X. 16.

I OFTEN went to bed with tears; and after a sleepless night arose again with tears: I required some strong support; and God would not vouchsafe it me, while I was running with the cap and bells.—GOETHE in *The Confessions of a Fair Saint.*

'What man is he that will begin to fight against the children of Ammon?'—JUDGES X. 18.

THERE was some juggling among the officials to avoid direct taxation; and Pepys, with a noble impulse, growing ashamed of his dishonesty, designed to charge himself with £1000; but finding none to set him an example, 'nobody of our ablest merchants' with their moderate liking for clean hands, he judged it 'not decent'; he feared it would 'be thought vain glory'; and, rather than appear singular, cheerfully remained a thief. One able merchant's countenance, and Pepys had dared to do an honest act! Had he found one brave spirit, properly recognized by society, he might have gone far as a disciple.—R. L. STEVENSON, *Men and Books*, p. 321.

THE key to all ages is—Imbecility; imbecility in the vast majority of men, at all times, and even in heroes, in all but certain eminent moments; victims of gravity, custom, and fear. This gives force to the strong,—that the multitude have no habit of self-reliance or original action.—EMERSON.

'And they said unto Jephthah, Come, and be our captain.'—JUDGES XI. 6.

WHEN a subject presented itself so large and shapeless, and dry and thorny, that few men's fortitude could face, and no one's patience could grapple with it; or an emergency occurred demanding, on a sudden, access to stores of learning, the collection of many long years, but arranged so as to be made available at the shortest notice—*then* it was men asked where Lawrence was.—LORD BROUGHAM.

'And the elders of Gilead said unto Jephthah, The Lord be witness between us, if we do not so according to thy words.'—JUDGES XI. 10.

IN a sermon preached at Fenwick in 1663, William Guthrie told his congregation: 'If you be not ashamed of Him and His word, He shall not be ashamed of you. We are in the case of the Gileadites, sore oppressed; and Christ is Jephthah. He may say to us, as Jephthah did, *Did you not hate Me, and expel Me out of My Father's house? Why now come you to Me in your distress?* We must take with the charge, and put ropes on our necks, and still press our point on Him. *Well*, He says, *if He deliver us or right our matters, shall He then be Head over us?* Let us all lay our hand to our heart this day. Dare we say as Gilead said, *The Lord be witness between us if we do not according to Thy words?* Well then, here is the Covenant, and here I take instruments, and do append His seal to the Covenant. Now take your Sacrament upon this.'

'And Jephthah uttered all his words before the Lord in Mizpeh.'—JUDGES XI. 11.

THOMAS BOSTON, in his *Memoirs*, describes a lengthy fast in which he reviewed his past life and renewed his vows to God. In the middle of the work, being exhausted, he desired some tokens from God of acceptance. 'Two, he observes, 'were somewhat relieving unto me. One was that God knew the acceptance of His covenant, as above expressed, was the habitual bent of my heart and soul. . . . Another was that Scripture brought to my remembrance: *and Jephthah uttered all his words before the Lord in Mizpeh.* So I closed the work betwixt three and four o'clock in the afternoon.'

'Behold, his daughter came out to meet him with timbrels and with dances; and she was his only child: beside her he had neither son nor daughter. And it came to pass when he saw her, that he rent his clothes, and said, Alas, my daughter! thou hast brought me very low.'—JUDGES XI. 34, 35.

'Now you read poetry, I daresay—what you call poetry,' said the old Dissenting preacher in *The Revolution in Tanner's Lane.* 'I say in all of it—all, at least, I have seen—nothing comes up to that. She was his only child: beside her he had neither son

not daughter. The inspired writer leaves the fact just as it stands, and is content. Inspiration itself can do nothing to make it more touching than it is in its own bare nakedness. There is no thought in Jephthah of consolation, not in the noblest sense; but nevertheless he has his own sorrow. *He is brought very low.* God does not consider him for the great He knows well enough, my dear friends, the nature which He took upon Himself. He does not anywhere, therefore, say for us that we should even break our hearts over those we love and lose. . . . He elected Jephthah to the agony he endured while she was away on the hills. That is God's election, an election to the cross and to the cry, "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani." "Yes," you will say, "but He elected him to the victory over Ammon." Doubtless he did; but what cared Jephthah for his victory over Ammon when she came to meet him, or indeed for the rest of his life? What is a victory, what are triumphal arches and the praise of all creation, to a lonely man?'

REFERENCES.—XI. 35.—J. Keble, *Sermons for Lent to Passiontide*, p. 328. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxii. No. 1341.

'And it was a custom in Israel, that the daughters of Israel went yearly to lament the daughter of Jephthah the Gileadite.'—JUDGES XI. 39, 40.

IT is perhaps significant of Japanese married life that a Japanese bride goes to be married in a pure white mourning robe, which is intended to signify that henceforth she is dead to her old home and her parents, and that she must henceforth look upon her husband's people as her own. But to the bride I think it must have a deeper significance. It must mean that she has said good-bye to all freedom and all family devotion, and to most of the pleasures of life: and that she has been disposed of to a man of whom she probably knows nothing, for him to use and abuse as the good or evil in him dictates. If ever the Japanese as a nation take to reading our Bible, the Japanese girl will make a god (not a goddess) of Jephthah's daughter. A Japanese is called upon to perform the sacrifice of Jephthah when his daughter is married.—MISS NORMA LORIMER in *More Queer Things About Japan.*

'Then said they unto him, Say now Shibboleth; and he said, Sibboleth: for he could not frame to pronounce it right. Then they took him and slew him.'—JUDGES XII. 6.

I CAN and do, in retrospect, sympathize heartily, tenderly, and reverentially with the Simeonite or Evangelical reaction. Not a stone would I dare to throw at the names of any of the good men who took part in it. But, at the same time, I know perfectly well that there is a type of character which never did, never will, perhaps, understand Evangelicism, but which is capable of religious faith acceptable to God, though innocent of Shibboleths; and a type which could have found no shelter during (which I dare to call) the *Sturm und Drang* season of the Simeonite reaction, except in the bosom of the English Church. —W. B. RANDS in *Henry Holbeach*, II. pp. 44, 45.

AS it is the ear of fruit which distinguishes the wheat from the tares, so this is the true Shibboleth that He, who stands as Judge at the passage of Jordan, makes use of to distinguish those that shall pass over Jordan into the true Canaan from those that should be slain at the passage. For the Hebrew word *Shibboleth* signifies an ear of corn. And perhaps the more full pronunciation of Jephthah's friends, *Shibboleth*, may represent a full ear with fruit in it, typifying the fruits of the friends of Christ, the antitype of Jephthah; and the more lean pronunciation of the Ephramites, his enemies, may represent their empty ears, typifying the show of religion in hypocrites without substance and fruit.—JONATHAN EDWARDS in *The Religious Affections.*

REFERENCE.—XII. 6.—G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 269.

'And after him . . . and after him . . . and after him.'—JUDGES XII. 8, 11, 13.

As one old statesman leaves the scene, a younger one comes forward, in the vigour of hope and power, to fill his place. When one great orator dies, another commonly succeeds him. The opportunity of the new aspirant is the departure of his predecessor; on every vacancy some new claimant—many claimants probably—strive with eager emulation to win it and to retain it. Every loss is, in a brief period, easily and fully repaired. Even, too, in the hereditary part of our constitution, most calamities are soon forgotten. One monarch dies, and another succeeds him. A new court, a new family, new hopes and new interests, spring up and supersede those which have passed away.—BAGEHOT in *The Economist* for December, 1801.

Behold now, thou art barren; but thou shalt conceive, and bear a son.—JUDGES XIII. 3.

A DEEP teaching lies in the Hebrew idea, recurrent in so many forms, and haunting the world of fairyland and of legend, that the most precious gift of heaven must be long waited for. The late-born child is always the best beloved, the wondrously gifted, the miracle of strength, or the seer, who is to decide the fate of a nation. More or less, we see that the late-born is the precursor of the virgin-born.—JULIA WEDGWOOD, *Message of Israel*, p. 142.

REFERENCES.—XIII. 16.—W. Ewen, *Christian World Pulpit*, 1891, p. 328. XIII. 18-22.—J. Vaughan, *Fifty Sermons* (1874), p. 249.

'The angel of the Lord did no more appear to Manoah and to his wife. Then Manoah knew that he was an angel of the Lord.'—JUDGES XIII. 21.

THE golden moments in the stream of life rush past us, and we see nothing but sand; the angels come to visit us, and we only know them when they are gone. —GEORGE ELIOT.

A WOMAN'S LOGIC

'And Manoah said unto his wife, We shall surely die, because we have seen God. But his wife said, If the Lord were pleased to kill us He would not have received a burnt offering and a meat offering at our hands, neither would He have showed us all these things, neither would He as at this time have told us such things as these.'—JUDGES XIII. 22, 23.

WE say usually that woman has instinct and man has logic. That is an ingenious definition to save

the masculine face. For really instinct is logic without its forms, and you have only to look at this text to see that the woman's instinct and logic are alike sound and convincing.

I. The Promise in Nature.—Now let us first take this question: If the Lord had been pleased to kill us, would He have shown us all these things? We may ask this question in respect of this present life, and its anxieties. We are often full of trouble about our future life in this world. We are full of misgivings, full of solicitudes, full of apprehension. Now when we are thus tormented would it not be a good thing to put to ourselves: Would God have shown us all these things (these things that He is displaying to us, say, in this royal summer-time), would God have shown us all these wonderful things of our personal experience if He had meant to starve us, to degrade us, to forsake us, and leave us to nakedness and despair? All the riches and splendours of nature assure us that God is going to take care of us in the days to come as in the days that are past.

II. The Promise in Life.—And you may take the same argument about the greater life beyond this world. We are doubtful sometimes, we are troubled with perplexities about the unknown future, and we are tempted to say that we shall perish utterly. If God had meant to destroy us would He have acted as He has with us, brought us into this world, and schooled us only to dismiss us to the dust? After all the grandeur of the world of which we are the chief object, the splendour of our faculties, the excellence of our education, the rich treatment received at the hand of heaven, all declare that life has an immense perspective, that God is contemplating generous things, and after laying His large foundations He is going to put on the superstructure and the topstone of perfection, of immortality.

III. The Promise in Revelation. — Another question, Would the Lord have spoken to us all these things if He had meant to kill us? He has not only shown us wonderful things, but He has spoken to us great words. God has not left Himself without witness; from the beginning there have been His messengers speaking great words of light, of true righteousness, and hope to the various nations. And (depend upon it) God will continue to vindicate Himself and utter His great words. And what is all this for? For what end? Has God spoken to us through the Jewish nation, and spoken to us through His Son, and is it likely now that He is going to annihilate us, to desert us, to leave us in darkness and despair? It is not like Him. The very fact that He has spoken to us is full of promise and full of prophecy.

IV. The Promise in Grace.—Finally, would God have shown us all the grace which He has shown us if He had meant to destroy us? Think of what God has given us in His Son; of the love He has expressed to us in His Gospel! God has spoken words to you that He will justify and accomplish.—W. L. Watkinson, *The Christian World Pulpit*, Vol. lxv. 1904.

References.—XIII. 22, 23.—H. J. Bevis, *Sermons*, p. 186. J. Keble, *Sermons for Sundays after Trinity*, part i. p. 95. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxiii. No. 1340. XIII. 23.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. viii. No. 440. XIII. 24.—I. Williams, *Characters of the Old Testament*, p. 149. XIII. 24, 25.—Bishop Alexander, *The Great Question*, p. 145.

'And the Spirit of the Lord began to move him at times in the camp of Dan, between Zorah and Eshtaol.'—Judges xiii. 25.

Deeds of heroism are only offered to those who have been, for many long years, heroes in obscurity and silence.—Maeterlinck.

History proves that the majority of men who have done anything great have passed their youth in seclusion.—Heine.

Reference.—XIII. 25.—J. Clifford, *Daily Strength for Daily Living*, p. 97.

'And Samson went down to Timnath.'—Judges xiv. 1.

All transitions are dangerous; and the most dangerous is the transition from the restraint of the family circle to the non-restraint of the world.—Herbert Spencer.

Reference.—XIV. 4.—J. N. Norton, *Golden Truths*, p. 369.

'And, behold, a young lion roared against him. And the Spirit of the Lord came mightily upon him, and he rent him as he would have rent a kid.'—Judges xiv. 5, 6.

God never gives strength, but he employs it. Poverty meets one like an armed man; infamy, like some furious mastiff, comes flying in the face of another; the wild boar out of the forest, or the bloody tiger of persecution, sets on one; the brawling curs of heretical pravity, or contentious neighbourhood, are ready to bait another; and by all these meaner and brutish adversaries, will God fit us for greater conflicts. It is a pledge of our future victory over the Philistines, if we can say, My soul hath been among lions.—Bishop Hall.

Reference.—XIV. 8, 9.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxix. No. 1703.

'Out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong came forth sweetness.'—Judges xiv. 14.

All over Normandy you come upon these fortified abbayes, built for praying and fighting once, and ruined now, and turned to different uses. It is like Samson's riddle to see the carcase of the lions with honey flowing from them. 'Out of the eater came forth meat; out of the strong came forth sweetness.' There is a great archway at the farm at Tracy, with heavy wooden doors studded with nails. There is rust in plenty, and part of a moat still remaining. The hay is stacked in what was a chapel once; the yellow trusses are hanging through the crumbling flamboyant east window. There is a tall watch-tower, to which a pigeon-cote has been affixed, and low cloisters that are turned into outhouses and kitchens. The white walls tell a story of penance and fierce battlings which are over now, so far as they are

concerned.—From Miss Thackeray's *The Village on the Cliff.*

In the fourth chapter of *My Schools and Schoolmasters*, Hugh Miller tells how 'a party of boys had stormed a humble-bee's nest on the side of the old chapel-brae, and, digging inwards along the narrow winding earth passage, they at length came to a grinning human skull, and saw the bees issuing thick from out a round hole at its base—the *foramen magnum*. The wise little workers had actually formed their nest within the hollow of the head, once occupied by the busy brain; and their spoilers, more scrupulous than Samson of old, who seems to have enjoyed the meat brought forth out of the eater, and the sweetness extracted from the strong, left in very great consternation their honey all to themselves.'

Some of the loveliest of the works of man's hand seem to come out of utter foolishness and vileness, just as came honey from the carcass of Samson's lion. Even to exclude the later abomination of Greek sculpture, much of its true work was done in societies putrid to the core in public and private life.—Frederic Harrison.

Compare James Smetham on De Quincey: 'What a queer, mystic, sublime, inscrutable, fascinating old mummy he is! Throw your mind back to the days when, fifty years or more ago, he wandered in London streets, and what he says of himself in the *Confessions* then, and fancy that he has lasted on till now, and is winking and blinking yet. . . . Now the fact is, *that* man has wasted his life; and one can only, in one's soul, use him as Samson used the honey out of the dead lion—"Out of the strong came forth sweetness".'

Temptations, when we meet them at first, are as the lion that roared upon Samson; but if we overcome them, the next time we see them, we shall find a nest of honey within them.—Bunyan, *Grace Abounding.*

In his essay on 'The Enjoyment of Unpleasant Places,' R. L. Stevenson tells how once in a cold, bleak, Northern district he received some singularly pleasurable impressions, owing to the discipline of having to hunt out what was good amid the uncongenial surroundings. 'And this happened to me in the place of all others where I liked least to stay. When I think of it, I grow ashamed of my own ingratitude. "Out of the strong came forth sweetness." There, in the bleak and gusty North, I received, perhaps, my strongest impression of peace. I saw the sea to be great and calm; and the earth, in that little corner, was all alive and friendly to me. So, wherever a man is, he will find something to please and pacify him . . . let him only look for it in the right spirit, and he will surely find.'

'And the Spirit of the Lord came upon him.'—Judges xiv. 19.

Some one once asked Luther what was the difference between Samson and Julius Cæsar, or any famous general who had been endowed with a vigorous body and a vigorous mind. The Reformer answered: 'Samson's strength was produced by the Holy Ghost animating him, for the Holy Ghost enables those who serve God obediently to accomplish great exploits. The strength and grandeur of soul of the heathen were also an inspiration and work of God, but not of the kind which sanctifies. I often reflect with admiration upon Samson. Mere human strength could never have done what he did.'

I confess there are, in Scripture, stories that do exceed the fables of poets, and, to a captious reader, sound like Gargantua or Bevis. Search all the legends of times past, and the fabulous conceits of these present, and 'twill be hard to find one that deserves to carry the buckler to Samson; yet is all this of an easy possibility, if we conceive a Divine concourse, or an influence from the little finger of the Almighty. —Sir Thomas Browne, *Religio Medici.*

'And he found a new jawbone of an ass, and took it, and slew a thousand men therewith.'—Judges xv. 15.

Is it fair to call the famous *Drapier's Letters* patriotism? They are masterpieces of dreadful humour and invective: they are reasoned logically enough too, but the proposition is as monstrous and fabulous as the Lilliputian island. It is not that the grievance is so great, but there is his enemy—the assault is wonderful for its activity and terrible rage. It is Samson, with a bone in his hand, rushing on his enemies and felling them: one admires not the cause so much as the strength, the anger, the fury of the champion.—Thackeray upon *Swift.*

References.—XV. 15-19.—S. Baring-Gould, *Village Preaching for a Year*, vol. ii. p. 38. XVI. 3.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. lii. No. 3009.

'And it came to pass afterward, that he loved a woman in the valley of Sorek, whose name was Delilah.'—Judges xvi. 4.

In the preface to *The Character of the Happy Warrior*, Wordsworth notes that 'the cause of the great war with the French naturally fixed one's attention upon the military character, and, to the honour of our country, there were many illustrious instances of the qualities that constitute its highest excellence. Lord Nelson carried most of these virtues that the trials he was exposed to in his department of the service necessarily call forth and sustain, if they do not produce the contrary vices. But his public life was stained with one great crime, so that, though many passages of these lines were suggested by what was generally known as excellent in his conduct, I have not been able to connect his name with the poem as I could wish, or even to think of him with satisfaction in reference to the idea of what a warrior ought to be.'

'And he awaked.'—Judges xvi. 14.

Methinks I see in my mind a noble and puissant nation rousing herself like a strong man after sleep, and shaking her invincible locks: methinks I see her as an eagle renewing her mighty youth, and kindling her undazzled eyes at the full midday beam; purging and unscaling her long-abused sight at the fountain

itself of heavenly radiance; while the whole noise of timorous and flocking birds, with those also that love the twilight, flutter about, amazed at what she means, and in their envious gabble would prognosticate a year of sects and schisms.—MILTON, *Areopagitica*.

To the history of Samson, one of his favourite Scriptures, Milton returns in his *Reasons of Church Government*, where he frequently compares the Hebrew champion's career and character to the rulers. 'I cannot better liken the state and person of a king than to that mighty Nazarite, Samson; who, being disciplined from his birth in the precepts and the practice of temperance and sobriety, grows up to a noble strength and perfection, with those his illustrious locks, the Laws, waving and curly about his godlike shoulders. And, while he keeps them undiminished and unshorn, he may with the jawbone of an ass, that is, with the word of his meanest officer, suppress and put to confusion thousands of those that rise against his just power. But laying down his head amongst the strumpet flatteries of prelates, while he sleeps and thinks no harm, they, wickedly shaving off all those bright and weighty tresses of his laws and just prerogatives, which were his ornament and strength, deliver him over to indirect and violent counsels, which, as those Philistines, put out the fair and far-sighted eyes of his natural mind, and make him grind in the prison house of their sinister ends, and practise upon him; till he, knowing this prelatical razor to have bereft him of his wonted might, nourish again his puissant hair, the golden beams of law and right, and they, sternly shook, thunder with ruin upon the heads of those his evil counsellors, but not without great affliction to himself.'

REFERENCES.—XVI. 17.—H. P. Liddon, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 1111. XVI. 20.—R. J. Campbell, *Sermons Addressed to Individuals*, p. 73. G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 413. W. J. Bach, *A Book of Lay Sermons*, p. 247. S. Baring-Gould, *One Hundred Sermon Sketches*, p. 121. XVI. 20, 21.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. iv. No. 224.

A FORFEITED GIFT

'He wist not that the Lord had departed from him.'—JUDGES XVI. 20.

I. THE fall and the death of Samson are illustrative of a recurrent human experience. Unfaithfulness to a Divine gift results in its withdrawal. In a sense all men are divinely gifted, though their gifts differ both in quality and in degree, which is precisely what we ought to expect. Suppose Samson had lived and died like the great lawgiver of Israel—who can think about Moses without believing his estimate of manhood is better for that life? Joshua, who, inspired by a greater than himself, hearing his Divine call, 'Moses my servant is dead, now therefore arise,' rose captain of Israel, faithful to the call, was faithful to the last, in his dying hour calling Israel before him. 'Choose you this day whom ye will serve.' Elijah, the most picturesque of them all, a solitary figure in a decadent age, defying all the untoward tendencies of his time, witnessing for God and in the sublimity of his death impressing Israel for good like Samson, but oh, in what a different fashion! Suppose that Samson's life and death had been as these—for he was called to the first place just as these were? He had his opportunity and he put it away.

II. Vocation may be forfeited, and there is no tragedy so sad, no end so melancholy, as that in which a man discovers that he has been living for long without God and without the gift that ought to have led him to great things. You have had your gracious opportunity, your season of vision, and whatever kind of man you are it will be of no use to you in the great day of reckoning for you to deny the moment when the opportunity came. Do we know the opportunity when it comes? Are we clear as to the moment when we stop our ears and close our eyes and turn our feet from the pathway of duty? You know perfectly well if this gift that is in you is debased, and when you know it you have rightly judged in the day of dread discovery that the Spirit of the Lord has departed.

III. It is sometimes said that the word of the prophet has no hearing in these days. Men are indifferent to the claims of the Christ. God has but little place in their lives. Now, is it true of the men who reject God and Christ, and the Bible, and with it all the ideals and associations that belong of right thereto—is it true that they are living the life of the highest they can see? When you exchanged something else for Christ, did you choose a higher or did you choose a lower? If you choose a lower, putting from you the higher, on whatever hypocritical pretext your choice was made, you did it knowingly, and you forfeited a great opportunity and you thrust from you the Divine gift. Recognize that the Divine gift rests upon you for just what you are and where you are, and that it can be withdrawn, and it may be so. You are not living to your highest, and yet you could in the strength of the Lord God.—R. J. CAMPBELL, *Sermons Addressed to Individuals*, p. 73.

'And the Philistines put out his eyes.'—JUDGES XVI. 21.

HIS eyes were the first offenders, which betrayed him to lust; and now they are first pulled out. . . . It is better for Samson to be blind in prison than to abuse his eyes in Sorek: yea I may safely say, he was more blind when he saw licentiously, than now that he sees not; he was a greater slave when he served his affections, than now in grinding for the Philistines. The loss of his eyes shows him his sin; neither could he see how ill he had done, till he saw not.—BISHOP HALL.

'And he did grind in the prison house. Howbeit the hair of his head began to grow again.'—JUDGES XVI. 21, 22.

SAMSON'S hair grew again, but not his eyes. Time may restore some losses, others are never to be repaired.—THOMAS FULLER.

IN his fifth lecture on *Heroes*, Carlyle applies this incident to Benthamism, which, he avers, 'you may call heroic, though a Heroism with its *eyes* put out.

It is the culminating point, and fearless ultimatum, of what lay in the half-and-half state, pervading man's whole existence in that eighteenth century. It seems to me, all deniers of Godhood, and all lip-believers of it, are bound to be Benthamites, if they have courage and honesty. Benthamism is an *eyeless* Heroism: the Human species, like a hapless, blinded Samson, grinding in the Philistine Mill, clasps convulsively the pillars of its Mind; brings huge ruin down, but ultimately deliverance withal.'

Those who would take away the use of our reason in spiritual things would deal with us as the Philistines did with Samson—first, put out our eyes, and then make us grind in their mill.—John Owen.

Ruskin, in the fifth volume of *Modern Painters*, asks, How did the art of the Venetians 'so swiftly pass away? How become, what it became unquestionably, one of the chief causes of the corruption of the mind of Italy, and of her subsequent decline in moral and political power? By reason of one great, one fatal fault—recklessness in aim. Wholly noble in its sources, it was wholly unworthy in its purposes. Separate and strong, like Samson, chosen from its youth, and with the Spirit of God visibly resting on it,—like him, it warred in careless strength, and wantoned in untimely pleasure.'

In his essay on *Old Mortality*, Stevenson describes the career of a brilliant, soulless, fellow-undergraduate, 'most beautiful in person, most serene and genial by disposition . . . a noble figure of youth, but following vanity and incredulous of good; and sure enough, somewhere on the high seas of life, with his health, his hopes, his patrimony, and his self-respect, he miserably went down. . . . Thus was our old comrade, like Samson, careless in the days of his strength.'

References.—XVI. 21.—J. Aspinall, *Parish Sermons* (2nd Series), p. 89. XVI. 21-31.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—Judges*, p. 250. XVI. 22.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxxiii. No. 1939.

'And they called for Samson out of the prison house, and he made them sport.'—Judges xvi. 25.

Compare Carlyle's grim description of British opera. 'One singer in particular, called Coletti or some such name, seemed to me, by the cast of his face, by the tones of his voice, by his general bearing, so far as I could read it, to be a man of deep and ardent sensibilities, of delicate intuitions, just sympathies; originally an almost poetic soul, or man of *genius*, as we term it; stamped by Nature as capable of far other work than squalling here, like a blind Samson, to make the Philistines sport.'

HOW NOT TO PRAY

'Only this once.'—Judges xvi. 28.

We have heard these words until we are heartsick of them. There are some words we cannot do without; we know they are lies, we mean them at the time, or at least we think we mean them; and lo, in a little while the remembrance utterly fades, and we come back upon the old spot with the old hammer, with a false repercussion, with a smiting that we promised should never be renewed.

Samson would gather himself up for a grand final effort; he said in effect, O Lord, the Philistines have taken away mine eyes, I am no longer what I was, I am no longer a prophet and servant of Thine, I am no longer a judge in the country, I am a poor fool; I gave up my secret, I was fallen upon by cruel wretches, they are laughing at me and mocking me with a most bitter sarcasm; Lord, remember the old days, direct my hands, some of you, to the pillars on which this house stands, and now, Lord, this once, the last time, give me back the old Samson, and I will tear these Philistines down as a palace might be torn down by an earthquake: Lord, this once, only this once; I pray Thee let the old strength come back, and I will be avenged for my two eyes. It was very natural, it was most human, it was just what we would have done under similar circumstances, and therefore do not let us laugh at the dismantled giant.

Let us accommodate the passage, so that it may become a lamp which we can hold over various points of life.

I. Now let us note three things about this prayer. First of all, the prayer was to the true God. It was not offered to an idol or to a graven image of any kind or to a mere filmy ideality, a shadowy half-something that was wraith-like, apparitional, but not nameable or not approachable in any suitable and substantial way. This prayer went up directly in the line of the true throne. It was the Lord God of Israel, it was the cry of necessity to the Giver of all good. Know then that we may be praying to the right God; that is no guarantee that we shall get the answer which we desire.

II. What ailed this poor prayer? what was its mortal disease? The mortal disease of this prayer uttered by Samson was that it was offered in the wrong spirit. It is the spirit that determines the quality. 'That I may be at once avenged of the Philistines for my two eyes.' It was a prayer for vengeance. That prayer comes easily to the natural spirit. We love to magnify the individual, and to think that individualism is personality. Prayer is self-slaughter, in so far as the will and the supreme desire of the heart may be concerned. Prayer is self-renunciation; prayer says, Lord, Thy will be done, not mine. Thus the Divine will is done by consent human and Divine, and is the law, in its own degree of the universe; the soul then falls into the rhythmic movement of the creation, and the man is translated out of individuality into personality in its broadest definitions, and he is part and parcel of the great unity which swings like a censer round the altar Divine.

III. In the third place this prayer was answered, but answered in judgment. Samson had his way, but his way killed him. We will not say anything about Samson's character, we have too much to say about our own; it does not do to stretch our hands across the centuries that we may smite some downtrodden man, but we must begin at the house of God. The

judgment must begin in every man's own secret soul. But this we may say; for the eternal comfort of the race it is written according to the blessing pronounced by father Jacob, 'Gad, a troop shall overcome him: but he shall overcome at the last'. So we come upon the familiar thought of intermediate and final victories.

We were caught in all the sins; the decalogue was flying round us in splintered, shattered pieces, the devil was triumphing over us, but we overcame at the last. It was a long time in coming, but the purpose of God cannot be set aside, and if we diligently, humbly, and reverently entreat the Divine presence, and if we be heartily ashamed of our sins, and name them one by one in the face of the noonday sun, and smite upon our hearts and say, 'All these sins are ours, and we repent them,' who can tell whether God will be gracious unto us, and give us a nail in His tabernacle, and one small place in His great providential plan?—Joseph Parker, *City Temple Pulpit*, vol. III. p. 32.

'And Samson took hold of the two middle pillars . . . and he bowed himself with all his might; and the house fell upon the lords and upon all the people that were therein.'—Judges xvi. 29, 30.

In his introduction to Woolman's *Journal* Whittier has occasion to speak of the magnitude of that evil which Woolman set himself to grapple. The slave-trade had rooted itself in all departments of American life. 'Yet he seems never to have doubted for a moment the power of simple truth to eradicate it, nor to have hesitated as to his own duty in regard to it. There was no groping like Samson in the gloom; no feeling in blind wrath and impatience for the pillars of the temple of Dagon. . . . He believed in the goodness of the Lord that leadeth to repentance; and that love could reach the witness for itself in the hearts of all men, through all entanglements of custom and every barrier of pride and selfishness.'

Death is no such terrible enemie, when a man hath so many attendants about him, than can winne the combat of him. *Revenge* triumphs over *Death; Love* slights it; *Honour* aspireth to it; *Grief* flieth to it. —Bacon.

References.—XVI. 30.—Phillips Brooks, *The Law of Growth*, p. 253. A. P. Stanley, *Sermons on Special Occasions*, p. 274. J. M. Neale, *Sermons Preached in Sackville College Chapel*, vol. iii. p. 388.

'And he judged Israel twenty years.'—Judges xvi. 31.

A man's life is his whole life, not the last glimmering snuff of the candle. . . . It is neither the first nor last hour of our existence, but the space that parts these two—not our exit nor our entrance upon the stage, but what we do, feel, and think, while here—that we are to attend to, in pronouncing sentence upon it.—Hazlitt.

'Silent was that house of many chambers,' writes Mr. Meredith of Lassalle. 'That mass of humanity, profusely mixed of good and evil, of generous ire and mutinous, of the passion for the future of mankind and vanity of person, magnanimity and sensualism, high judgment, reckless indiscipline, chivalry, savagery, solidity, fragmentariness, was dust. He perished of his weakness, but it was a strong man that fell. His end was a derision because the animal in him ran him unchained and bounding to it. A stormy blood made wreck of a splendid intelligence.'

References.—XVI. 31.—Bishop Alexander, *The Great Question*, p. 145. XVII. 3.—G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 261.

'I am a Levite, and I go to sojourn where I may find a place. And Micah said unto him, Dwell with me, and be unto me a father and a priest, and I will give thee ten shekels of silver by the year, and a suit of apparel, and thy victuals. So the Levite went in. And the Levite was content to dwell with the man.'—Judges xvii. 9-11.

After that first fervour of simple devotion, which his beloved Jesuit priest had inspired in him, speculative theology took but little hold on the young man's mind. When his early credulity was disturbed, and his saints and virgins taken out of his worship, to rank little higher than the divinities of Olympus, his belief became acquiescence rather than the ardour; and he made his mind up to assume the cassock and bands, as another man does to wear a breast-plate and jack-boots, or to mount a merchant's desk, for a livelihood, and from obedience and necessity, rather than from choice. There were scores of such men in Mr. Esmond's time at the universities, who were going into the Church with no better calling than his.—Thackeray, *Esmond*, chap. ix.

In *The Force of Truth*, Thomas Scott confesses that his original views in entering the ministry 'were these three:—A desire of a less laborious and more comfortable way of procuring a livelihood, than otherwise I had the prospect of; the expectation of more leisure to employ in reading, of which I was inordinately fond; and a proud conceit of my abilities, with a vainglorious imagination that I should sometime distinguish and advance myself in the literary world.'

'And they said unto him, Who brought thee hither? and what makest thou in this place? and what hast thou here?'—Judges xviii. 3.

'It is a vain thought,' says Dinah Morris in *Adam Bede*, 'to flee from the work that God appoints us, for the sake of finding a greater blessing to our own souls, as if we could choose for ourselves where we shall find the fullness of the Divine Presence, instead of seeking it where alone it is to be found, in loving obedience.'

'They dwelt careless, after the manner of the Zidonians, quiet and secure; and there was no magistrate in the land, that might put them to shame in any thing.'—Judges xviii. 7.

A man's own safety is a god that sometimes makes very grim demands.—George Eliot.

Security, as commonly understood, is the state in which one fears no danger, where one is cheerful and hopes the best. We all begin our life in security. . . . We are all born optimists.—Martensen.

There are a multitude of persons who go through life in a safe, uninteresting mediocrity. They have

never been exposed to temptation; they are not troubled with violent passions; they have nothing to try them; they have never attempted great things for the glory of God; they have never been thrown upon the world; they live at home in the bosom of their families, or in quiet situations . . . and when their life is closed, people cannot help speaking well of them, as harmless, decent, correct persons, whom it is impossible to blame, impossible not to regret. Yet, after all, how different their lives are from that described as a Christian's life in St. Paul's Epistles!—NEWMAN.

REFERENCES.—XVIII. 7, 27, 28.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xlii. No. 2490. XVIII. 9, 10.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons Preached in Sackville College Chapel*, vol. ii. p. 330.

'Hold thy peace, lay thine hand upon thy mouth.'—JUDGES XVIII. 19.

So, in almost the same words, was the like bribe offered by one of the great religious houses of England to the monk who guarded the shrine of one of the most sacred relics in the adjacent cathedral of Canterbury—'Give us the portion of St. Thomas's skull which is in thy custody, and thou shalt cease to be a simple monk; thou shalt be Abbot of St. Augustine's.' As Roger accepted the bait in the twelfth century after the Christian era, so did the Levite of Micah's house in the fifteenth century before it.—STANLEY.

'And the priest's heart was glad, and he went.'—JUDGES XVIII. 20.

HE that was won with ten shekels may be lost with eleven. . . . There is nothing more inconstant than a Levite that seeks nothing but himself.—BISHOP HALL.

REFERENCE.—XVIII. 24.—S. Baring-Gould, *One Hundred Sermon Sketches*, p. 109.

'And they came unto Laish, unto a people that were at quiet and secure: and they smote them with the edge of the sword.'—JUDGES XVIII. 27.

WHEN a *Warré-like State* growes *Softe* and *Effeminate*, they may be sure of a *Warre*. For commonly such States are growne rich, in the time of their degenerating: and so the Prey inviteth, and their Decay in Valour encourageth a Warre.—BACON.

'And a certain Levite took to him a concubine out of Bethlehem-judah.'—JUDGES XIX. 1.

ON the night before he fled from Geneva, Rousseau relates how finding himself unusually wakeful, 'I continued my reading beyond my usual hour, and read the whole passage ending at the story of the Levite of Ephraim—in the book of Judges, if I mistake not, for since then I have never seen it. This story made a great impression on me, and in a kind of dream my imagination still ran upon it.' Suddenly wakened by the news that his *Émile* was proscribed, he drove off, and composed, during his journey, a version of this barbaric tale.

'And, behold, there came an old man from his work out of the field at even.'—JUDGES XIX. 16.

I HEAR but of one man at his work in all Gibeah; the rest were quaffing and revelling. That one man ends his work with a charitable entertainment; the others end their play in a brutish beastliness and violence.—BISHOP HALL.

REFERENCE.—XIX. 20.—H. J. Wilmot-Buxton, *Common Life Religion*, p. 232.

'And the men of Israel turned again upon the children of Benjamin, and smote them with the edge of the sword, as well the men of every city, as the beast, and all that came to hand.'—JUDGES XX. 48.

'HUMANITY, or mercy, is certainly not the strong point of Achaian Greeks. With them not only no sacredness, but little value, attached to human life; and the loss of it stirs no sympathy unless it be associated with beauty, valour, patriotism, or other esteemed characteristics. Yet here, again, the forms of evil are less extreme. We do not find, even in the stern, relentless vengeance of Odysseus on his enemies, or in the passionate wish of Achilles that nature would permit what it forbade, namely, to devour his hated foe, a form of cruelty and brutality so savage as is recorded in the case of the Levite with his wife and concubine at Gibeah, and of the war which followed it.—W. E. GLADSTONE.

'O Lord God of Israel, why should there be to-day one tribe lacking in Israel?'—JUDGES XXI. 3.

IF there were no fault in their severity, it needed no excuse: and if there were a fault, it will admit of no excuse: yet, as if they meant to shift off the sin, they expostulate with God, 'O Lord God of Israel, why is this come to pass this day!' God gave them no command of this rigour; yea he twice crost them in the execution; and now, in that which they entreated of God with tears, they challenge Him. It is a dangerous injustice to lay the burden of our sins upon Him, which tempteth no man, nor can be tempted with evil; while we so remove one sin, we double it.—BISHOP HALL.

THE MISSING ONE

'O Lord God of Israel, why is this come to pass in Israel, that there should be to-day one tribe lacking in Israel.'—JUDGES XXI. 3.

THIS inquiry represents the spirit of the whole Bible.

I. Look at this text as a sentiment, a discipline, as an encouragement. Is not this the human aspect of the solicitude of God's heart? In this respect as well as in others is man made after the image and likeness of God. There is what may be called a distinct unity of emotion—call it pity, solicitude, compassion, or by any other equal term—running through the whole Bible. From the first God loved man with atoning and redeeming love. Marvellous and instructive as is the development of the Bible history, in all the infinite tumult God looks after the sinner, the wanderer, with longing love.

II. But, from another point of view, how different the text. This high feeling has also a disciplinary aspect, and therefore there is a whole field of complete and ardent loyalty. When Deborah sang her triumphant song she disclosed the sterner aspect of this case,

She mentioned the absentees by name, and consigned them to the withering *immortalities of oblivion*. 'Reuben remained among the sheep-folds' when he ought to have answered the call of the trumpet. Why was he lacking in that day? He was pre-occupied; he sent promises, but he remained at home among the flocks.

III. Some are no longer in the battle, yet to-day are not lacking in the sense of the text. They are not here—they are here. Even the mighty David waxed faint. He was but seventy when he died.—Joseph Parker.

'If the daughters of Shiloh come out to dance in dances, then come ye out of the vineyards.'—Judges xxi. 21.

Speaking, in *Time and Tide*, of the ancient religious use of dance and song, as in this passage, where the feast of the vintage is marked by thanksgiving, Ruskin contrasts it with a Swiss scene of vulgar riot which he once witnessed in the autumn of 1863, when the Zurich peasantry abandoned themselves to 'two ceremonies only. During the day, the servants of the farms, where the grapes had been gathered, collected in knots about the vineyards, and slowly fired horse-pistols, from morning to evening. At night they got drunk, and staggered up and down the hill paths, uttering, at short intervals, yells and shrieks, differing only from the howling of wild animals by a certain intended and insolent discordance, only attainable by the malignity of debased human creatures. . . . Note this, respecting what I have told you, that in the very centre of Europe, in a country which is visited for their chief pleasure by the most refined and thoughtful persons among Christian nations—a country made by God's hand the most beautiful in the temperate regions of the earth, and inhabited by a race once capable of the sternest patriotism and simplest purity of life, your modern religion, in the very stronghold of it, has reduced the song and dance of ancient virginal thanksgiving to the howlings and staggerings of men betraying, in intoxication, a nature sunk more than half-way towards the beasts.'

'In those days there was no king in Israel: every man did that which was right in his own eyes.'—Judges xxi. 25.

'From a combination of causes,' says Mr. Froude in his *Annals of an English Abbey*, 'we are now passing into a sea where our charts fail us, and the stars have ceased to shine. The tongue of the prudent speaks stammeringly. The fool clamours that he is as wise as the sage, and the sage shrinks from saying that it is not so. Authority is mute. One man, we are told, is as good as another: each by Divine charter may think as he pleases, and carve his actions after his own liking. Institutions crumble; creeds resolve themselves into words; forms of government disintegrate, and there is no longer any word of command. . . . Civilized mankind are broken into two hundred million units, each thinking and doing what is good in his own eyes.

'Experience of the past forbids the belief that anarchy will continue for ever.'

Reference.—XXI. 25.—H. Hensley Henson, *Light and Heaven*, p. 87.

RUTH

RUTH

References.—I.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xlvii. No. 2746, I.-IV.—E. Griffith Jones, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lv. 1899, p. 42. I. 1-5.—S. Cox, *The Book of Ruth*, p. 43.

'And they took them wives of the women of Moab; the name of the one was Orpah, and the name of the other Ruth.'—Ruth i. 4.

We strain our eyes to know something of the long line of the purple hills of Moab, which form the background at once of the history and of the geography of Palestine. It is a satisfaction to feel that there is one tender association which unites them with the familiar history and scenery of Judæa—that from their recesses, across the deep gulf which separates the two regions, came the gentle ancestress of David and the Messiah.—Stanley.

References.—I. 6-22.—S. Cox, *The Book of Ruth*, p. 63. I. 8.—W. M. Statham, *Outlines of Sermons on the Old Testament*, p. 60.

'It grieveth me much for your sakes, that the hand of the Lord is gone out against me.'—Ruth i. 13.

Good dispositions love not to pleasure themselves with the disadvantage of others; and had rather be miserable alone, than to draw in partners to their sorrow. . . . As, contrarily, ill minds care not how many companions they have in misery; if themselves miscarry, they could be content if all the world were enwrapped with them in the same distress.—Bishop Hall.

'And Orpah kissed her mother-in-law; but Ruth clave unto her.'—Ruth i. 14.

Perplexed Naomi, torn with contrary feelings; which tried her the more—Orpah who left her, or Ruth who remained? Orpah who was a pain, or Ruth who was a charge?—Newman.

'Behold, thy sister-in-law is gone back unto her people and unto her gods; return thou after thy sister-in-law.'—Ruth i. 15.

Orpah kissed Naomi and went back to the world. There was sorrow in the parting, but Naomi's sorrow was more for Orpah's sake than for her own. Pain there would be, but it was the pain of a wound, not the yearning regret of love. It was the pain we feel when friends disappoint us and fall in our esteem. That kiss of Orpah was no loving token; it was but the hollow profession of those who use smooth words, that they may part company with us, with least trouble and discomfort to themselves. Orpah's tears were but the dregs of affection; she clasped her mother-in-law once for all, that she might not cleave to her.—Newman.

References.—I. 16.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xlvi. No. 2680. J. McNeill, *Regent Square Pulpit*, vol. iii. p. 185. I. 16, 17.—C. Bickersteth, *The Shunammite*, p. 47. I. 16-22.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, Ruth*, etc., p. 259.

STEADFASTLY MINDED

'Steadfastly minded.'—Ruth i. 18.

I. As we read the simple Bible story, how does the beauty of the character of that Moabitish woman attract us? Her gentleness, love, faithfulness, courage, industry, patience, obedience—all stand out before us and win us. They were found in her in the various circumstances which drew them forth because she was 'steadfastly minded'.

II. 'Steadfastly minded,' there was the secret of her noble life. What a contrast with her sister Orpah, weeping, kissing, but going back, or with Saul, impatient, unable to wait God's time, breaking His commandment, and falling lower and lower into sin. 'Steadfastly minded,' you all recognize the importance of this in earthly things; you know that a man who enters upon any work, or business, or profession, with only half his heart in it, never really succeeds—is never really happy in it. Steadfastness leads to self-denial, energy, perseverance, effort, pressing on; and therefore in all earthly things we recognize its value and importance; and we know that certain failure sooner or later awaits those who lack it.

III. The things which concern your never-dying souls, on which such infinite, eternal destinies depend, surely here, above all, is it necessary that all should be *steadfastly minded*, and no less so, that there must be continual self-denial. We must take up our cross daily, and follow in the road that is so narrow, through the battle that is so hard, and the dangers that are so many, until we receive the crown that is so glorious.—W. Howell Evans, *Sermons for the Church's Year*, p. 167.

FROM PLEASURE TO AFFLICTION

'Call me not Naomi, call me Mara.'—Ruth i. 20.

Ten years form a considerable portion of every man's life. Ten years in sharp conflict with the world, its labours, laws, and ways, will give a man a very different opinion of life to what he entertained in the days of his youth. When he took his departure into the far-off land to seek a place in the battle of life, he was carried along with the crowd of money-getters, pleasure-seekers, and ambition-hunters, and at the end of ten years, if not before, he will be ready to admit that affliction, barrenness, and want, underlie all its outward glory and tempting delight. Ten years will be enough to change its pleasant things into bitterness, to blunt the keen zest for life, and it may be, under God's grace, to bring back the soul from the land of bondage, and

to fill it with a sense of the great importance of living for that which is beyond. Man goes away, God brings home. The departure into Moab is all our own, but the return is His with Whom we have to do.

'Call me not Naomi, call me Mara.' Call me not Naomi the pleasant one, but Mara the bitter one, 'for the Almighty hath dealt *very* bitterly with me. I went out *full*, and the Lord hath brought me home again *empty*.'

I. Is not this the Cry of many a Heart?—Is not this the sad experience of thousands who have drunk deeply at life's fountain? The far-off land of worldliness in which I dwelt has yielded only barrenness and want. My years have been wasted, my opportunities lost, and that which seemed sweet and pleasant has turned to bitterness. I have mourning for mirth, dishonour for honour, sour for sweet. Oh, had I served my God with the zeal I served the world, I would not have to mourn a past that has been, as far as my eternal interests are concerned, a failure! 'Call me not Naomi, call me Mara.'

II. But after all, as Regards this Life, is it not better to be called Mara than Naomi?—Is there nothing good in this change of name? Does Mara bring more future blessedness than Naomi? Well, for life to be pleasant and sweet to a man he must have his own way. He must be at full liberty to select his studies, pursuits, pleasures, companions. He cannot endure to be disappointed, thwarted, foiled. He must enter the land of Moab and drink deeply of its snares and lusts and temptations. And what is the inevitable result? In his abundance he forgets the God Who giveth all, and Who intended all to be used in a different way, and for another purpose. But when disappointment, failure, affliction, confront him, then they reveal to him that life was never intended for him to have his own way. Naomi is changed into Mara, pleasant into bitter, and he beholds two wills in conflict, Divine and human, God's and his. He has been walking in the light of his own eyes, and not after the will of the Almighty. He sees that if he pursues this course the conflict must end, as far as he is concerned, in future and unutterable loss. Seeing the vanity and emptiness of earthly things, he comes to himself, he discovers that it is far better to submit his will to God's. There is a returning from the land of Moab unto his Father's house.

III. When the Change comes, when Naomi becomes Mara, what is our Work?—To come out of Moab. To leave the vain and empty surroundings, which in the past have proved such an attraction to us. For Naomi there was no rest, no comfort, no profit in Moab. Its sweetness had become bitter. Enjoyment had gone, wealth had vanished, and, like the prodigal of old, she came to herself, she remembered that there was enough and to spare in the Father's house, and so she arose with her daughters-in-law that she might return. From sorrow to repentance, bitterness to decision. Moab had become distasteful, she will arise and depart to the old home of childhood and youth. Whereupon 'she went forth out of the place'. Thus, when God in His mercy wakens up in us a sense of the vanity and emptiness of life, turns its sweet into bitter, let us depart from that which holds us earth-bound, and, while accepting the change in our lot with patience and resignation, let us struggle to rise from the lowness and deadness around us, to the earnestness and newness of life.

References.—I. 20.—C. Leach, *Mothers of the Bible*, p. 107. I. 20, 21.—T. Snape, *A Book of Lay Sermons*, p. 33. II. 1-23.—S. Cox, *The Book of Ruth*, p. 83. II. 3, 4.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons Preached in a Religious House*, vol. ii. p. 346. II. 4.—F. E. Paget, *Helps and Hindrances to the Christian Life*, vol. ii. p. 201. 'Plain Sermons' by contributors to the *Tracts for the Times*, vol. vi. p. 197.

'Let me glean and gather after the reapers among the sheaves.'
—Ruth ii. 7.

I do not hear Ruth stand upon the terms of her better education, or wealthy parentage; but now that God hath called her to want, she scorns not to lay her hand unto all homely services, and thinks it no disparagement to find her bread in other men's fields.—Bishop Hall.

'American girls,' says Mr. Kipling in *From Sea to Sea* (i. p. 6), 'develop greatly when a catastrophe arrives, and the man of many millions goes up or goes down, and his daughters take to stenography or typewriting. I have heard many tales of heroism from the lips of girls who counted the principals among their friends. The crash came: Mamie or Hattie or Sadie gave up their maid, their carriages and candy, and with No. 2 Remington and a stout heart set about earning their daily bread.'

Working in the quiet village, or in the distant field, women may be as pure and modest, men as high-minded and well-bred, and both as full of the fear of God, and the thought that God's eye is upon them, as if they were in a place or station where they had nothing to do but to watch over the salvation of their own souls; the meadow and the harvest-field need not be, as they too often are, places for temptation and defilement, where the old too often teach the young not to fear God and keep themselves pure, but to copy their coarse jests and foul language, and listen to stories which had better be buried for ever in the dirt out of which they spring. You know what I mean. You know what field-work too often is. Read the book of Ruth, and see what field-work may be and ought to be.—Charles Kingsley.

Reference.—II. 7.—H. J. Wilmot-Buxton, *Sunday Sermonettes for a Year*, p. 220.

THE DUTY OF GLEANING

(Harvest Festival)

'Then said Boaz unto Ruth, Hearest thou not, my daughter? Go not to glean in another field, neither go from hence, but abide here fast by my maidens.'—Ruth ii. 8.

Boaz in this book is a type of Christ, and Ruth is the type of the Christian soul. And the command given by Boaz to Ruth to glean in his fields, and not to glean in any other field, is very emphatic, and is repeated afterwards by Naomi.

I. Where are we to Glean?—We are warned that there is only one field in which we must glean—the field of Jesus Christ; the field of His Church; the field purchased by His Death and Passion; the field watered by the blood of His martyrs; the field which for nineteen hundred years has produced its glorious harvest of countless saints.

David says, 'Those that be planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God'. We must first be planted there by the Sacrament of Baptism. But this is not all. We must remain there, and grow there, and flourish there, and *glean* there, if we are to fulfil the commands of Holy Writ.

II. What are we to Glean?—Even those who are gleaning in Christ's Church need to be reminded that they are to seek those things which are best.

What are we gleaning? 1. Are we making the best use of our labour? Are we picking up the largest, and finest, and ripest ears of corn? The Sacraments of the Church, these are the full, ripe ears, the great means of grace. Do we avail ourselves of them in all their fulness.

2. Are we picking up those stalks of corn from which the birds have plucked the ears, which are, therefore, only husks and straw? What are our prayers and devotions? Are they merely formal words of the lips, and not feelings of the heart; the form of devotion without the spirit?

3. Are we picking up noxious weeds which grow among the corn, and making up our sheaves with them?

St. Paul tells us some of the things which we should be gleaning in the fields of Christian virtue, when he says, 'Whatsoever things are true,' etc.

III. How are we Gleaning?—With steady perseverance, with real industry; or in a fitful, idle, slothful way?—A. G. Mortimer, *The Church's Lessons for the Christian Year*, part iv. p. 344.

'Have I not charged the young men that they shall not touch thee?'—Ruth ii. 9.

Let us consider what that thing is which we call years of discretion. The young man is past his tutors, and arrived at the bondage of a caitiff spirit; he is run from discipline, and is let loose to passion; the man by this time hath wit enough to choose his vice, to act his best, to court his mistress, to talk confidently, and ignorantly, and perpetually, to despise his betters, to deny nothing to his appetites, to do things that, when he is indeed a man, he must for ever be ashamed of; for this is all the discretion that most men show in the first stage of their manhood; they can discern good from evil; and they prove their skill by leaving all that is good.—Jeremy Taylor.

References.—II. 12.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxxi. No. 1851. II. 14.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons for the Church Year*, vol. ii. p. 263. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. ix. No. 522. S. Baring-Gould, *Village Preaching for a Year*, vol. i. p. 229.

'Reproach her not.'—Ruth ii. 15.

Innocence and haycocks do not always go together.—Macaulay.

References.—II. 15.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xlvi. No. 2585. II. 15, 16.—*Ibid.* vol. viii. No. 464.

'And Boaz said, The Lord recompense thy work. . . . Let fall also some of the handfuls of purpose for her.'—Ruth ii. 16 with 12.

Charity was so well matched with his religion, without which good words are but hypocrisy.—Bishop Hall.

RUTH, THE MOABITESS

'So they gleaned in the field until even, and beat out that she had gleaned: and it was about an ephah of barley.'—Ruth ii. 17.

I. Notice the good providence of God, illustrated in the story of Ruth and Naomi. We are shown here how true is that verse of the Psalms, 'He is the father of the fatherless, and the God of the widow'. He never faileth those that trust in Him.

II. Let us notice in Ruth the reward of daughterly affection and dutifulness. Had she gone back, as her sister Orpah did, when Naomi gave her the choice of returning, even pressed her to go back, she would never have left that memorial of herself which will last while time lasts—the book of Ruth in our Bible She would never have married Boaz, nor become by so doing the ancestress of the Messiah.

III. She is an example of another great quality. How beautiful in God's sight, as in the sight of man, is maidenly modesty, purity, steadiness of conduct She spent, as we know, many days gleaning in the harvest field: never in all those days did she say or do aught that might cause shame.

IV. 'Where hast thou gleaned to-day?' This question opens out into a far wider meaning when we look at its spiritual instruction. It is a question that coming out of a Christian man's mouth applies to many things beside that of gathering up the ears of corn. Where hast thou gleaned to-day? may be asked, and *ought* to be asked, by each of us of his own soul, in respect to his way of spending the Sabbath, and asked at the close of every Sunday.

V. Notice the diligence of Ruth. She gleaned in the field until even, and beat out that she gleaned, and it was about an ephah (eight gallons) of barley, a good day's work, bringing with it a good recompense of reward. Ruth invites us to use all diligence to make our calling and election sure. She by what she did in the plot of ground at Bethlehem shows us what our work should be in the world. To glean, to gather up, here a little, and there a little, of those great Christian qualities which go to make a character that God will accept.—R. D. B. Rawnsley, *Village Sermons* (3rd Series), p. 119.

'And she brought forth and gave to her that she had reserved after she was sufficed.'—Ruth ii. 18.

Discussing, in *Arcady: For Better or Worse* (pp. 225 f.), the effect of the workhouse system in rural England, Dr. Jessopp observes: 'It does people good to be brought into daily intercourse with the aged and the weak and the needy. It is bad for us if our sense of pity and our gentle sympathies are never appealed to. We get hard and coarse and selfish, that

way. . . . But for good or evil there stands the fact that in our villages we have very little to do with or for the old people who are a link with the past, and very little occasion to make any sacrifices for others, and still less are we called upon to interest ourselves in their sorrows. The law of the land has come in and taken out of our hands the duty of looking after the poor and aged.'

REFERENCES.—II. 19.—J. McNeill, *Regent Square Pulpit*, vol. ii. p. 97. T. Champness, *New Coins from Old Gold*, p. 142. II. 20.—S. Cox, *The Book of Ruth*, p. 164. III. 1-18. —*Ibid.* p. 105. H. W. Webb-Peploe, *The Life of Privilege*, p. 130.

THE MESSAGE OF THE BOOK OF RUTH

'Thou art a near kinsman.'—RUTH III. 9.

IN speaking of the message which this little book has for us, we shall treat it as conveying to us a message of redemption. Looked at in this light the book has, I think, these things to tell us:—

I. *It tells us that the range of God's grace is ever wider than our conception of it.* The book of Ruth shows us how one who was a member of an idolatrous people, one who was a Gentile, an alien from the commonwealth of Israel, a stranger from the covenant of promise, having no hope and without God in the world, was actually brought into the number of the chosen people, and became one of the direct line of which the Messiah came.

In the old time, as in the new, God's salvation, though reaching men through channels of His own appointing, was open to all who cared to avail themselves of it.

II. *The second thing about redemption which this book tells us is, that although God's grace is so free and open to all, it can save us only when we make it ours by an act of deliberate choice.* God does not force His salvation on any. Ruth chose Israel and Israel's God. Had that choice not been made, Ruth would never have gained her position as the wife of Boaz. And even after this decisive choice was made her position was not secured until she had claimed all that was hers. Ruth had to make herself and her claims known to Boaz. She had to possess herself of her rights by a holy violence. And this she did.

With like decision and like determination must we act if we would win the heavenly city. It is true 'whosoever will may come'. It is true 'him that cometh unto Me I will in no wise cast out'. But if these blessed promises are to avail us, we must *will* and we must *come*.

III. *The third lesson about redemption which this book teaches us is this—that redemption is achieved by and only by a Kinsman-Redeemer.* Ruth owed her position in no sense to herself. She owed it entirely to Boaz. Her knowledge of her claim, her presentation of her claim, would have availed her nothing had Boaz refused to act. And Boaz' power of acting depended on his being a kinsman.

God's grace is indeed wide, wide as the universe, great as God Himself, but God's grace reaches sinners only through the Redeemer. And our Lord's power to redeem us lies in the fact that He is our near kinsman. Our Saviour is God. But our Saviour is man—as truly God as if He were not man, as truly man as if He were not God. Man alone could be the Lamb of God to take away the sins of the world. In Jesus therefore we have a Kinsman-Redeemer.

And as Boaz, the kinsman-redeemer of this little book, completed his work of redemption by uniting Ruth to himself and making her a sharer in all his glory and power, so is it with our Redeemer. He saves us by union to Himself.—G. H. C. MACGREGOR, *Messages of the Old Testament*, p. 101.

'Thou hast showed more kindness in the latter end than at the beginning.'—RUTH III. 10.

THIS text, in its Latin form, 'Priorem misericordiam posteriore superasti,' has been placed on a tablet in the porch of the ancient church of Guingamp in Brittany, to commemorate the blessings received during a recent mission.

REFERENCE.—IV. 1-22.— S. Cox, *The Book of Ruth*, p. 123.

'I cannot redeem it for myself, lest I mar mine own inheritance.'—RUTH IV. 6.

THE revolutionary school always forgets that right apart from duty is a compass with one leg. The action of right inflates an individual, fills him with thoughts of self and of what others owe him, while it ignores the other side of the question, and extinguishes his capacity for devoting himself to a common cause.—AMIEL.

THE desire to raise the pyramid of my existence—the base of which is already laid—as high as possible in the air absorbs every other desire, and scarcely ever quits me.—GOETHE to LAVATER.

REFERENCE.—IV. 8.—B. D. Johns, *Pulpit Notes*, p. 44.

'And Naomi took the child, and laid it in her bosom, and became nurse unto it.'—RUTH IV. 16.

IT would seem as if there was already a kind of joyous foretaste of the birth and infancy which in after-times was to be for ever associated with the name of Bethlehem. It was the first appearance on the scene of what may by anticipation be called even then the Holy Family, for that child was Obed, the father of Jesse, the father of David.—STANLEY.

'And they called his name Obed; he is the father of Jesse, the father of David.'—RUTH IV. 17.

THERE is no tradition in the Hebrew literature which is at first sight more purely composed of universal human elements than the story of Ruth. Hartley Coleridge, in verses commenting on the mysterious 'tale of bloodshed' which constitutes the history of Israel, has called this story an oasis of human beauty in 'the wild and waste of Bible truth'. Yet the cause of its preservation and consecration among the chronicles of the nation is scarcely the loveliness of the rural picture of the young gleaner in the harvest fields of Bethlehem followed by the kindly eye of the

rich farmer bidding his young men drop ears on purpose for her from the sheaves; nor even the mere devotedness of heart which made Ruth 'cleave' to Naomi. It is, on the one side, the exultation in the providential reward which was allotted to an alien woman of Moab for her abandonment of her country and gods in order to embrace the faith, and identify herself with the fortunes, of Israel; on the other side, the fact that David, the great King of Israel, was descended so directly from her, which made this beautiful narrative so precious to the Jews.—R. H. Hutton, *Literary Essays*, pp. 256, 257.

THE FIRST BOOK OF SAMUEL

THE FIRST BOOK OF SAMUEL

THE first book of Samuel deals with the process from the judges to the kings. In this book we have the history of the people from the last of the judges, Samuel, through the troublous times of Saul to the beginning of the reign of the king chosen by God, David. The book naturally falls into three sections, around the names of these three men.

I. Samuel.—The story of the life at Shiloh reveals two movements going forward simultaneously in Israel, those namely of degeneration and regeneration. The corruption of the priesthood was appalling. Within the precincts of the Tabernacle Samuel was preserved from pollution, and grew in the fear of the Lord. The crisis of judgment foretold by Samuel came in connexion with the Philistine attack upon the people. A dark period of twenty years is passed over without detailed record. During that time Israel was under Philistine rule, and Samuel was advancing from youth to manhood, and approaching the hour of his leadership. In a brief paragraph the story of his actual judgment is told.

II. Saul.—The book now merges into its second division, which has to do with Saul. The people clamoured for a king. The occasion of their request was the maladministration of the sons of Samuel, and their sinful practices. The real principle underlying it was a desire on their part to be, as they said, 'like all the nations'. In the pursuit of his filial duty Saul was led into contact with Samuel; while they were alone he communicated to him his Divine appointment, and his formal presentation to the people took place at Mizpeh. Two chapters give an account of the wars Saul waged. While he was victorious, he was disobedient in that he spared Agag and part of the spoil. The two men are seen in striking contrast at this point. Saul, the man of great opportunity, miserably failing, and passing along the pathway of disobedience to ruin. Samuel, rejected long ago of the people, still mighty in his allegiance to God.

III. David.—Samuel was rebuked for his prolonged mourning, and was commissioned to arise and await the new king. Immediately the two men are seen in the presence of a national danger. David without human resource, but conscious of the true greatness of his people, and sure strength of God, gained his victory over Goliath. One of the most charming love-stories of the Bible is that of the friendship between Jonathan and David. Coincident with the commencement thereof, the hatred of Saul against David deepened, and manifested itself in deeply laid schemes and unworthy methods in which he attempted to rid himself of his rival. During this period Samuel died. So terrible was the pressure of these dark days that David himself became pessimistic. The closing chapter of this book tells the story of the end of one of the most disastrous failures. Saul died upon the field of battle by his own hand.—G. CAMPBELL MORGAN, *The Analysed Bible*, p. 141.

THE MESSAGE OF THE FIRST BOOK OF SAMUEL

THE books of Samuel are so named from the circumstance that Samuel is the prominent figure at the opening of these books and in the history with which they deal. The use of his name has nothing whatever to do with their authorship. The books of Samuel are undoubtedly compilations. While there is much in them to show that in their present form they came to us from one hand, there is also very much to show that the compiler in his work had the assistance of numerous contemporary documents. The composition of the books of Samuel falls in the golden age of Israel's history. In these books we find perhaps the best and purest Hebrew that the Bible contains. In this chapter we deal with the first book. From this book in its three sections there came to us three lessons which are the main messages of the book.

I. From the first section comes the word, 'God is a Spirit, and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth'. The teaching of this section is a strong protest against ritualism. The idea that the presence and the blessing of God can be secured by the use of sacred vestments, and sacred postures, and sacred acts performed by or on sacred persons in specially sacred places, is an idea not a whit less superstitious than the idea that victory would be secured by sending the ark into the battle-field.

II. From the second section of the book comes the word, 'Whosoever shall keep the whole law and yet offend in one point is guilty of all'. This is a lesson that comes to us from the history of Saul. God, for the fulfilment of His purpose with Israel, wanted a king who should be really Jehovah's servant. But Saul, in his treatment of Amalek, showed that he set himself above God. In this matter, which some would call little, Saul manifested a spirit which made him utterly unfit to be God's king. He offended in one point, but was guilty of all. And the sequel showed that the man who was capable of setting aside the command of God in this one point, was also capable of ranging himself in definite opposition to the purpose of God to set David on the throne.

III. From the third section of this book comes the

word, 'The counsel of the Lord standeth for ever, and the thoughts of His heart to all generations'. In reading this history we cannot lose sight of the fact that it is typical of David's Son and David's Lord. It is the counsel of the Lord that Jesus Christ shall yet reign as King over the whole earth. God has sworn by Himself that in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ every knee shall bow. At present this often seems but little likely! Yet, we cannot lose heart. We read the story of David. We see him a fugitive, an outlaw, an outcast, with a mere handful of men to uphold his cause; we read on and find him after a little seated on the throne, and those who had shared his suffering sharing in his glory. 'The counsel of the Lord standeth for ever, and the thoughts of His heart to all generations'.—G. H. C. Macgregor, *Messages of the Old Testament*, p. 115.

SAMUEL THE SEER

In Samuel we have a deep stretch of condescension—God in communion with the life of a child.

I. Was he a miracle—this little Samuel? No—in the view characteristic of the Bible he is the real and normal aspect of humanity. All seers of God's kingdoms have seen it by the light of their childhood. We do not drop our childhood when we become men, we carry it with us into the life of men. Every sage bears within his bosom a little Samuel—an instinctive child—life which concludes without reasoning, adores without arguments, worships without symbols, prays without words. The man who listens to this voice is a prophet of the kingdom.

II. There are two things about Samuel's illumination which are very prominent, and which seem to be typical of religious illumination in general.

(*a*) The call of Samuel does not come to him as a call from heaven, but as a voice from earth. The voice of God has assumed the accents of a man. Our deepest impressions of spiritual things come to us indirectly. It is not by a voice from heaven that a man believes himself to be in the presence of God; it is by the blending of earthly voices.

(*b*) From the moment in which he recognized the real origin of the message, he perceived it to be something which would disturb the calm of his life. It brought not peace, but a sword. Although the case of Samuel is an accentuated one, the call of duty is nearly always a struggle. The very idea of duty implies restraint.

III. There were three great functions in the Jewish nation whose simultaneous existence was contemporary with the life of Samuel—the Prophet, the Priest, and the King.

(*a*) The Priest is the representative of the past. He exists as a salve to the pains of memory.

(*b*) The King represents the present. He exists to guide the hand at the actual hour.

(*c*) The Prophet is the representative of the future. He exists to tell not merely of forthcoming events, but of eternal principles. And therefore it is that the organ of the prophetic life is ever the spirit of the child. Childhood is the time that looks forward.—G. Matheson, *The Representative Men of the Bible*, p. 239.

References.—I. 15.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxvi. No. 1515. I. 20, 21.—Williams, *Characters of the Old Testament*, p. 160. I. 22.—J. Keble, *Village Sermons on the Baptismal Service*, p. 292. II. 1.—H. J. Wilmot-Buxton, *Sunday Lessons for Daily Life*, p. 37. II. 2.—F. Corbett, *The Preacher's Year*, p. 115. II. 3.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxix. No. 1736.

THE UNRECOGNIZED VOICES OF GOD

'Samuel did not yet know the Lord.'—1 Samuel II. 7.

We turn to the revelation in Christ for comfort, only to realize how long the silence has been since God spoke to men in Him. What we long for is to hear God for ourselves, to hear Him speak to-day.

I. God speaks to men to-day. Unless God speaks now we cannot really believe that He ever spoke to men. It is absurd to imagine that a revelation was made to men through long centuries and closed in the year, say, A.D. 70, and no voice from the great Unseen has come since. He does speak, and it is by the Bible that we test the voice and know the voice of God from other voices.

II. God speaks to men now, but we often do not recognize His voice. In so saying I do not deny that God speaks to men through audible means, and comes to men in dreams and visions, impressions and appearances. But God does not speak to all of us in visions and voices and impressions.

III. How, then, may we recognize the voice of God when He speaks to-day? (*a*) God speaks to men in the highest conscience of the time. (*b*) God speaks to men when men's thoughts are stirred to higher conceptions of truth. (*c*) God speaks to men through our fellow-men.

IV. Let us each listen for God's voice in our individual lives. For if God speaks to nations and generations, He will speak to individuals. How shall I know, then, that God speaks to me? We speak to Him in prayer, but there comes no audible answer, and we often wonder whether, after all, God hears. How shall we know? When prayer makes us better men He has spoken. Whenever our conscience is touched, whenever our souls are stirred, whenever there comes the inspiration to a new, better life, that good and perfect gift has come down from above, and if we reject it we have rejected God Himself.—E. Aldom French, *God's Message to Modern Doubt*, p. 75.

Reference.—II. 9.—G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 176.

SONS OF ELI, YET SONS OF BELIAL

'The sons of Eli were sons of Belial.'—1 Samuel II. 12.

We are always coming upon these conflicts, ironies, impossible lies. There is no smooth reading in history.

i. But we see this not only religiously in the distinctive sense of that term. We see this inversion and perversion of heredity along all the lines of life, and in all the spheres of human experience.

(*a*) A civilized man, a son of civilization, may be one of the most barbarous men upon the face of the earth. Civilization has in its power, by the very necessity of its being civilization, to go deeper than ever poor ignorant barbarism could do.

(*b*) Who can be so ignorant as a soul who has given himself up to the service of evil? It is not ignorance of the base and vulgar type that can be excused on the ground of want of privilege and want of opportunity, but it is that peculiar ignorance which, having the light hides it, knowing the right does the wrong.

(*c*) Sometimes we may say, 'the sons of refinement are the sons of vulgarity'. Is there any refinement so vulgar as the refinement which gives itself up to work all manner of evil criticism with greediness and with diabolical delight in the torture and humiliation of others?

II. We hold nothing by right of ancestry. You cannot hand down a good character to others. Whatever we have we can only have by right of labour, thought, watchfulness, and conducting the whole economy of life in the spirit of stewardship. Do not, therefore, on the one hand, presume upon your parentage and say, 'My father was good, and therefore I cannot be bad'; and, do not on the other hand, be discouraged and say, 'I come from so low a beginning that it is impossible for me to do anything'. There is nothing impossible to courage, to faith, to reverence, to prayer.—J. Parker, *British Weekly Pulpit*, 1890, p. 88.

References.—II. 18.—C. Bosanquet, *Tender Grass for the Lambs*, p. 128. W. S. Pearse, *Sermons for Children*, p. 56. R. D. B. Rawnsley, *Village Sermons* (1st Series), p. 299. II. 18, 19.—W. H. Hutchings, *Sermon Sketches*, p. 174. II. 22.—J. Bainton, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxii. p. 150. II. 25.—T. Arnold, *Sermons*, vol. iii. p. 218.

THE CHILD SAMUEL

'And the child Samuel grew on, and was in favour both with the Lord, and also with men.'—1 Samuel ii. 26.

These words will arouse our attention not merely on account of what they tell us about the character of Samuel, but also because they are the same words which are used to describe the character of our Lord. Samuel was, in his young days, apparently, the same sort of child as was our Lord. Each was in favour with the Lord.

I. Naturalness in Children.—He was a child just of the kind that God would have him be. How often children, through their surroundings, are very much warped from their childhood. The little affectations, curious phrases, little methods of raillery or contempt—these certainly do not belong to the child, but have plainly been picked up elsewhere. I am sure that there is one thing God likes to see in a child, that it should be in every sense, on its religious and all other sides, perfectly natural.

II. Trustfulness in Children.—Children being so quick in a simple way, if they are wisely tended and directed to recognize the Unseen, we notice next, how wonderfully they trust unless their sense of faith has been trifled with. Have we not at times, perhaps, when we have told children some little anecdote, been astonished at the way in which they accepted it as true? Samuel was a child of this kind. He had that quick, ready recognition that there was something beyond the world we see which is implanted in every child. He was ready to trust his God, he was ready to try and obey. How did this come about? The times were very broken and very strange ones. The book of Samuel follows hard upon the book of Judges, and, as you know, the times of the Judges might be summed up in that phrase, 'There was no King in Israel, no distinct ruler,' and in such a time there are continually cast up two types of character, and these are strongly marked. It was so in the Middle Ages. There were comparatively few people of the intermediate kind; people were either very good according to their opportunities, or they were very bad. Now we see something like this in the time of Samuel. On the one hand at Shiloh there were the two sons of Eli, breaking the law of God in various ways, and in some of them the very worst ways, and then there, too, we have the sight of this family of Elkanah. He was a religious man, and he was accustomed to go up and worship God. We are told specially that he went up, and his household went up every year. We see that he was an earnest-hearted, religious man, a lover of God, and loving very much his own household too. And still more remarkable is his wife, Hannah. She is in every sense a saint of the Most High. See how she comes and pleads for the child, see how, when the child is given her, she vows it to the Lord, and how year after year she comes up to look after its well-being, having placed it where she thought it was most fitted for its spiritual good, in the courts of the Tabernacle with Eli. Are your children the children of many prayers? Do you bring their names constantly before God?

III. Children's Work for God.—Samuel was connected with useful religious work. We are told that he ministered to the Lord before Eli; we are told that on an eventful occasion, and no doubt it was like other occasions, he opened the doors of the temple of the Lord. As a boy he would not do anything very extraordinary, but there were little, simple things which a child could do, and these his mother through Eli put him in the way of doing. Do we take sufficient care to teach our children that they can in their way bless men and work for God?

IV. The Opportunities of Children.—If we parents were quicker to recognize that we need not wait for children to come to old age, or middle age, or even maturity, but that much before that they really have a true place in God's kingdom, and a true service to do for God, how much happier parents would be! How exhilarating it would be to say, 'I have the child, and I can even now make it a servant of God!' The teaching of Scripture surely is this, that God makes different calls upon different persons, and that

the little child, the young man or the young woman, the middle-aged and the old person, each has a special degree of holiness, each has a special way of serving God, and if only they serve God in that way He will bless them perpetually, and ever more and more.

References.—II. 26.—J. Edmunds, *Sermons in a Village Church*, p. 178. R. D. B. Rawnsley, *Village Sermons* (3rd Series), p. 130.

GOD'S PROMISES CONDITIONAL

'Wherefore the Lord God of Israel saith, I said indeed that thy house, and the house of thy father, should walk before Me for ever: but now the Lord saith, Be it far from Me; for them that honour Me I will honour, and they that despise Me shall be lightly esteemed.'—1 Samuel ii. 30.

God's promises are conditional. This is a point which is often overlooked. We are somewhat apt to look upon God's promises as absolute, and to insist strongly on our security, forgetting that they imply reciprocity on our part. We shall find, if we search the Scriptures, that in all cases God's promises are in the nature of covenants or agreements. There are two parties to them—God and man, and when God's promises have failed it is because the conditions on which they were made had not been fulfilled by man, although these conditions, perhaps, were not expressed but understood.

We may briefly examine one or two cases where the promise seems to be absolute, but we shall still find that it is conditional.

I. The Case of Eli.—God had said, 'And did I choose him out of all the tribes of Israel to be My priest, to offer upon Mine altar, to burn incense, to wear an ephod before Me? . . . I said indeed that thy house, and the house of thy father, should walk before Me for ever.' And we hear that Eli sinned by his indulgence to his sons. He indulged them, and they indulged in grievous sins, so that they brought the priestly order into ill-repute, and caused the people to sin and were a stumbling-block. And so we see the result in the words of our text, 'but now the Lord saith, Be it far from Me'. This change was because the sons of Eli made themselves vile, and Eli restrained them not. Accordingly the priesthood, which had been promised to the house of Eli, passed to the house of another. Here we have an instance of the promise of God, seemingly without condition, nevertheless depending on a condition. Eli broke the law, and therefore the promise remained unfulfilled.

II. The Case of Moses.—Moses was called to lead the people out of Egypt, and the word of God came that God had come down to deliver the people out of the hands of the Egyptians. From this the promise went on to say that He would lead them into a land flowing with milk and honey. From these words we seem to gather that there was no condition attached to the promise. But what was the sequel? Neither Moses nor the people from Egypt entered into the land, and this because they did not fulfil the conditions which, though unexpressed, were understood. Moses spoke unadvisedly with his lips, and God withdrew the promise He gave unto him. In the same way the people sinned. They came to the borders of the land, but when reports came back of mighty cities and men like giants, then they were terrified, and they had no trust in God that He could perform the promise He had made. They murmured against God, and God withdrew from them the promise. And all who left Egypt, except two men, left their bones to whiten in the wilderness, because they did not fulfil the conditions of the promise which, though not expressed, were understood.

III. The Case of the Shipwrecked Crew.—We may take one other instance from the New Testament. You will remember that St. Paul journeyed from Judæa to the Imperial Court at Rome. When the vessel was off the island of Clauda a tempest arose, and it looked as if the vessel would be overwhelmed by the waters. They lightened the ship by casting away the tackling, but they had little hope of saving their lives. In the middle of the night a message came from God to Paul, saying that he was to take heart—he should not lose his life, and that God had given him the lives of all those with him in the vessel. The sailors seemed to have lost heart, and paid little attention to what Paul said to them. They devised a scheme to leave the vessel, and listened to St. Paul a little to deceive him. But he knew of their intention, and told the centurion, 'Unless these abide in the ship ye cannot be saved'. And so the soldiers cut the ropes, and prevented the work of embarking. They remained in the ship to work her, and all came safely to land at last. Thus, although the promise that the sailors' lives should be saved had apparently been made without condition, yet when they were about to leave the vessel St. Paul said, 'Except these abide in the ship ye cannot be saved'. Evidently he thought there was a condition, although none had been stated. It really amounted to this: 'I will save you from the deep if you will do what you can to save yourselves. If you will make the effort, I will bless it and make it successful.'

IV. God Helps Those who Help Themselves.—It is universally true that God helps those who help themselves. Man has his part to play. The Christian man who is not in earnest will often find himself discouraged. He will find himself falling far short of his ideals. But if that man is really in earnest, if he makes his efforts the subject of prayer and works together with God, then he will advance in his spiritual life. God's arms are always open to receive him; God never sends men away.

References.—II. 30.—M. Briggs, *Practical Sermons on Old Testament Subjects*, p. 143. W. Brock, *Midsummer Morning Sermons*, p. 37. H. Alford, *Quebec Chapel Sermons*, vol. iii. p. 357. III.—9. Sadler, *Sermons for Children*, p. 19. *Sunday Thoughts*, p. 1. A. P. Stanley, *Sermons on Special Occasions*, p. 64. F. D. Maurice, *Sermons*, vol. vi. p. 163.

THE WORD OF THE LORD

'The word of the Lord was precious in those days.'—1 Samuel iii. 1.

Is there not a message for us from this story of Samuel listening to the word of God? Is the word of God,

the revelation which He gives to men, precious in these days? There is, as there was in those days, no open vision, but we have the written word of God. It carries our minds on—does it not?—not only to the revelation which God gave of the word of the Lord in the Old Testament, but to that greater Word of the Lord Who was with the Father from all eternity, God the Son, the second person in the Blessed Trinity, the Word of God Who was God. That revelation is given to you and to me, it is spoken to us in these later days—the revelation of Jesus Christ. God speaks to us in various ways—by the circumstances of our lives, through our consciences, through Holy Scripture; and we know not God, we do not recognize His voice, and so we do not hear the message which He has for each soul. Let us consider how that message comes to each one.

I. God's Voice in the Circumstances of Our Lives.—First of all in the circumstances of our lives, as it was in the circumstances of the life of Samuel. We were placed in the same position near to God when we were brought to Him in our baptism. The circumstances of our lives are very much those of Samuel, hedged around, guarded from evil, from temptation, being taught from earliest infancy the will of God, even as he was. We can see all through our lives that God is continually near us, speaking to us, calling to us in the circumstances of those lives. What does He require us to do? If He sends us temptation, He calls us to face that temptation. If He saves us from temptation, He calls us to higher things still that we may advance in holiness. Each one of us can look into our lives and see how God speaks to us in the circumstances of those lives.

II. God's Voice in Conscience.—Then further, God speaks in our conscience—if we do not pay attention to that voice as it speaks to us, if we do not listen for it, then that voice will grow dimmer and dimmer. If we do not act on what that voice tells us, we shall not hear any voice at all in the end. A hardened sinner or a confirmed criminal will commit a sin which you and I would call a deadly and awful sin. Why? His conscience is dead, he cannot hear through it the voice of the Holy Spirit. Let us take care that as the word of the Lord comes to us through the voice of conscience, that we listen to that voice and act upon it.

III. God's Voice in the Bible.—Then there is—taking the more literal meaning of the word of the Lord—God's voice speaking to us through the Bible. As we listen to the lessons in church, as we read our chapter day by day, does it bring to us a message from God? Or do we hear or read the words just as a story, interesting, nothing more.

As we listen for the voice of God, either through the circumstances of our life, or our conscience, or the Bible, let us be ready with Samuel to say, 'Speak, Lord; for Thy servant heareth'. Speak, Lord, into our innermost being, not only to our outward ears but to our very soul. Speak, Lord, that we may hear, and do Thy will, that we may go on assured that what we do is done under Thy guidance, that we are trying to carry out Thy will, and are in the end bound to come to that everlasting home which Thou, even now, art preparing for us in the heaven above.

THE DIVINE CALL

1 Samuel iii. 1-10.

Nothing is more certain in matter of fact, than that some men do feel themselves called to high duties and works to which others are not called. Why this is we do not know; whether it be that those who are not called forfeit the call from having failed in former trials, or have been called and have not followed; or that though God gives baptismal grace to all, yet He really does call some men by His free grace to higher things than others; but so it is; this man sees sights which that man does not see, has a larger faith, a more ardent love, and a more spiritual understanding. . . . The more men aim at high things, the more sensitive perception they have of their own shortcomings; and this again is adapted to humble them specially. We need not fear spiritual pride, then, on following Christ's call, if we follow it as men in earnest. Earnestness has no time to compare itself with the state of other men; earnestness has too vivid a feeling of its own infirmities to be elated at itself.—J. H. Newman.

'And the Lord came, and stood, and called as at other times, Samuel, Samuel. Then Samuel answered, Speak; for Thy servant heareth.'—1 Samuel iii. 10.

One of the most delightful and fascinating personalities of the Old Testament is the child Samuel. The charm, among other things, consists in this: we find in him what we long to see in all our boys and what is beautiful when we do see it. What is that? Why, this: there is nothing so gracious or so graceful in all creation as real religion in a young boy's heart. The fresh, simple, unaffected goodness of a pure-minded boy who fears God and loves his mother is charming and delightful.

I. The Personality and Circumstances of Samuel.—He had many advantages which are not given to every boy.

(*a*) *He was blessed in his start in life.*—He was blessed with good parents, the greatest blessing that a boy or a girl can possibly have. Unfortunately you cannot arrange this before you come into the world, but God arranges it for you, so the greater is the gift if when you come you find that you are the child of godly people.

(*b*) *He was associated with religious people and religious work.*—That is the greatest possible point. Get your boys interested in the attractiveness of religious worship and work as soon as you possibly can. Throw them as soon as it is possible into a happy, busy, religious atmosphere. You know how to do that most effectively. Throw yourselves into it and they will follow, for your boys are like sheep without their stupidity. They have a great capacity for following where you lead. Throw yourselves into it, be keenly and deeply and increasingly interested in the work of God and in the work of the parish

church to which you belong. Samuel's people were, and the consequence was that the little fellow when he grew up was as much at home in the Church of God as in his own sitting-room with his parents.

II. But He Knew Not the Lord.—He worshipped, he prayed, he heard the Word of God such as there was in those days, he loved the service of the Tabernacle, he mixed with the people of God, but as yet anything like conscious spiritual communion with the living God was a thing altogether unknown to him. There may be great religious privilege and much religious instruction, but no real personal saving knowledge of Christ. There may be in a boy or a girl, or a man or a woman, a sweet and pure and holy goodness, but he may not yet consciously know the Lord Jesus Christ. Do not be disheartened if you feel that is your case, that you are loving the service of God and enjoying it and looking forward to it and delighting in God's work, and yet somehow you are conscious that you have not spiritual fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ. I say, do not be disheartened. Samuel did not yet know the Lord, but the Lord knew him. That was better; and He knows you. And as in Samuel's case, so in yours, there will one day be an awakening to what was there all the time, but you did not know it. Your eyes will be opened perhaps in a moment, perhaps only by degrees, to a conscious spiritual fellowship with the living God.

III. The Divine Call.—When the Lord called him he did not recognize His voice. How like he was to ourselves who are older and better taught! We do not always recognize God's voice when we hear it. He speaks, but there is none to answer. Some go farther than this, and will not recognize it. We refuse to, we do not want to. God calls us by His Word, as perhaps He is calling some now; God calls us by His providence, and we say, 'How strange that it should happen so, what a remarkable occurrence, what a remarkable coincidence!' It was not an occurrence or a coincidence, it was God breaking the silence of your life. So often there is One standing among us Whom we know not. Samuel did not recognize God's voice when he did hear it. It was so human. God talks so humanly, so intelligently, so sympathetically, just as we can bear it, almost in our own language, so that we think it is our own. Sometimes something occurs in our life which forces us to stop and take steps either for or against Christ. At first we thought it was a mere nothing, till it dawned upon us it is the Lord wanting to speak to our heart. Or God has thrown you into the company of somebody who has been a blessing to your life and completely altered it. It was the Lord. Or you have been in the habit of reading your daily portion of Holy Scripture, often only just running over the syllables and shutting the Book, till one day somehow all these syllables burst into beauty and life. It was there before, but you did not see it. All became clear, and we said, 'How strange, I never read it before'. It was not strange, it was the Lord speaking to us in His Word. Keep yours ears open from this time forth. Be listeners, be receivers, be where the Voice is likely to be sounding, be where the blessing is. I do not know what you will hear if you wait long enough. Samuel's entire course was probably determined by his immediate response to God's first call. Yours and mine may be. Neglect that call when it comes, and the Voice may never speak again. Respond to it, and the music of God will follow you to the end.

'Speak; for Thy servant heareth.'—1 Samuel iii. 10.

This passage is quoted by Père Gratry in his *Lifeof Henri Perreyve*, who consecrated himself at the age of twelve to the service of Christ. Père Gratry points out that many teachers are disposed to turn children aside from early consecration, saying, as Eli said to Samuel: 'It is nothing, child; sleep on!' ('Enfant, ce n'est rien; dormez toujours!'), or as our version gives the words: 'I called not; lie down again'.

THE CALL OF SAMUEL

1 Samuel iii. 10.

Is it not a great thought that God knows the name of every child? I have read that the shepherds of Helvellyn know the face of every sheep, and can recognize the lambs by their likeness to their mothers. 'Every shepherd kens his ain.' This is the confidence of every endeavourer. God knows his name, and has therefore some particular work for him to do. Whom God calls, God appoints to service.

In the spring, with the earliest green of the fields and the coming of the first flowers, larks fill the air with song, as though the freshness of life beneath must be accompanied by the freshness of praise above. And so should the dreams and joys and playtime of childhood have its song of piety, its morning hymns of praise to Jesus Christ. The mind's early flowering is all the surer for the heart's early praying and obedience.

VISION AND DUTY

'And Samuel opened the doors of the house of the Lord.'—1 Samuel iii. 15.

I. Our duties are in strange contrast to our missions. Yesterday Samuel was a child, and lived in a childish world. But his little world had grown during the night. It had widened out to embrace the eternal God. And in that vaster universe and under that exaltation of the soul that every widening of outlook brings, it was almost incongruous to be opening doors. So marked indeed is this contrast between task and vision that the sweet illusions which we never realize seem almost to be a ministry of God. When Abraham went out, not knowing whither he went, turning his back upon his father's country, what made him strong? It was the vision of Canaan that his God had promised him. When I see him fighting the kings there, and herding his flocks and haggling for a tomb, I feel what a gulf there was between *his* vision and the actual duties laid to his hand to do. Yet

the little he did he never could have done but for the light that cheered him on.

II. Our visions must never keep us from our duties. I always honour Samuel as I read this verse. I find here something of that faithfulness, and something of that self-restraint that were to make Samuel a king of men. In the morning after the greatest moment in his life Samuel is at his post. Vision or no vision, voice or no voice, his duty must be done, and he will do it.

III. Vision and duty are true Christianity. The man who has only vision is a visionary. He builds his castle in the air, he dreams and dies. But the poor world goes staggering on in darkness, and the mere vision is powerless to save. The man who has only duties is a moralist. And if nineteen centuries have demonstrated anything it is the powerlessness of mere morality to save. But in between these two, embracing both, there stands the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.—G. H. Morrison, *Flood Tide*, p. 53.

THE LEAGUE OF CHRISTIANS

'The Lord revealed Himself to Samuel in Shiloh by the word of the Lord. And the word of Samuel came to all Israel.'—1 Samuel iii. 21 and iv. 1.

The call of Samuel is inseparably connected with what Mrs. Browning called our 'childhood's faith'.

I. It is not too much to say that the book presents to us two distinct Samuels according to the authorities which the inspired writer happened to be following. One Samuel is the quiet, unobtrusive wiseacre of a small town, where he conducts the worship of Jehovah at a local shrine and dispenses advice all round the district, but is no leader of the nation, no statesman, no prophet of the Lord to an entire people; the other Samuel is at once ruler and judge and prophet so obviously moved by the Word of the Lord that he puts down one and sets up another, so splendid in his governance of Israel that they feared him as they feared Moses all the days of his long life and were saved in that they feared.

II. But the Lord did not reveal Himself to Samuel in Shiloh, and the word of Samuel did not come to all Israel, merely because his ministry was honest, incorruptible, self-denying; and the apostolic devotion of the modern episcopate will not by itself avail to command the doctrine of Christ our Saviour in all things, even when it is splendidly backed by the labours of the 'inferior clergy, the priest and deacons,' and responded to by a willing and obedient laity. For the call of Samuel was a summons to Eli to realize that a family connexion with the priesthood, and a more or less direct ecclesiastical descent are no magical preservatives against a terrible 'example of life' and an appalling 'instruction of manners'. The correlative of the call of Samuel and of the rejection of the House of Eli is the discovery that in other lines of descent and in other systems of ministry there is scope for the worship of God and for the pastorate of sinful souls, and it was Eli himself who perceived that the Lord had called the child.

III. It is impossible for us who name the Name of Christ to quench our desire that all who do so in our land may be joined together in unity of spirit and in the bond of peace as well as in righteousness of life. That is only another way of saying that we long for the day when the word of the Samuels of our Church may really come to all Israel, not merely to a few men and women in every hundred. True, we should think lightly of a Church and more lightly of leaders that were ready to purchase unity at the price of truth or at the peril of faith. But truth is not compromised and faith is not wrecked, and purity is not smirched if at this time our fathers in God make a courageous effort to see the historic episcopate in its historical aspect as a slow development into the system which God has put it into the heart of man to conceive for shepherding the sheep that are scattered abroad, not a ready-made ring fence enclosing the sheep and dividing the goats.—E. H. Pearce, *Church Family Newspaper*, September 25, 1908, p. 816.

References.—III. 21.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. iv. No. 186. IV. 3-5.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons on the Blessed Sacrament*, p. 76. IV. 7.—H. L. Paget, *Sermons for the People*, vol. i. p. 160. V. 2-4.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxiii. No. 1342.

THE ARK IN THE HARVEST-FIELD

'And they of Beth-shemesh were reaping their wheat harvest in the valley: and they lifted up their eyes, and saw the ark, and rejoiced to see it.'—1 Samuel vi. 13.

The ark had been a prisoner in the land of the Philistines since the fatal day when the army of Israel was completely overthrown. Its presence had brought mischief and misery, plague and death to the cities of Ashdod and Ekron, and after seven months' sojourn it was sent back to its own country with all respect and with all care.

I. The coming of the ark at that time to that particular occupation of the men of Beth-shemesh was to them a great reminder, a striking memorial. God brought Himself to the level of their intelligence by sending the ark into their harvest-field as a sacrament of sacred realities, to press home this truth to them that it was to God they owed the harvest they were reaping.

II. It is just as much our duty to recognize the same source of all our good, but possibly we need this reminder, God in the harvest-field, more forcibly even than they did. The world has grown much older since then; childlike faith is not so evident and worthy, simple trust is obscured or pushed out of the way by habits of doubting, of accepting things as of use and wont, and of explaining away the supernatural by natural reasons and processes. Romance, imagination, wonder are gone; and with these often goes the sense of blest dependence on the great Creator, and of gratitude to the great Giver of all food. But this decay of interest is, in its way, a sign of the superficiality of much of the age in which we live.

III. What we need above all to see is the ark of God standing in the harvest-field, the great source of

all our supply. We need to rub our sleepy eyes and yet awake to the presence of the great Creator. The ark in the harvest-field teaches us also that the harvest-field is sacred ground; the field is holy. The ark in the harvest-field was a summons to the men of Beth-shemesh to present the firstfruits of their harvest to God. And as the harvesters saw it safely placed in their midst, it renewed to them the message of the Law, that to God were due the firstfruits of their reaping and in special measure for such special restoration of the Divine presence and smile.—W. A. Swanson, *Homiletic Review*, November, 1906, vol. lii. p. 388.

References.—VII. 11.—C. Perren, *Outline Sermons*, p. 272. VII. 12.—F. Bourdillon, *Plain Sermons for Family Reading* (2nd Series), p. 105.

RECONQUESTS

'The cities which the Philistines had taken from Israel were restored to Israel.'—1 Samuel vii. 14.

We have to dwell upon reconquests, upon the taking back of cities which we ought never to have lost. I do not speak of cities in the ordinary sense of the term, but I speak of the great losses which the Church—meaning by the term Church all its sections and communions—has forfeited or lost or unworthily abandoned. There will be a great day of restoration; the Church of Christ has much property to reclaim. The Church is very guilty in all this matter; the Church has let one thing slip after another. The consequence is that the Church is surrounded by a number of little military houses from the windows of which popguns are being continually fired, largely in mockery, and mainly because nearly all the Church property has been stolen.

I. We shall reclaim all that has been pilfered. Agnosticism will have to give up its purse and its pass-book and its cheque-book and its balance. Agnosticism is the meanest of the thieves. Its name was invented only yesterday; it was baptized in a ditch, it has done no good for the world, but it has troubled a good many people in the Church on the subject of the unknowableness or unthinkableness of God. The Church ought never to have been troubled or disturbed for one moment.

II. And then the Philistines have built another hut which is called Secularism. Man likes a word which he thinks is practical and intelligible. Man loves to keep up a shop with a counter in it; man would not be happy if he had not a till, that is a box or drawer, unseen by the public, admission into which, so far as the public are concerned, is by a very small slit in the counter. Man calls that business. He does not care for religion, he cares for the secular aspects of life; he can understand these, but he cannot understand metaphysics, philosophies, theologies; so he puts another penny in the slot and sees that nobody else takes it out. This he thinks is commerce. No Christian treats wealth without regard, no truly pious man despises business; the man who prays best will work best in the city or in the field or on the sea. Prayer is genius in all directions. He who prays best conquers most. We ought never, therefore, to have allowed the secularist to take anything from the Church. Anything that the secularist holds which is really precious and good belongs to the Church, and we should have it back, and take all the cities again in honest restoration which for the moment have been wrenched from the grasp of our unbelief.

III. There is now a wonderful partition, mainly of lath and plaster, put up between religion and what is called science. There ought to be no such partition. Science is theological; there is nothing excluded from the grasp and the dominion of a true theological genius and conception of things. The laboratory is a chamber in the Church; every retort ought to be claimed by the Church as a special instrument or resource or piece of furniture; the Lord has made the inventory, and that retort belongs to God. We must retake from Philistinian hands terms and properties and provinces which have been stolen from us, either while we were faithlessly slumbering, or in some hour in which our belief gave way and let the devil come in like a flood.—Joseph Parker, *City Temple Pulpit*, vol. ii. p. 50.

Reference.—VIII. 4-7.—F. D. Maurice, *Prophets and Kings*, p. 1.

THE CHOICE YOUNG MAN

'A choice young man.'—1 Samuel ix.

This was Saul the son of Kish. This description was given of the Benjamite early in life, and as a young man he was—in some respects at least—most exemplary. It is a mistake to think of Saul as throughout an objectionable and wicked character. His later life was most unsatisfactory; but as we have him here, the son of Kish is not without many admirable traits.

I. The first thing to notice about young Saul is his fine physique. As he is introduced to us, the son of Kish is tall in stature, graceful in build, fresh and healthy in appearance, good-looking and handsome, and withal of a lordly mien and carriage. Do not despise a fine physique. The outward should be the expression of the inward; the physical part of us should be the symbol of the spiritual part of us. Physical beauty alone is a poor thing. But if there be a beautiful soul, there cannot be a repulsive or unpleasant face. Intelligence and goodness will impart beauty to a form otherwise without attractions.

II. The second thing to notice about him is his filial piety. The asses of his father had wandered from their pasture. He told his son to take a servant and go in search of the animals. And Saul did so, with alacrity, diligence, and cheerfulness. For days he wandered over hills and through valleys in pursuit of his task. He did as he was told, offering no objections and asking no questions. There is no duty more plainly or strongly enforced in the Scriptures than the duty of obeying parents; and with it are associated the highest rewards and the severest punishments; and these rewards and punishments pertain not only to the future but to the present life. Gratitude for all that parents have been to us should be a sufficiently strong motive to filial devotion. But here it

has pleased God to give a further incentive—even His reward and blessing.

III. The third thing to notice about him is his modest disposition. On Samuel calling him to the kingdom you remember his answer—'Am not I a Benjamite, of the smallest of the tribes of Israel? And my family the least of all the families of Benjamin? Wherefore then speakest thou to me after this manner?' While pride makes men ridiculous, humility commands admiration and love. But modesty may degenerate into a vice—a vice not particularly common, however, among young men. I would rather have a man over-estimate than under-estimate his powers. While the first mistake may stimulate small talents to the performance of great deeds, the last may prevent great talents from achieving half their possibilities.

IV. The fourth thing to notice about him is his independent and generous spirit. In search of the asses he came near to the town where resided the prophet Samuel. The servant suggested to him that he should consult the seer about the strayed herd. 'But,' said Saul, 'behold, if we go, what shall we bring the man? for the bread is spent in our vessels, and there is not a present to bring to the man of God: what have we?' And the servant answered Saul again, and said, 'Behold, I have in my hand the fourth part of a shekel of silver: that will I give to the man of God, to tell us our way'. Saul was a gentleman. Do not say that this was an Eastern custom. It was, and the plate at the church door is a Western custom. It is the height of meanness to receive all the advantages of churches and to bear no share, or no adequate share in their support.—A. F. Forrest, *British Weekly Pulpit*, vol. II. p. 429.

SEER AND PROPHET

'He that is now called a Prophet was beforetime called a Seer.'
—1 Samuel ix. 9.

So long as they both meant the same thing, what does it matter what they were called? If they did not always mean the same thing, then it signifies a great deal. We must not have old names with new meanings, nor must we invent new ideas to suit old terms. The parable of the old wine and the new bottles, the old bottles and the new wine, old ideas and new conceptions, afford a very tempting ground for fancy and invention and divers knavery. When we have a word, let us know exactly what its meaning is. When we change the word, publish the fact; do not let us have any vocal or verbal legerdemain; let us beware of trifling with terms, let us beware of meddling with the currency of the King's language.

'He that is now called a Prophet was beforetime called a Seer.' Probably there was really no change of a vital kind, and therefore the change of terms resolved itself into the popular question, What's in a name? But there is a principle here; there is a great moral possibility just at this very point; let us have no verbal ambiguity or ambiguity in deed, and then tell others that we really meant in substance the same thing, when we did not. There is a morality of language, there is a currency of words; and we must not keep some little private mint in which we counterfeit the inscribed and superscribed glory of the heavenly realm. Let us apply this change of names to the circumstances in which we find ourselves in our own day.

I. That which is now called a Discovery was beforetime called a Revelation. I prefer the beforetime word; it is deeper, it holds more, it is intellectually and spiritually more capacious; it is ideally and imaginatively more poetical and ideal.

II. He that is now called an Agnostic was beforetime called a Blind Man. I prefer the beforetime description; it seems to get nearer the truth. It would be impossible, I think, to find a proud blind man. Did you ever in all your companionship and confidences find a proud blind fellow-creature? It would be difficult for a blind man to be proud, but it is the natural air of my lord the agnostic. You never found a humble agnostic; he could not be humble; he has eloquence enough to pretend to be humble, but in the soul of him, if he has a soul, he is as proud as Lucifer.

III. That which is now called an Accident was beforetime called Providence. I like the old term best; it covers more ground, it is nobler, it stands in a more royal majesty. I will not have any accidents in my little world; I have no room for accidents,—little broken pieces of china that nobody can patch together again. I have in my little world of imagining and experience a ruling, loving, watchful Providence.

IV. That which is now called a Better State of Things was beforetime called Regeneration. And I like it better. Oh for the old, old Regeneration!—the metaphysical, penetrating, all-including new birth. There are many dusters and sweepers in the world, persons who go about with little dusters, and rubbing things and saying, Now they are all right. It is one thing to have a Hyde-Park-Sunday-afternoon-demonstration duster and another thing to have a Holy Ghost.

V. That which is now called the Continuity of Law was beforetime called the Sovereignty of God.

VI. That which is now called the Survival of the Fittest was beforetime called Predestination, election, foreordination: and these are the grand terms when properly defined and understood.—Joseph Parker, *City Temple Pulpit*, vol. II. p. 202.

STAND STILL AWHILE

'And as they were going down to the end of the city, Samuel said to Saul, Bid the servant pass on before (and he passed on) but stand thou still awhile that I may show thee the Word of God.'—1 Samuel ix. 27.

Samuel had been entertaining Saul at a sumptuous meal, and would speak to Saul on a very important matter. So the two set off from the city. As they go a little from the centre of the town and approach the edge of the houses, Samuel bade Saul send his servant forward so that they might be private and

alone. Samuel evidently felt the solemnity of the moment, he saw before him the man who should be the future King of Israel, and he knew that in the conduct of that king lay a great responsibility. And as the servant had passed onward, Samuel said to Saul: 'Stand thou still awhile that I may show thee the Word of God'.

There are two things here that I should like you to notice; the first is the attention which Samuel requires, and the second is the subject on which he spoke.

I. The Attention Required.—Samuel asked Saul to send his servant forward that he might—

(*a*) *Forget his family affairs,* his joys and sorrows, and to concentrate his attention on the subject. In our own case there are joys and sorrows, there are business affairs that sometimes invade the very sleep and rehearse themselves in the hour of night. By an effort of will they may be made to pass onward.

(*b*) *Stand still awhile.*—Samuel requested Saul to 'Stand still awhile'. Let us remember that when the body is quiet and restful it aids the mind in taking in spiritual truth. It is a very desirable thing when listening to the Word of God to let it have its full effect upon the mind; let it come down like rain into a fleece of wool. Is not this what the Word of God deserves? When God speaketh His Word let all be silent before Him. If God is speaking, we are to be still. It is desirable to get away from the city into the fields, and there to stand still awhile and to say with Samuel the words he said when he was a little boy: 'Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth'. There are some who are so exceedingly careful about the things of this world that they scarcely give a thought to the things of God. Inform them how they may become rich and famous, and they will pay you a handsome price; inform them as to the undying things of God's Word, and perhaps they may pass on.

II. The Subject of the Message.—Look now at the second point. The Word of God which Samuel had on this occasion to speak to Saul.

(*a*) *Mentioned a kingdom* which Saul is going to possess and for which he must endeavour to fit himself. So to us the Word of God says, 'Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness' The Word of God by coming to us has made each one of the members of the Church of Jesus Christ a king. Are you so entirely occupied with the business of the present that you are unable to gaze on the throne of the kingdom that is prepared for you? God calls you to a nobler, higher destiny than can be found in any earthly kingdom.

(*b*) *Predicted a change.*—Samuel said that there should come a very great change upon Saul, and that that change should soon come about. Samuel said that he should journey and the Spirit of the Lord should come upon him. 'Thou shalt join thyself to a company of prophets and shalt be turned into another man.' Can you tell what God will do for you if you are willing and obedient? Lay hold of the propitiation offered by Christ and, in a higher sense than was possible for Saul, undergo a wonderful and remarkable change. It is the change which should come on account of the love of Christ born in the soul and the spirit of Christ coming to dwell in the heart. Listen to the words of the covenant: 'I will put My spirit within you, I will take away the stony heart and give you a heart of flesh, and in that heart of flesh ye shall live and rejoice before God'. Life is a tangled skein to those who do not seek the guidance of the Word of God, but to those who do it is not so.

SELF-RESPECT AND COMPANIONSHIP

'Is Saul also among the prophets?'—1 SAMUEL X. 12.

THE popular interpretation of Saul among the prophets is that Saul had taken a step up. The truth is, the text may mean that he had taken one down. It all depends who the prophets were.

I. In these prophets of the time of Saul, when we first meet them, we have the type which prophesying had first assumed on Canaanitish soil. They were, in fact, a species of begging friars, and were held by the people in a contempt which they evidently did their best to deserve. When Saul was found among these so-called prophets he had ceased to respect himself, and when a man does that he must either recover himself or accept moral ruin.

II. A man may be a very faulty man, and yet be a genuinely good man. His goodness does not excuse his faults, nor do his faults destroy his claim to goodness. Let a man have the right to respect himself, and he has that which can take the sting out of his disappointments and the tyranny of victory out of his failures. There is no necessary connexion between a straight life and failure to win the kingdoms of this world. There may be cases where honesty handicaps a man for a time, but they are comparatively few and short-lived in their operation. But lift the definition of success to higher levels, and I assert without qualification that with the right to respect ourselves there can be no failure, and without it there can be no success.

III. Saul had ceased to respect himself, and this very probably supplies the explanation of his being found in this questionable company. If you realize that you must surrender something of your better self to be the friend of a certain person, you will be almost sure to establish that friendship at your peril. Whatever the King of Israel might think of his company, the fact that he was in it gave to their worthlessness a new tenure of existence, and to their wickedness an added licence. He did not make them better men, but they made him a worse man. Human society has no need more pressing than its need of young men and women with moral courage and religious conviction to take up the right attitude to wrong things. — AMBROSE SHEPHERD, *Men in the Making*, p. 139.

References.—IX. 20.—H. Hayman, *Sermons Preached in Rugby School Chapel*, p. 29. X. 9.—G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 284.

SAUL'S HIDING HIMSELF

1 Samuel x. 17-27.

Dr. W. G. Blaikie remarks on the fact that Saul hid himself and could not be found: 'We do not think the worse of him for this, but rather the better. It is one of the many favourable traits that we find at the outset of his kingly career. . . . Many of the best ministers of Christ have had this feeling when they were called to the Christian ministry. Gregory Nazianzen actually fled to the wilderness after his ordination, and Ambrose, Bishop of Milan, in the civil office which he held, tried to turn the people from their choice even by acts of cruelty and severity, after they had called on him to become their bishop.'

References.—X. 24.—J. Richardson, *A Sermon Preached in Camden Church*, No. viii. X. 26.—J. Burns, *Sketches of Sermons on Special Occasions*, p. 153.

THE RELIEF OF JABESH-GILEAD

1 Samuel xi.

Of the rejoicing after the relief of Jabesh-Gilead Dr. Blaikie says: 'It was perhaps the happiest occasion in all the reign of Saul. What constituted the chief element of brightness to the occasion was—the sunshine of heaven. God was there, smiling on His children. There were other elements too. Samuel was there, happy that Saul had conquered, that he had established himself upon the throne, and above all, that he had, in a right noble way, acknowledged God as the author of the victory at Jabesh-Gilead. Saul was there, reaping the reward of his humility, his forbearance, his courage, and his activity. The people were there, proud of their king, proud of his magnificent appearance, but prouder of the super-eminent qualities that had marked the commencement of his reign. Nor was the pleasure of anyone marred by any ugly blot or unworthy deed throwing a gloom over the transaction.'

References.—XII. 1-4.—R. Hiley, *A Year's Sermons*, vol. i. p. 323. XII. 2, 3.—J. R. Macduff, *Sermons for the Christian Seasons* (2nd Series), vol. ii. p. 681.

SAMUEL'S DISMISSAL

1 Samuel xii. 12-15.

Some one has said, 'In addition to other graces a good man ought to pray for is the grace to resign his office when his work is done'. Samuel was the last of the judges and prophets. He had ruled with conspicuous ability, justice, success. Under his control, it is true, the people had suffered from the attacks of the neighbouring tribes, but defeat had not been due to Samuel's holding the rein of government.

I. Samuel himself might be good, righteous, just, but the system he represented was out of date, obsolete. So they desire a king and make their desire known. He is willing to grant their request. He sees it is God's will that he should, so the king is appointed, and Samuel summons the people to meet him for a farewell address. When they come first he vindicates his character and conduct, wishes like a brave and good man to meet those who are dissatisfied. He briefly reviews the history of the past, bringing to their notice one clear fact that when they had sinned they suffered, when they repented and turned to God, were saved. And so he says it will be in the future. Do not depend upon a change of government. Whether Samuel judges or Saul reigns, if they did right, the blessing of God would be theirs.

II. That was the lesson then that in the far-off past Samuel taught. We are reminded very frequently by statesmen and others of the awful struggle against poverty, misery. We are also being constantly reminded of those who suffer in other ways owing to the stress of modern life, those, for instance, who because they are poor, have to work 'midst unwholesome surroundings and under insanitary conditions. And some of those who most frequently remind us of these things tell us that it is the competition system that is at fault; that instead of competition there should be co-operation; that socialism should be the system under which we live instead of the method of government that now obtains. The need is deep and great for reform, but whether we have a government of Samuel or Saul, whether the present system of private capital be replaced by a system of collective ownership by the State or community of all the sources and instruments of production and distribution, we shall not get rid of suffering, wrong, oppression, till we can get rid of sin.—E. J. Miller, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxxiv. p. 62.

References.—XII. 13.—H. Hensley Henson, *Preaching to the Times*, p. 33. Spurgeon, *Ten Sermons*, p. 80. R. Heber, *Parish Sermons*, vol. ii. p. 25. XII. 14.—G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 125. XII. 19.—W. H. Hutchings, *Sermon-Sketches*, p. 180. XII. 20.—J. Keble, *Sermons After Trinity*, part i. p. 105.

GOD'S SECOND BEST

'God forbid that I should sin in ceasing to pray for you.'—1 Samuel xii. 23.

If a man has blundered or played the fool in the management of his life, is there a second chance? God not only approves of a man's penitence, but assists it. But to see this one needs to keep in mind a process and a principle at work in the world, 'God's Second Best'.

I. Israel's First Best.—In the earlier stages of its national life Israel had no king, but experienced again and again marvellous smoothings of its way by Providence, to convince the people that they were under God's care, and make it easy for them to obey Him.

II. Israel's Second Best.—The process of degeneration. The repairing process. Silently, quietly God builds up the walls they have broken down; He repairs the waste places; He creates out of the very debris of their failure a new sort of opportunity, and offers the remainder of life for reclamation and transfiguration.

III. God's Second Best in Modern Life.—Men lose health through violation of nature's laws. But a repairing process is at work in our bodies—the physical expression of God's marvellous patience—and through that process a second best is offered to men.

IV. The Cross as a Second Best.—God in His loving mercy came to man in his fall from innocence, with a design of salvation and repair of which the centre was the cruel Cross—God's most terrible, amazing 'second best'—and through that Cross has been repairing human life and bringing it to sainthood. Even beyond saintship is a third experience, in which we shall have to look for the last and truest definition of the phrase 'God's Second Best'.—G. A. JOHNSTON ROSS, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. LXXV. p. 321.

REFERENCES.—XII. 23.—H. J. Wilmot-Buxton, *Sunday Lessons for Daily Life*, p. 49. J. Vaughan, *Fifty Sermons* (9th Series), p. 333. J. Keble, *Sermons Academical and Occasional*, p. 127. XIII. 3.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons for the Church Year*, vol. i. p. 269.

WAITING FOR SAMUEL

'And Samuel said, What hast thou done? And Saul said, Because I saw that the people were scattered from me, and that thou camest not within the days appointed, and that the Philistines gathered themselves together at Michmash; therefore said I, The Philistines will come down now upon me to Gilgal, and I have not made supplication unto the Lord: I forced myself therefore, and offered a burnt offering.'—1 SAMUEL XIII. 11, 12.

I. A CRISIS which would try a stronger man than Saul showed himself to be had arisen. He had just made a bold stroke, and with a detachment out of his 3000 reserved men had driven out the Philistine garrison, quartered on his own tribe in Benjamin. It would have been better for him not to strike than to follow it up. But he finds himself at Gilgal confronted by an increased and increasing band of Philistines, with his own army, an unarmed and disorganized rabble, panic-stricken, demoralized, and constantly deserting. And here he was hampered by a tiresome restriction put upon him by Samuel, to wait for him seven days, until he came to offer sacrifice for him and the army. He waits seven days, in which his position was getting worse and worse, and Samuel did not come. At the end of the seven days he would wait no longer. At the end of the time appointed—directly after—Samuel came. We know Samuel's verdict. It was this—'Thou hast done foolishly. The kingdom shall not continue.'

II. I am speaking to those who have heard the call of God, and who have answered to a mysterious vocation; to men in whom their friends have seen, it may be, a natural aptitude for the sacred profession of the priesthood, who amidst such modest shrinking and sense of the greatness of the issues, have laid their powers at the disposal of the Almighty God, and have consecrated to Him any special faculty or talents which would the more fit them for His service. You are conscious that you are raised up to be leaders, directors, organizers, as you watch the passes which lead up from the plains and marshal your forces and count the odds. And one great advantage of a festival like this is that it recalls us to the council-chamber of God, and here, before the altar, bids us remember that we are under orders, and are carrying out the details of a campaign with which we are very imperfectly acquainted; and that the great danger we have to avoid is independent action starting from self-will, and impatience which refuses to wait for slower, but matured plans of God. 'Only look at the difficulty with which I am confronted. The secularist hall is full, the public-houses are fuller still. The churchmen, so-called, follow me trembling. And yet Samuel tells me to wait. Wait? I have had enough of waiting. I must do something at once, something more human, more up to date.' But had Samuel no scheme for rallying Israel. Do we really suppose that a great general thinks the battle lost if he cannot disperse at once a local pressure? Look deeper, and you will see his method to be this, where we should seek to improve man's condition, he seeks to improve man; that as the evil is deep-seated the remedy must be thorough. Improve man, and we shall improve his condition; believing in this the Church waits confidently for Samuel's methods, and is not diverted from her purpose by an impetuous Saul.—W. C. E. NEWBOLT, *Words of Exhortation*, p. 118.

A MAN AFTER GOD'S OWN HEART

'The Lord hath sought Him a man after His own heart.'—1 SAMUEL XIII. 14.

LET us examine the meaning of this text, and see in what way David could deserve it. Let us compare the character of David with that of Saul. Saul was wilful, disobedient. This text gives us an account of why he was rejected by God. Samuel had desired him to wait, and had said that he would come and offer burnt offerings unto the Lord. The king would not wait, and he himself then offered sacrifices. Here was disobedience of the worst kind. Contrast the character of these two men and we shall see that, although some passages in the Psalmist's life were certainly very bad, and some in Saul's very good, we shall see that the roots of their characters were different. The life of David was one of faith and obedience, and the life of Saul one of godless independence.

I. The Life of David.—His first appearance in public exhibits his zeal, his true character.

(*a*) *His Combat with Goliath.*—He viewed Goliath's insult in a light in which it was never seen by that godless Saul. It was defiance of the living Jehovah, and when he heard the defiance of the giant, he felt himself at once the champion of Jehovah. He saw Jehovah on his side, and knew that he should prevail. Few sentences are more striking for their simplicity and their courage than those in which David expresses before Saul, and then again before the giant himself, the ground upon which his courage depended. Here you see the true metal shining forth in his character, faith in God and zeal for His honour. And you will readily allow that in all His conduct

faith in God forms such a leading feature as to make his character very like that which we should imagine to be especially after God's own heart.

(*b*) *Regard for the Lord's Anointed.*—If you look at the early days of David you will find another beautiful characteristic of him. He was anointed to be king over Israel as a boy, so that he must have known he was appointed to succeed Saul. Saul persecuted David, and he was obliged several times to flee for his life. Saul was several times in David's power, and yet he said: 'How wast thou not afraid to stretch forth thy hand to destroy the Lord's anointed?'

(*c*) *In the Psalms of David* we see a more vivid picture than could perhaps be anywhere else found of a mind waiting upon God, looking away from itself, trusting in Him, blessing Him in trouble, and blessing Him in prosperity, of a mind of which the motive power is faith in God and submission to Him. After his fall, when repentance and sorrow had enabled him to see his sin in its true colours, when he bemoans his sin, it is not his sin in any of the inferior lights in which it might be viewed. All other views of sin vanish before this, that it was an offence against God. A man's vice may bring misery to himself, it may ruin his health and bring him to beggary, but he who looks at wickedness as God looks at it, must see it in the light in which it appeared to David.

II. The Character of Saul.—He, too, was brave. What, then, spoiled his character? It was simply the opposite of what I have described. When Samuel came not, he must needs be priest himself. When Goliath came out and defied the armies of Israel, he did not offer to go out himself. He offered a reward to any one who would meet the giant, but it never occurred to him that the Philistines had defied Jehovah, and that he who went out was the avenger of Israel, and would have the victory which belonged to the champion of God. Saul was sent to destroy the Amalekites. He kept the best part of the spoil and then blamed the people. When Saul found himself deserted by the Spirit of the Lord, he must needs have access to unlawful means of gaining, as he believed, help in his trouble. He never thought of asking help of the oracle of the Lord. These are some of the features of Saul's life, and without wishing to depreciate such good qualities as he possessed, I think we may justly hold him forth as a specimen of a man self-dependent, wilful, strikingly deficient in those qualities which formed the beauty of David's character—faith in God, humble waiting upon Him, and submission to His divine will.

When we contrast the two characters we can easily see that, without speaking lightly of his great sin, we may nevertheless say in truth that the character, in the main features of it, was after the mind of God, that David may rightly be spoken of as a man after God's own heart.

References.—XIII. 13, 14.—Bishop H. Goodwin, *Parish Sermons*, p. 136. XIII. 14.—R. D. B. Rawnsley, *Sermons for the Christian Year*, p. 300. XIII. 19.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons Preached in Sackville College Chapel*, vol. ii. p. 31. XIII. 20.—Spurgeon, *Preacher's Magazine*, vol. xix. p. 322. XIV. 6.—J. G. Greenhough, *Comradeship and Character*, p. 187. XIV. 23.—H. Bonner, *Sermons and Lectures*, 1900, p. 140. XV. 2, 3, 6—J. J. Blunt, *Plain Sermons* (2nd Series), p. 204.

OBEDIENCE

1 Samuel xv. 10-23.

Obedience is a sacrifice—better, because more profound than any other sacrifice can be. 'It is much easier,' Matthew Henry remarks, 'to bring a bullock or a lamb to be burnt upon the altar than to bring every high thought into obedience to God, and make the will subject to His will.' Sacrifice is as the presents which Hiram sent to Solomon; but obedience is like the artist whom he sent to remain in Jerusalem and do the finest work of the Temple—for obedience is a living power, which returns from every altar stronger than when it went.

When an officer of Engineers urged that the directions he had received were impossible to execute, the Duke of Wellington replied: 'Sir, I did not ask your opinion; I gave you my orders, and I expect them to be obeyed'.

References.—XV. 16.—J. Bowstead, *Practical Sermons*, vol. i. p. 73. XV. 22.—H. Alford, *Pudsea Chapel Sermons*, vol. iii. p. 390. XV. 23.—*Ibid. Quebec Chapel Sermons*, vol. ii. p. 44. XV. 24.—J. Keble, *Sermons for Sundays after Trinity*, part i. p. 105. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. iii. No. 113.

SAUL'S 'I HAVE SINNED'

'And Saul said unto Samuel, I have sinned: for I have transgressed the commandment of the Lord, and thy words: because I feared the people, and obeyed their voice. . . . Then he said, I have sinned: yet honour me now, I pray thee, before the elders of my people, and before Israel, and turn again with me, that I may worship the Lord thy God.'—1 Samuel xv. 24, 30.

Saul said 'I have sinned' oftener than any other person in the Bible. Was he, therefore, the truest penitent? Was he a penitent at all?

His was the case of a backsliding man; backsliding still at the moment when he said them; on the decline—going down the slope of sin—at the same time that those godly words were on his lips. That is the characteristic, and there lies the bane of Saul's 'I have sinned'. He was on the incline; going further and further; lower and lower; and the words, spiritless and untrue, only precipitated him farther. Why was his 'I have sinned' so barren?

I. A Lack of Reality.—His words had no reality. There was no religion in them. They failed all the tests of a true confession. It was simply remorse, the child of fear. It curried favour with man, and it sought to appease God for a temporal end.

II. He Implicated Others.—Now observe, for your warning, some of the marks of a spurious and false confession. Saul's did not isolate itself. True repentance always does isolate itself. The penitent is alone with God in the matter of his sin. It is 'myself'. He implicates no other. Saul said, 'I and the people'; and 'we'. Saul did more. He did what, from the time of Adam, a convicted but unhumbled heart always does, he skulked: he acknowledged the

fact; but he transmitted the blame. 'I feared the people, and I obeyed their voice.' It is the very opposite to confession. Confession is always generous.

III. Would Stand Well with Men.—It is plain, also, that Saul thought more of how he should stand with man than how he stood with God. 'Yet honour me now, I pray thee, before the elders of my people, and before Israel, and turn again with me, that I may worship the Lord thy God.' For man to honour him is just what the real penitent thinks nothing of. What is all that man can say to a mind sensible of God's regard, and that is dealing with God and eternity? What an impertinence! Rather is not human honour, at such a moment, always distasteful to a man?

IV. No Relationship to God.—And observe that '*Thy* God'. The Christian always says, '*My* God'. 'Notwithstanding all I have done, *my God*.' The appropriation is as necessary to the faith as the faith is necessary to the grace. However you have sinned, always say, '*My* God'.

V. Gave a Religious Cloak to his Sin.—And what was the worst of all? Though Saul said, 'I have sinned,' he gave a religious cloak to his sin! 'We did it to sacrifice to the Lord.' Pious phraseology is very often the bane of a good faith.

REFERENCES.—XVI. 1-13.—W. M. Taylor, *David King of Israel*, p. 1. XVI. 2.—F. Corbett, *Preacher's Year*, p. 125. XVI. 4.—J. Aspinall, *Parish Sermons* (2nd Series), p. 71. XVI. 6, 7.—James Moffatt, *The Second Things of Life*, p. 48. XVI. 6-13.—C. Perren, *Sermon Outlines*, p. 188. XVI. 7.—S. Baring-Gould, *One Hundred Sermon Sketches*, p. 84. H. J. Wilmot-Buxton, *Common Life Religion*, p. 197. XVI. 11.—A. P. Stanley, *Sermons for Children*, p. 32. XVI. 11, 12.—J. Vaughan, *Sermons to Children* (5th Series), p. 1. XVI. 13.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons Preached in Sackville College Chapel*, vol. ii. p. 39. Bishop How, *Plain Words to Children*, p. 68. XVI. 14.—Phillips Brooks, *Twenty Sermons*, p. 297. I. Williams, *Characters of the Old Testament*, p. 171. R. D. B. Rawnsley, *A Course of Sermons for the Christian Year*, p. 281. XVI. 14-23.—W. M. Taylor, *David King of Israel*, p. 13.

A YOUNG MAN FROM THE COUNTRY

'Behold, I have seen a son of Jesse the Beth-lehemite, that is cunning in playing, and a mighty valiant man, and a man of war, and prudent in matters, and a comely person, and the Lord is with him.'—1 SAMUEL XVI. 18.

KING SAUL wished to engage a court minstrel. There is not a single historical personage before the Christian era of whom we know so much as we do of David. In our passage we meet with him as still but a young man; and there are five distinct things mentioned about him, which you may find it interesting and useful to consider.

I. The Bible is emphatic in telling us that he was a remarkably good-looking young man. A splendid fellow, thoroughly manly in his bearing. There was nothing effeminate about him. The body, no doubt, is but the tabernacle, the shell; but do not despise it; it bears the stamp and image of God.

II. His Pastime.—Every sensible man must have some pastime. We cannot always be working. Well, David's pastime was music. He had evidently quite a genius for it. David consecrated this great gift of his to the highest ends, and he found music to be most enjoyable when it was linked with sacred themes. Sacred music is the grandest of all music.

III. His Patriotism.—If ever a man loved his country, it was he. His heroic fearlessness of danger was constantly put to the proof. Where his country's interests were at stake, his life was at its service. No mere ambitious self-seeker was David; he was as genuine a patriot as ever lived. A healthy and unselfish public spirit needs to be cultivated. The first and most obvious duty which a man owes to the commonwealth is to see that he is no burden to it. In fact, it is in vigilant industry and sound common sense, employed about a man's daily calling, that he makes his first contribution to the nation's wealth and weal.

IV. His Prudence.—The text describes him as 'prudent in matters,' i.e. a young man of sound judgment, of sterling common sense. This is a wonderful recommendation to a man, no matter what kind of office he has to fill. Next to piety there is no endowment more valuable than what in England goes by the name of good common sense.

V. His Piety—'the Lord is with him'. This was his noblest recommendation; he carried God with him into all the minutest details of life. No one can intelligently read his sacred songs without seeing that the central spring of his religious life was humble dependence upon the Divine Deliverer who was one day to suffer and die for the sins of men.—J. THAIN DAVIDSON, *The City Youth*, p. 18.

THE CHARACTER OF DAVID

'Behold, I have seen a son of Jesse the Beth-lehemite, that is cunning in playing, and a mighty valiant man, and a man of war, and prudent in matters, and a comely person, and the Lord is with him.'—1 SAMUEL XVI. 18.

How manifold are the ways of the Spirit, how various the graces which He imparts; what depth and width is there in that moral truth and virtue for which we are created! Contrast one with another the Scripture saints; how different are they, yet how alike! how fitted for their respective circumstances, yet how unearthly, how settled and composed in the faith and fear of God! As in the Services, so in the patterns of the Church, God has met all our needs, all our frames of mind. 'Is any afflicted? let him pray; is any merry? let him sing Psalms.' Is any in joy or in sorrow? there are saints at hand to encourage and guide him. There is Abraham for nobles, Job for men of wealth and merchandise, Moses for patriots, Samuel for rulers, Elijah for reformers, Joseph for those who rise into distinction; there is Daniel for the forlorn, Jeremiah for the persecuted, Hannah for the downcast, Ruth for the friendless, the Shunammite for the matron, Caleb for the soldier, Boaz for the farmer, Mephibosheth for the subject; but none is vouchsafed to us in more varied lights, and with more abundant and more affecting lessons, whether in his history or in his writings, than he whose eulogy is contained in the words of the text, as cunning in

playing, and a mighty valiant man, and prudent in matters, and comely in person, and favoured by Almighty God.—J. H. Newman.

DAVID'S MUSIC AND ITS INFLUENCE ON SAUL

1 Samuel xvi. 23.

Dr. Blaikie says: 'Of the influence of music in remedying disorders of the nerves there is no want of evidence. "Bochart has collected many passages from profane writers which speak of the medicinal effects of music on the mind and body, especially as appeasing anger and soothing and pacifying a troubled spirit" (*Speaker's Commentary*). A whole book was written on the subject by Caspar Lœscherus, Professor of Divinity at Wittenberg (A.D. 1688), Kitto and other writers have added more recent instances. It is said of Charles IX of France that after the massacre of St. Bartholomew his sleep was disturbed by nightly horrors, and he could only be composed to rest by a symphony of singing boys. Philip V of Spain, being seized with deep dejection of mind that unfitted him for all public duties, a celebrated musician was invited to surprise the king by giving a concert in the neighbouring apartment to his majesty's with the effect that the king roused himself from his lethargy and resumed his duties.'

DAVID'S HARP

1 Samuel xvi. 23.

In truth, the great Elements we know of are nō mean comforters: the open Sky sits upon our senses like a sapphire crown—the Air is our robe of State—the Earth is our throne; and the Sea a mighty minstrel playing before it—able, like David's harp, to make such a one as you forget almost the tempest cares of life.—Keats (to *Jane Reynolds*, 1817).

References.—XVII. 36.—S. Gregory, *How to Steer a Ship*, p. 56. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxi. No. 1253. XVII. 37.—E. A. Askew, *Sermons Preached in Greystoke Church*. J. Keble, *Sermons for Sundays After Trinity*, part i. p. 105. XVII. 42.—W. Brock, *Midsummer Morning Sermons*, p. 173. XVII. 47.—H. J. Wilmot-Buxton, *Sunday Lessons for Daily Life*, p. 61. XVII. 48.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons Preached in Sackville College Chapel*, vol. i. p. 192. XVII.—R. Lorimer, *Bible Studies in Life and Truth*, p. 211. W. M. Taylor, *David King of Israel*, p. 26. XVII. 50.—R. Hiley, *A Year's Sermons*, vol. ii. p. 254. XVII. 55.—E. A. Askew, *Sermons Preached in Greystoke Church*, p. 189.

WHOSE SON ART THOU, YOUNG MAN?

'Whose son art thou, young man?'—1 Samuel xvii. 58.

When this shepherd boy entered the royal presence with the ghastly trophy, his fingers clutching the hair of Goliath's head, the king looked at him with admiring wonderment, and put the plain, straightforward question of my text, 'Whose son art thou, young man?' It was natural that Saul should wish to know something of the antecedents of so brave a youth.

I. If there is anything more utterly contemptible than for one who has risen a bit in the world to be ashamed of his humble origin, it is the conduct of him who ridicules his low-born brother. I admire the prompt, straightforward answer which David gave to the king: 'I am the son of thy servant Jesse, the Beth-lehemite.' Sometimes we hear it remarked with a sneer and a curl of the lip concerning some young man who is doing well, 'Oh, he has risen from the ranks'. Well, the more honour to him, if it is so; and the more shame upon the silly, contemptible snobbishness that could be guilty of such an utterance.

II. We shall not talk of rank now, but of character. Let me tell you that the purest blood this world has ever known is that of a Christian ancestry. It throws all other nobility and aristocracy into the shade. It is but too plain that grace does not run in the blood. The Bible itself teaches us this. A long line of Christian inheritance is something to rejoice in. 'Whose son art thou, young man?'

III. I am not afraid to put the question even to those who have had no such advantage. I thank God that I have seen many a clean bird come out of a foul nest. If ever a man might have been supposed to have had bad blood in his veins, it was Hezekiah, who was the son of one of the worst monarchs that ever reigned over Israel. And yet he turned out a devout and holy man of God.

IV. I tell you that whether you realize it or not, you have, each of you, royal blood in your veins. Your pedigree traces back to the King of kings. St. Luke goes right up to the fountain-head when he finishes his genealogical table thus: 'Which was the son of Enos, which was the son of Seth, which was the son of Adam, which was the son of God'. Awake to the glorious fact, and claim your high inheritance.—J. Thain Davidson, *The City Youth*, p. 126.

References.—XVII. 58.—R. D. B. Rawnsley, *Sermons in Country Churches*, p. 96. XVIII. 1-30.—W. M. Taylor, *David King of Israel*, p. 39. XVIII. 4.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons for Some Feast Days in the Christian Year*, p. 227. XVIII. 17.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. v. No. 250.

RELIGIOUS ENTHUSIASM, TRUE AND FALSE

1 Samuel xix. 18-24.

This is a sort of subject that needs to be thought out and discreetly treated. And yet it can never be made quite plain. It goes off into mystery on every side; for the action of the nervous system is involved in this, and the whole question of contagious emotion which not the best physiologists thoroughly understand. But without going into physiological questions, there are here things very plain which ought to be known by all intelligent Christians.

I. There is a religious excitation or excitement which may not have any moral quality or influence whatever. It is not affected—it is real. It is not insincere; it is sincere. I mean a person who really is lifted up and carried along with a rush of sacred enthusiasm. He cries for mercy, and he sings loudly of salvation. I do not say that all excitement is useless, but I say that there is an excitement that only amounts to this. God forbid that we should for a

moment deny that there are cases in which people get real permanent good. But the excitement is only the accompaniment; it is not the change. The only thing of real value is the exercise of conscience, and enlightenment of the understanding, the turning of the affections and the will to God in Christ and to righteousness.

II. The degree in which religious emotion overpowers the body is generally proportioned to the ignorance of the mind, or to its alienation or estrangement from God. David joined the company of these prophets without any excitement or frenzy. Why was that? Because David had more of the matter in him than Saul. He was a man of God himself, and the religious emotions flowed through him without resistance—found in him a congenial recipient. But Saul was in an evil mood. Envy and murder were in his heart, and when this pure sacred impulse came upon him it met with the stronger resistance. Then there was this bodily manifestation, this falling down upon the ground, which far from being a sign of grace, was rather indicative of the lower moral state in which the man was found, and the resistance that his mind and heart made to the spirit upon him.

III. If this is right, and surely this is right—it is historical—this case should teach those persons who have at various times made a great ado over prostrations and trances and long fastings as signs of the work of grace to be somewhat more cautious in their utterances. These things occur almost always in the case of a morbid hysterical temperament, in which case they are only a sign of disease, not of health; or in the case of a very ignorant person who is overwhelmed with things of which he has no intelligent conception; or in cases where there has been a very awful estrangement from God, and the Word of His grace finds an obstruction. The Bible teaches us to be calm and fervent, fervent and calm. Let the evidence of our Christian faith and character be found not in any passing mood of excitement, but in the moral excellence that we exhibit in the fruit of the light and of the spirit that we daily bring forth.—D. Fraser, *British Weekly Pulpit*, vol. II. p. 178.

References.—XIX. 24.—F. D. Maurice, *Prophets and Kings*, p. 14. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxxi. No. 1870. XIX. W. M. Taylor, *David King of Israel*, p. 52.

THE CHARACTER OF JONATHAN

1 Samuel xx.

'One knows not,' says Dr. Blaikie, 'whether most to wonder at the faith of Jonathan or the sweetness of his nature. It is David, the poor outlaw, with hardly a man to stand by him, that appears to Jonathan the man of power, the man who can dispose of all lives and sway all destinies; while Jonathan, the King's son and confidential adviser, is somehow reduced to helplessness and unable even to save himself. But was there ever such a transaction entered into with such sweetness of temper? The calmness of Jonathan in contemplating the strange reverse of fortune, both to himself and David, is exquisitely beautiful . . . it is manly and glorious while it is meek and humble; such a combination of the noble and the submissive as was shown afterwards, in its highest form, in the one perfect example of our Lord Jesus Christ.'

References.—XX.-XXII.—W. M. Taylor, *David King of Israel*, p. 65. XX. 3.—H. Woodcock, *Sermon Outlines*, p. 252. J. M. Neale, *Sermons for Some Feast Days in the Christian Year*, p. 193. XX. 25.—Herbert Windrose, *The Life Victorious*, p. 33. XXI. 8, 9.—*Ibid. Sermons for the Church Year*, vol. ii. p. 15. XXII. 2.—H. J. Buxton, *God's Heroes*, p. 109. XXIII. 14-16.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons for Some Feast Days in the Christian Year*, p. 338. XXIII. 17.—John Watson, *Respectable Sins*, p. 253. XXIII. 19, 20.—*Ibid. Sermons for the Church Year*, vol. ii. p. 112. XXIII. 28.—W. M. Taylor, *David King of Israel*, p. 79. XXIV.—R. Lorimer, *Bible Studies in Life and Truth*, p. 231. W. M. Taylor, *David King of Israel*.

A PROVIDENCE OR A TEMPTATION?

'I will not put forth mine hand against my lord; for he is the Lord's anointed.'—1 Samuel xxiv. 10.

The touching and picturesque incident here related is an extract from the life of an outlaw. It took place amid the wild deep ravines that overhang the oasis of Engedi. This spot, situate about half-way down the western shore of the Dead Sea, owes its name, as it does its luxuriant growth of vegetation, to a fountain which rises from the limestone rock and falls in long silver ribbands to the sloping plain below. There were many reasons why David should take refuge here. The deep gorges and bleak hills were safe. Wood and water abounded. The solitude had its own charm. But no long time elapsed till the solitude was broken rudely by the warlike invasion of King Saul. With a fierce band of troops he had hurried out to seize the fugitive alive or dead, for just then there burned in him a fever-heat of malignant envy. Too often the prey had escaped his grasp, but this time he would make sure. This time the expedition must finish its work. It was a skilful plan, likely enough to be successful, if man were the only partner in the transaction. But God cannot safely be forgotten in our schemings; and although He may not always melt the heart of men like Saul, He finds many ways of tying their hands. So this chapter has lessons worth pondering by all who move amid the changing passions of human life.

Note the greatness of David's temptation. To let Saul escape would be madness and impiety; what had happened was as good as a command to rise and strike home. Deal him the fatal blow here and now. Creep up behind him where he lies unconscious, and smite him to the heart.

It was a temptation all but overwhelming. Particularly for an Eastern mind, it did look extremely like a Divinely given opportunity. David had a long list of grievances to settle, and one thrust of a dirk would pay them all.

But what is the principle that rules his action, curbing both the savage purposes of those around

him and the hot fever racing in his own veins? What but this, that men must not go faster to their goal than the will of God permits? Do not take short cuts to happiness, if to do it you have to leave the high road of rectitude and mercy. It was a promise of God to David that one day he should wear the crown, but he would not step up to it over Saul's dead body. He would not be king before God's time at such a price as that! How often men ruin their lives by, as we say, 'plaving Providence' to their own career. What looks like Providence may be a snare of the devil. So beware of that policy on which you can embark only by soiling your clear sense of right. Beware of side-paths that lead through the mire. Stick to the highway of the King, and leave the future issues in His keeping. Wave back the eager or contemptuous arguments of others when they plead for your real worldly interest, or cry that you are a fool to be so scrupulous; and say with brave Nehemiah, and in his reliance on a higher will, 'So did *not* I, because of the fear of God'.—H. R. Mackintosh, *Life on God's Plan*, p. 256.

References.—XXV. 1.—W. M. Taylor, *David King of Israel*, p. 110. XXV. 10, 11.—H. J. Wilmot-Buxton, *The Children's Bread*, p. 113. XXVI.—W. M. Taylor, *David King of Israel*, p. 95. XXVII.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. viii. No. 439. XXVII.-XXXI.—W. M. Taylor, *David King of Israel*, p. 199.

SAUL AND THE WITCH OF ENDOR

'Then said Saul unto his servants, Seek me a woman that hath a familiar spirit, that I may go to her, and enquire of her. And his servants said to him, Behold there is a woman that hath a familiar spirit at Endor.'—1 Samuel xxviii. 7.

I. How Valued and Beneficent Presences may be Withdrawn.—What pathos there is in the fact that on the eve of dreaded battle Saul has not his friend, his teacher, his pastor, to consult. Samuel was dead. Samuel had been everything to Saul. But Saul had not treated him well. He had slighted his old friend. Saul would have given a great deal to have had his rejected and grieved friend now, but 'Samuel was dead'.

II. How a Man may Cut Himself Off from Divine Influences.—'When Saul inquired of the Lord, the Lord answered him not.' May we get so forlornly far? Yes, we may so sin and sin and sin, we may so fatally harden ourselves, that God will have nothing to do with us.

III. How Low a Man may Sink by Sin.—Is this Saul? Yes—in ruins.

(*a*) He is physically and mentally enfeebled. You see that by the fear and trembling which seizes him as he looks across from Gilboa to Shunem and sees the Philistine camp. His sins have so wrought on him that he is in a state of collapse.

(*b*) Saul is now doing what once he condemned. Early in his reign he put out those that had familiar spirits and the wizards out of the land. Now he is actually proposing to consult one of the obnoxious herd.

(*c*) Having given up God Saul is compelled to resort to strange methods. He—the King of Israel—is on the way to consult a woman who has a familiar spirit.

IV. See how the Tragedy Culminates.—Saul's servants tell him that at Endor there is a woman reputed to have 'a familiar spirit'. Saul confronts the wild old creature at her cave door, a diabolical inspiration seems to be upon Saul, for he not only asks the witch to 'divine by the familiar spirit' but he goes so far as to beg her to practise necromancy and to read the future by means of the dead. The leering scoundrel says, 'whom shall I bring up unto thee?' The infatuated Saul, all trepid, shaking with uncontrollable excitement, cries 'Bring me up Samuel'. No description is given of the arts the witch used. But the issue is plainly stated. 'The woman saw Samuel,' and at the same time she discovered that her interlocutor was King Saul. Saul perceived it was Samuel. He falls overwhelmed and obeisant. And the spirit of the seer cries, 'Why hast thou disquieted me to bring me up?' Saul tells his woeful tale. Samuel assures Saul that he can do nothing in his behalf, seeing God has become his adversary because of his sins. Then he adds this prophecy, 'To-morrow shalt thou and thy sons be with me'.

V. From this Seance let us Learn—

(*a*) How God confounds evil-doers. Little thought Saul that the scene in Endor's cave would be so tragically real.

(*b*) How near is the spirit world; strangely soon did the spirit form appear. The world unseen is close to us.

(*c*) Men seem to retain in the spirit world the appearance they have on earth. Samuel's form was identical with that he had when here.

(*d*) God often gives solemn intimations concerning eternity 'To-morrow'. Saul and his sons were to die. The Almighty forewarns them.

(*e*) Mercy rejoices over judgment in God. Samuel said to Saul, 'To-morrow shalt thou and thy sons be with me'. 'With me.' And in what part of the spirit world was Samuel? Samuel was in immortal and ineffable bliss.

Saul and his sons were to be with Samuel. I think that this can only mean that Saul was in his few remaining hours to repent, and once more to receive 'the root of the matter' into his nature. Then when death destroyed his body his pardoned and purified soul was to be received into paradise. He who said to the dying robber, 'To-day shalt thou be with Me,' allows Samuel to say to the stricken Saul, 'To-morrow shalt thou and thy sons be with me'.—Dinsdale T. Young, *Neglected People of the Bible*, p. 74.

References.—XXVIII. 6.—J. Bowstead, *Practical Sermons*, vol. i. p. 80. XXVIII. 13.—E. A. Askew, *Sermons Preached in Greystoke Church*, p. 21. XXVIII. 15.—G. W. Brameld, *Practical Sermons*, p. 344. XXIX. 8.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons for the Church Year*, vol. ii. p. 256. XXX. 4-6.—*Ibid. Sermons Preached in a Religious House*, vol. ii. p. 555.

THE GOLDEN ART OF SELF-ENCOURAGEMENT

'But David encouraged himself in the Lord his God.'—1 Samuel xxx. 6.

'He ran to his cordial' is the sententious comment of John Trapp. He sorely needed a cordial. What

mercy that he knew where the cordial was! He discovered it in the heart of God.

David's soul was overwhelmed within him. Every prospect was doleful. Black skies frowned over his head. He was exhausted. All the springs seemed dried up. 'But David encouraged himself in the Lord his God.' Yes, He knew his cordial, and in the exigent hour he ran to it.

Here we have often, all of us, a great community with David. We cannot follow him in some of his supremely exultant moods, but in his depression and depletion we have a strong affinity with him. We are one with him in the deep and dire need of encouragement.

I. Seasons for the Exercise of this Golden Art.—We need to be proficient in this art (1) amid *personal sorrow*; (2) in social distress; (3) in depression; (4) when the results of our evil past come on; (5) when old age gathers upon us.

II. Reasons for the Development of this Golden Art.—We need to encourage ourselves in the Lord our God because of the powerlessness of human help. How little we can do for ourselves, and how little others can do for us in the critical hours of life!

It is not in man to strengthen himself with effectual strength. Experience shows the illusiveness of mortal forces. When Ziklag lies in ruins whither shall David turn but to God?

III. Methods of Practising this Golden Art.—How shall we encourage ourselves in the Lord our God? We must do it (1) by prayer; (2) by the realization of God we encourage ourselves in Him. To sit down amid the shadows and contemplate our loving Lord is to be restored in soul; (3) by recollecting the saints of the past; (4) by searching the Scriptures.

IV. Benefits which this Golden Art Educes.—They reap a wealthy harvest who encourage themselves in the Lord their God. Solid comfort is theirs! When we address ourselves to God He wonderfully soothes our sorrow. 'No marvel that God remembered David in all his troubles,' says John Trapp, 'since in all his troubles David remembered God.' The Lord is to us, in this matter, as we are to Him. If we remember Him He will not fail to remember us. Wondrous solace our God affords. It is unspeakable. Deeper than the depths of grief it penetrates. In a thousand ways God comforteth the lowly.—Dinsdale T. Young, *The Gospel of the Left Hand*, p. 97.

References.—XXX. 6.—C. Bradley, *The Christian Life*, p. 239. J. M. Neale, *Sermons Preached in Sackville College Chapel*, vol. ii. p. 195. XXX. 6-8.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxvii. No. 1606. XXX. 18.—C. Bradley, *The Christian Life*, p. 225. XXX. 24.—M. G. Glazebrook, *Prospice*, p. 157. XXX. 24, 25.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons Preached in a Religious House*, vol. i. p. 313.

THE DEATH OF ISRAEL'S FIRST KING

1 Samuel xxxi.

Saul's death was neither more nor less than suicide; the death of all deaths the most loathsome and despised of men: of all deaths the only one that men call cowardly. It was a great historical event, meaning much to the nation which saw its first king thus sadly fall. It was the end of Saul's kingdom: his sons and all his family, and with them, all his hopes, died with him that night on Mount Gilboa. And it is still a conspicuous moral, as well as historical event, on which we may well pause to look across the ages. Saul brought down thousands with him when he fell, but he had been lowering the tone of the spiritual nation almost from the time when he began his reign. He had insulted and abashed and driven away the spiritual genius that brooded over that holy land, and he had dragged the armies of Jehovah down to the level of the armies of the nations around. And as he had been in his life in the land, so was he when he died at Gilboa. For 'There was the shield of the mighty vilely cast away—the shield of Saul—as of one not anointed of the Lord'. There are three points which indicate the departure of Saul from the path of peace and duty.

I. He had not long reigned until he began to separate himself from good men in the land. He was soon separated from Samuel, the best, the noblest, the representative good man of the time. He was soon separated from David, the man of the future, the man after God's own heart, and who desired to do only God's will. He was soon cruel and fierce in his wrath, slaying one by one the priests of the Lord.

II. Then we find that he was separated from God. He prayed to God and God gave him no answer. He was separated from Him who is the source of all light and the source of all strength. He asked in vain for God's guidance, and then called in vain for the dead Samuel.

III. Last of all Saul got separated from himself; from his own best nature. There was a great chasm in his nature, between his evil and his controlling better self; and thus he was left to the wreck and ruin which his own worst nature prompted. Such is the spiritual history of him whose tragic life we have now read to its close.—Hugh Black, *The British Weekly Pulpit*, vol. ii. p. 57.

THE SECOND BOOK OF SAMUEL

THE SECOND BOOK OF SAMUEL

REFERENCES.—I. 9.—S. Baring-Gould, *Village Preaching for a Year*, vol. i. p. 19. I. 17.—W. H. Hutchings, *Sermon-Sketches*, p. 192. I. 17, 18.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxviii. No. 1694.

'Also he bade them teach the children of Judah the use of the bow.'—2 SAMUEL i. 18.

I. The Song of the Bow.—We never come to this song of the bow without being struck afresh with its beauty, its pathos, its lofty patriotism, its whole-hearted grief, its tender recollection of a dead friend, and, perhaps, best of all, its generous forgetfulness of all that is bad in a dead enemy. The news has just been brought to David that his arch-enemy Saul is dead; and David, anointed by God to be Saul's successor, has been for seven years outcast. An outlaw in daily fear of his life, surrounded by a company of men desperate as he, and yet he has never lifted his hand against his enemy because he was God's anointed, and, in his loyalty to God, David forbore to slay his enemy, even on that occasion when he had him in his hand. And now, at last, the end has come—David is free from persecution, he is free, at last, to take his long-appointed place as king. But when the truth is established he and his six hundred outlaws stand, with their clothes rent, mourning, and weeping, and fasting. Then at last David rouses himself to action, and he finds vent for his grief in two ways—first of all in the exaction of the life of the unhappy messenger, according to the fierce temper of those times; and then in that touching song of lamentation to which he gives the title 'The Song of the Bow'. You will remember, I am sure, as David must have remembered as he sang it, how Jonathan in the days gone by gave to him his bow as a present, and how it was by the use of the bow, too, that Jonathan warned David to flee from the jealous anger of Saul, and so the first command of the new king was to order that 'The Song of the Bow' should be taught to all God's people from henceforth to keep green the memory of Saul and his son.

II. The Note of the Song.—This is the beautiful note of the song. The excitement of action is over, and all suffer because their natural head is cut off, and the singer suffers because, beyond the sorrow at the death of his early benefactor and of his truly loved friend, he has only recollection now of the valour and splendour of the departed king. 'Tell it not in Gath,' etc. His heart is sorry, and he calls on nature to join him in his mourning. 'Ye mountains of Gilboa,' etc. Even the earth should feel with him, he thinks. In his passion of sorrow he calls upon the beautiful fertile country to go into mourning and never again to produce tempting harvests for sorrow that nature should feel that the arms of the dead king can no longer give battle. But, if he is dead, still there is comfort in thinking of those brave men as he knew them. Some comfort to describe their prowess, their love for one another, their faithful comradeship. As you read all this, hundreds of years afterwards, in the light of the twentieth century, you think the praise of the king unnatural and stilted. At any rate, the words in which he commemorated his dead friend are beautiful indeed. Then comes that strongly generous reminder of how greatly Saul's successful wars had benefited the nation—'Ye daughters of Israel,' etc. He praises Jonathan for his bravery and skill in war, and for his fidelity to his father, and the singer gives a tender thought to his love for himself—'I am distressed for thee, my brother Jonathan'. You cannot but see the beauty of the song; you cannot but feel that in their defeat and death Saul and Jonathan are happy.

III. The Purpose of the Song.—Yet this song is not religious poetry, it is not a psalm, it is not a hymn. The Name of God never once occurs in it; it is simply a battle song. But God has put it in for a purpose, as He has put everything in the Bible. Nothing in this book refers only to the circumstances of the moment; all that is there is a teaching or a warning, a reproof or a blessing, for all time. And so here, underlying the sorrows of David, there are lessons for us in the twentieth century. One of them is that we must not usurp the prerogatives of God. It is God's place to judge; it is ours only to remember the good of the departed, and to leave the rest to Him. Another lesson surely is that a pure, self-denying love is the greatest of all great blessings.

2 SAMUEL i. 26.

MY love for my Brothers, from the early loss of our Parents, and even from earlier misfortunes, has grown into an affection 'passing the love of woman'. I have been ill-tempered with them—I have vexed them—but the thought of them has always stifled the impression that any woman might otherwise have made upon me.—JOHN KEATS (letter to *Benjamin Bailey*, 1818).

REFERENCES.—I. 26.—A. G. Mortimer, *The Church's Lessons for the Christian Year*, part iii. p. 111. R. E. Hutton, *The Crown of Christ*, vol. ii. p. 253. R. D. B. Rawnsley, *Village Sermons* (3rd Series), p. 139. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxxix. No. 2336. I. 27.—E. J. Hardy, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lvi. 1899, p. 327. II. 1.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. lii. No. 2996. II. 1-11.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture*—

2 *Samuel*, etc., p. 1. II. 17-27.—J. Mackay, *Jonathan, The Friend of David*, p. 193. III. 17.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons for the Church Year*, vol. ii. p. 101. III. 17, 18.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxiii. No. 1375. III. 33.—C. Perren, *Revival Sermons in Outline*, p. 339. III. 36.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xli. No. 2420. III. 38.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons Preached in Sackville College Chapel*, vol. iv. p. 222. III. 39.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. vi. No. 334. V. 17-25.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xl. No. 2348. V. 23, 24.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons for Some Feast Days in the Christian Year*, p. 291. V. 24.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. iii. No. 147. V. 24, 25.—*Ibid.* vol. xl. No. 2348. VI. 1-12.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture*—2 *Samuel*, p. 14. VI. 6, 7.—A. G. Mortimer, *Studies in Holy Scripture*, p. 94. VI. 11.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture*—2 *Samuel*, p. 21. VI. 20-22.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons for the Church Year*, vol. ii. p. 127. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. vi. No. 321; see also vol. xxxiv. No. 2031. VII. 1, 2.—'Plain Sermons' by contributors to the *Tracts for the Times*, vol. ii. p. 41. VII. 1-22.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xlv. No. 2641. VII. 2.—S. Martin, *Rain Upon the Mown Grass*, p. 56. VII. 4-16.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture*—2 *Samuel*, p. 30.

HUMILITY

'Then went King David in, and sat before the Lord, and he said, Who am I, O Lord God? and what is my house, that Thou hast brought me hitherto?'—2 SAMUEL VII. 18.

SAUL'S failure and David's success are here indicated; and in essence it came to this, that Saul was rejected for pride, and David was received for humility.

I. In illustration of all this, one of the most remarkable things in the story of David is the way in which he yielded to the guidance and reproof of God's prophets. His attitude of humble praise on this occasion of our text, when Nathan predicted the perpetual dominion of his house, is typical of his temper at all such times. Instead of creating pride and vanity, as it would in a smaller, meaner soul, it crushes him to the dust, makes him feel his unworthiness, and melts his heart with sweet humility.

II. Happiness should not separate the soul of man from God, if it be accepted humbly as from His loving hand and loving heart. It should make a man praise God for His goodness, and make him walk softly and gently all his days. Yet, how rare is this humble attitude of heart, gratefully accepting the unmerited blessing and undeserved favour of God. Our common attitude is exactly the opposite. We do not cultivate the thankful heart.

III. Pride is the first of the seven deadly sins. Humility is the chief of the virtues, because apart from it none of them can grow to full beauty and power. It is the beginning of wisdom; the threshold of grace; the very doorway of the kingdom itself; the good ground ready for the seed that will bear fruit, some an hundredfold. It was of this humble-mindedness and simple-heartedness the Master spoke when He made little children typical of His Kingdom. We must feel in the presence of such love as Communion represents that we have no standing except of grace. We are not worthy to eat the crumbs from His table. And yet He brought us unto His banqueting-house, gave us to eat the bread of life and to drink the wine of His love. When we have said all we just come back to the mystery of redeeming love, and we bow in humble, adoring praise before our Father in heaven.—HUGH BLACK, *Christ's Service of Love*, p. 221.

THE SOLICITUDE OF SUCCESS

'Then David the king went in, and sat before the Lord, and he said, Who am I, O Lord God? and what is my house, that Thou hast brought me thus far? And this was yet a small thing in Thine eyes, O Lord God; but Thou hast spoken also of Thy servant's house for a great while to come; and this too after the manner of men, O Lord God! And what can David say more unto Thee? for Thou knowest Thy servant, O Lord God.'—2 SAMUEL VII. 18-20 (R.V.).

I. *Who am I, O Lord God, and what is my house, that Thou hast brought me thus far?* It may seem paradoxical to say so, but in deep, true souls disappointment and disaster often cause less anxiety and questioning than brilliant success occasions. Success, especially sudden and singular success, brings many heart-searchings and solicitudes.

II. To a certain extent this is the right spirit in which to accept accessions of wealth and power. It is a far truer temper than to regard our success as the reward of merit, and to boast ourselves in our good fortune. To recognize our frailties, and to acknowledge that riches and honours are God's free gifts, is the true attitude towards all worldly advancement. Yet at the same time we must not permit morbid feeling to blind us to the graciousness of God, and to rob us of the sweetness of the good things He bestows. The 'gifts of the Greeks' were deprecated by their neighbours, it being generally understood that these favours were prompted by sinister motive or design; but there is nothing sinister in the bright things freely given us of God. The pagan in the day of his success was afraid of the jealousy with which the gods were reputed to view the uncommon happiness of mortals; but the Divine Giver is better known by us, and His delight in all the pure joy of His people is a great truth of that revelation which is 'the master-light of all our seeing'. It is well to feel our unworthiness of the least of His mercies, yet we may greet the shower of gold or roses with the utmost confidence and expectation. It is a fine trait in the Christian character when we are able to fill high places and to enjoy goodly things in the spirit of unquestioning trust and appreciation. A suspicious, ascetic spirit is not the highest mood of life.

III. If it please God to exalt us to brilliant posts, to invest us with authority and influence, to dower us with riches, to give us favour in the sight of the people, to establish our house, let us dismiss all heathen solicitude, and, praying for God's grace, use everything for His glory.—W. L. WATKINSON, *Themes for Hours of Meditation*, p. 163.

REFERENCES.—VII. 18.—Walter Brooke, *Sermons*, p. 72. VII. 18-22.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xx. No. 1166. VII. 18-29.—*Ibid.* vol. xlviii. No. 2811; see also vol. l. No. 2869. A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture*—2 *Samuel*, p. 36.

MORE THAN HUMAN

'Is this the manner of man, O Lord God?'—2 SAMUEL VII. 19.

AGAIN and again we see in the Bible that God is like none but Himself. He has no compeer. He challenges the gods; He takes them up, as it were, in His fingers, and nails them to the walls of the universe and laughs at them, and asks them to come down and assert themselves in fair reason and in miracles of undoubted beneficence. As with God so with the Church. We can only live in our distinctiveness; not wherein we are like other people, but at the point where we are unlike everybody else does our power come in. If the salt have lost his savour, his weight will do nothing for him or his whiteness; his reputation was founded in his savour; that gone, cast him out and let men tread him under foot. You must not try to make God like man, nor must you endeavour to make the God of the Bible like the gods of the heathen. The God of revelation astounds even His most reverent prophets and minstrels by His mercy, His tenderness, His power, and His pity.

I. It is the same throughout the whole circuit of human inquiry. We might say, for example, of the Bible, Is this the manner of our books? There is no book like it; it is so curiously composed, it is hardly composed at all; it seems to fall into place in great star-quantities; we cannot trace its genesis, its intellectual evolution, and its literary polish in its full verbal accomplishment. The Bible is not after the manner of our books; it is a book by itself, it is many books in one, it is all literature in one statement, and that statement is as a burning bush within whose fiery branches the Jehovah of the universe dwells and glows.

II. We might say the same thing of the Christ Whom we serve and Whom we adore, blessing His name as we bless the name of the Father. When we watch Him, when we hear His words, when we study His methods, we say, 'Is this the manner of man, O Lord God?' Hear the people, the people who did not care for Him, the people who were hostile to Him; when they returned they said, 'Never man spake like this man'. There we come upon our central doctrine, namely, there is in Him something more than human, more than measurable, more than common. When He came to the end of His Sermon on the Mount, the only sanctuary worthy of such a discourse, the people were astonished at His doctrine, for He taught them as One having authority, and not as the scribes.

III. We might say the same thing of the morality of the New Testament. Jesus Christ said, 'Except your righteousness exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven'; and the scribes and the Pharisees were there, and He offended every man of them. Jesus Christ took the soul back into the very sanctuary of the Divine wisdom and grace, and having wrought there in the innermost place the miracle of conversion, He said, Now, down, away to the paths and the market-place and the homes of the world, and love thy neighbour as thyself. Never man spake like this man!

Then take His attitude towards life. Sometimes He seemed to regard it as worthless; He said, Take no thought for it. Once He even went so far as to say that if any man would gain his life he must lose it; once again He declared in a startling paradox that if any man would gain his life he should lose it, and if he lost it in the right way he should gain it. There is no making a common line of this Man's talk, it does not fit into any other conversation, it is not an eloquence that falls like splashing water into the cadences of other rhetoric; it stands alone, it is full of paradox, full of mercy, full of light; and no man can interpret Christ until he has been buried with Him in the very baptism of a common suffering.—JOSEPH PARKER, *City Temple Pulpit*, vol. i. p. 77.

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PLAY THE MAN

'Be of good courage, and let us play the men for our people, and for the cities of our God: and the Lord do that which seemeth Him good.'—2 SAMUEL X. 12.

WHAT is it to play the man? It is:—

I. To Take Things Seriously.—Of Louis XV of France it was said that, being wholly occupied with his amusements, he had not an hour in the day for important matters; while the best that could be said of our own King Charles II was that he was a 'merry monarch'. There was no true manhood there, to say nothing of royal dignity.

II. Cheerful Courage.—But along with this seriousness, this clear and frank recognition of things as they are, there must be also, if we would play the man, that courage for which Joab appealed, and a courage which is something better than obstinacy and dogged endurance—a courage which has in it something of cheerfulness and hope. If you are a man, then, even though you may feel tired, and though the burden may weigh heavily upon you, and though the prospect may not be too bright, still you will set your face and press on. And the harder the battle, the stonier the path, the more resolute you will be not to be beaten, and not to cry out and make a fuss. Of course it is often difficult to play a manly part in this sense. It is especially difficult to keep going steadily on. That is the hardest kind of courage to practise: the courage that is needed in order to persevere.

III. The Courage to Endure.—And if you need manhood for patient continuance in well-doing, you need it also, and perhaps more, for patient continuance in the bearing of pain and trouble. It is much easier for us to bear our troubles at first than later on.

IV. Public Spirit.—'Let us play the men for the people and for the cities of our God.' It is not only courage and patience that are demanded of us, but

public spirit. There is no nobler ambition that can possess any man's mind, when he looks out into the world and sees how his brethren are faring, than the ambition to play a true man's part in the defence of the needy and the weak, and in the furtherance, though it be by much toil and sacrifice, of every sacred cause which aims at beating down the enemies of mankind, and bringing in the golden age of which so many prophets have dreamed, and for which so many martyrs have died. That, indeed, is the very Spirit of Jesus.—H. Arnold Thomas, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxxii. 1907, p. 81.

References.—X. 12.— Canon Atkinson, *Christian Manliness*, Sermons, 1828-93. XI. 1.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. viii. No. 450; see also vol. xv. No. 895. XII. 5-7.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—2 Samuel*, p. 55.

THE MESSAGE OF THE SECOND BOOK OF SAMUEL

'Thou art the man.'—2 Samuel xii. 7.

The second book of Samuel does not contain any very definite divisions, but seems most naturally to fall into three parts.

In the first, which includes chapters one to eight, we have the account of *David's public doings*. In the second section, containing chapters nine to twenty, we have the history of *David's court life*.

At chapter twenty the third and closing section of the book begins. This section constitutes an appendix of miscellaneous contents. The book closes with the story of the census and the plague which it brought in Israel, with the means taken by David for its removal.

As for the main lesson of this book, it is written across its pages so clearly that none can miss it. Wherever you open the book you find the message, 'Be sure your sin will find you out'.

I. The Awfulness of Sin.—Sin, as we know, is a theological term. The idea of sin is inseparably bound up with the idea of God. Without God you may have evil, vice, crime, you cannot have sin. Sin is a relation between a personal Creator and the personal creature. Hence it follows that our knowledge of God regulates our knowledge of sin. The better we know God the better we know what sin really is.

In reading the story of David we see something of the malignancy of sin, and learn something of its power. David was a good man. David was a God-fearing man. David's heart was on the whole right with God, yet see what sin did to him. It threw him from the throne into the gutter, and made him go mourning all his days.

II. The Limits of Forgiveness.—David sinned, and for months remained with his sin unconfessed and unforgiven. These months David never forgot. But a day came when Nathan reached David. The day came when David could write the fifty-first Psalm, the Psalm which ever since has been the song of broken-hearted penitents. And in that day David received forgiveness. When David said, 'I have sinned against the Lord,' Nathan could say, 'The Lord hath put away thy sin'. And David knew that was true. David was not only forgiven, but he was kept safe, as we can see, to the end of his days in fellowship with God. But even all that did not *undo his sin*. He was forgiven, but his household was desolated.

III. The Lesson is an Unspeakably Solemn One.—Sin has results which forgiveness cannot cancel. There are consequences of sin which even the grace of God cannot arrest. You may sin and be forgiven, and yet your sin may go down through the ages cursing and destroying men you never knew.—G. H. C. Macgregor, *Messages of the Old Testament*, p. 129.

NATHAN AND DAVID

'And Nathan said to David, Thou art the man.'—2 Samuel xii. 7.

Holy Scripture leaves us in no manner of doubt as to the general character of David (1 Sam. xiii. 14). So that we cannot doubt of David's favour and acceptance with God before he sinned so grievously. Moreover, his own writings have come down to us as witness of his affection towards God; his Psalms say plainly what his mind must have been, for we still use them, as they have ever been used in the Church of God both by Jews and Christians, as the best expression of our devout affections towards God; we can find no language so fit in which to clothe our own offerings of praise, or prayer, or thanksgiving; no words of Repentance so deep and earnest as those in the fifty-first Psalm, where David confesses before God the very sin referred to in this chapter.

But, notwithstanding all this, we see David here speaking to Nathan like a man whose conscience made no answer to the parable of the prophet; we see him so devout before his sin, and so penitent afterwards, yet apparently (for the moment) quite unconscious of his great offence; so that he needs to have his own righteous indignation turned backwards by the prophet's word upon himself; to be plainly told—'Thou art the man'.

I. We have before us, then, in David's conduct under the reproof of Nathan, an instance of one of the saddest effects of sin; we see that, so long as it is willingly entertained by us, sin overpowers the conscience and destroys it—that, so long as sin is living and reigning there, the soul is dead, for the Holy Spirit is grieved and silent, or has departed from us; and, so long as this is the case, all hope of recovery or deliverance is at an end. Whatever our sin may be, we may yet be saved, if we find grace to repent of it. But the very first consequence of sin is a deadness and insensibility of soul; with every advance in sin our own chance of retreat is more and more cut off, and our hope taken away; it brings, as it were, its own judgment with it.

Surely we leave this fact out of our calculation when we think or speak of an act of sin as a solitary and independent thing; that our consciences will still remain as now, and forget that our whole conscience is

becoming darkened, and the whole man changed by it. This fact will explain why good men have spoken so strongly of their own sinful state, in a way which may sometimes have seemed to us overdone and untrue; for it is a reward and consequence of holiness that, as men advance therein, the spiritual faculties become more enlightened; just as it is a consequence of sin persevered in that the conscience becomes darkened and dead. This, again, should lead us to fear the danger of making false calculations as to Repentance. If we reckon and rely on a future Repentance, it is plain that we do it because we wish to enjoy the pleasures of sin now. And what is this but choosing sin and all its consequences?

This alone is clear—that Repentance will never be so easy as now; that every delay must make it harder and harder, and remove it further out of our reach; that our love for God and holiness will grow weaker and weaker; and the desire for better things, and the knowledge of them, will fade together from our souls. Now is the accepted time, and Now the day of salvation. Now—before the power of sin is confirmed, or the Holy Spirit has finally departed from us. This, then, is the one great lesson which we may learn from the record of David's sin. We see him stand before the prophet unconscious of his guilt, and it needs that the prophet should say to him, 'Thou art the man,' in order that he may see himself in the parable set before him.

II. We may very well, then, take this warning of the blinding power of sin to ourselves, from the words spoken by Nathan to David. But who shall speak them to ourselves? Who shall point to God's Word, when they set before us our sins, or say to us, 'Thou art the man of whom these things are spoken'? We must undertake to do this for ourselves. We are bound to read or hear the Word of God with this view, that we may apply it to our own state. For, if we will not judge ourselves, we shall be judged and condemned of God; our sins will never be confessed or repented of; self-deceived and dead in sin, wholly ignorant of our own state in the sight of God, day by day we shall be ripening for His judgment; and this, because we never took God's Word to ourselves when it spoke of sin and its consequences.

SELF-JUDGMENT

'And Nathan said to David, Thou art the man.'—2 SAMUEL XII. 7.

IT is not the story of David's sin, and its punishment, with his bitter repentance, and ultimate forgiveness, which I desire to deal with now, but the great principle of self-judgment illustrated in the scene.

I. The first thing that strikes us is the blindness and infatuation of the man to have missed the application of the parable. It seems an almost impossible state of self-deception, which could let him flare out in indignant virtue against the supposed culprit, and never once dream that the case could apply to himself. But it is not such an impossible thing as it looks, nay, it is even one of the commonest facts of morals, and one which we can easily illustrate any day among ourselves. We nod assent to a general statement of right and wrong, accept principles, even give our unbiassed judgment on concrete cases that are mentioned, and yet never make the personal application. Conscience works out correctly in an abstract case, when there seems no personal interest. Till we come to the bar naked, without veils and excuses and palliations, as David was tricked into doing, we never do justice against ourselves.

II. In religion we are, if possible, more easily biassed by personal considerations. The self-deceit we are speaking about would seem incredible but for facts like this case of David. It is not incredible to the man who knows his own heart and the deceitfulness of sin. David must have previously deluded himself, or he could not have been so insensible. We are all right on the general principles of religion, but personal religion begins exactly where we leave off. Our great necessity is to relate our particular case to the general law. In assenting to the judgment, which Nathan meant to rouse in him about the rich man, David was passing judgment on himself unconsciously. This is the stumbling-block in the way of all amendment, that sin is not accepted as such; we do not recognize; the word has not come to us, striking us dumb: 'Thou art the man'. We must discover, and acknowledge, and confess our sin, before forgiveness is possible—discover first of all self-revelation, self-judgment, self-condemnation, these represent the first task of religion. Till we have come to grips with self, we cannot come to terms with God.

III. Rigorous self-judgment is the first requisite of moral life, to turn the light in on self. Many religious people are worms of the earth, with their whole nature corrupt in their general confession, and very fine gentlemen in detail—never dealing with self in any direct fashion, never hearing once the searching word, Thou art the man. We have seen how hard honest self-judgment is, and yet how essential. Essential—it is not only first, but it is also last. Would you then know the method, the infallible way of putting self to the proof? The method for us is this—bring yourselves, your work, motives, ambitions, inner thoughts into the presence of Christ, and judge them there. He is the Light in this sense also. Until we make Christ our conscience, bringing everything to be judged by the Light, we will keep confusing the issues, and disguising our sins, and finding all manner of self-escape, excuses, and counter-charges —HUGH BLACK, *Christ's Service of Love*, p. 147.

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CONFESSION OF SIN

'And David said unto Nathan, I have sinned against the Lord.'—2 SAMUEL XII. 13.

THE story of David's fall, and David's penitence, confession, and forgiveness, is recorded for us in Holy

Scripture in order that we may have plainly set before us the pathway in which every true penitent must walk. Confession of sin is a necessary condition of forgiveness of sin.

I. *We must confess our sins.* Mark that is something very different from confessing that we are sinners. To confess our sins, our own particular and private sins—the sins in consequence of which we might be compared with our neighbours to our disadvantage—the flaws and defects, the blots and the stains on our own piece of material which make it vile and worthless—the violations of God's Holy Law—this is the only true confession of sin—this is the necessary condition for obtaining the Divine forgiveness.

To do this work of confession aright, *self-examination* is plainly necessary—systematic and regular self-examination. And if our examination is to be real and efficient, we have a special need of the grace of God. The light of God we shall need to enable us to see our sins, the love of God we need to enable us to abhor our sins. And beyond the daily self-examination, it is plain that there should be regular seasons in our lives when we should make a more thorough and systematic examination. The penitential seasons of the Church—Lent, Rogationtide, Advent—afford us special opportunities.

II. When we sinned, whatever our sin was, we necessarily sinned against God. So when we sinned we had necessarily to make confession unto Him. But our sins are often sinned against our fellow-men. We do them wrong either by word or deed. In such cases it is part of true repentance, it is part of the confession which wins forgiveness, to confess our sins unto man. It is a bitter discipline to undergo, but a most wholesome one. And our Church imposes it upon us.

Confession to God through His Priest has been to many a blessed means of breaking with habits of sin. It has enabled them to lead a holier life. It has led up to the application of God's pardon to their own troubled conscience. They have been enabled to feel that the inestimable gift of forgiveness is theirs.

III. When we have heard the summons, let us confess our sin unto Almighty God; when we have confessed and been absolved, then another summons, a more grateful summons is heard. 'Let us give thanks.' When God has taken away our iniquity and received us graciously, then we *render the calves of our lips.* And we shall show forth God's praise, 'not with our lips only, but in our lives'.—F. Watson, *The Christian Life Here and Hereafter*, p. 1.

SIN PUT AWAY

(Easter Even)

'The Lord also hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die.'—2 Samuel xii. 13.

The point at which we stand to-day is the only one from which we can really see all the meanings which, whether Nathan was conscious of it or not, lay indeed inside the words which he said to David. The Sacrifice of Calvary is complete, and we are waiting to hear the joy bells of Easter telling us that Christ is risen. He was 'delivered for our offences and was raised again for our justification'.

I. The Rapidity of the Pardon.—The first thought which, probably, strikes the mind, is the rapidity with which the penitent received his answer—a rapidity so great that, in fact, the pardon had actually preceded the confession. 'Before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear.'

II. The Cross is God's Great Effort to 'put away sin' in some way compatible with His love, for sin cannot be near God. Sin cannot live in His sight. Having punished the sinner in Christ, it is as much a just, as it is a loving, act with God to take back the sinner to His bosom.

III. What God Says.—God does not say that that 'put away sin' shall never smart. God does not tell you there shall be no temporal punishment for that forgiven sin! He does not promise that there shall be no loving process of corrective chastisement. He is too wise and too fatherly to say that. But this is what He does say: 'Nevertheless, thou shalt never be separated from Me. Thy soul, through eternity, is safe. Thou shalt not die!'

IV. Then let your Sin Die out of your Sorrow.—Let it die! Let it die from those dark memories and those brooding fears—'even as a dead thing out of mind'. You will be holier when you are free from its cloggings! Why chain yourself to that thing of death? Did Jesus die? Then, by that token that sin is dead. This is the day for great things. May it be ours to realize that we are indeed 'buried with Him,' so that as He was raised even we may henceforth 'walk in newness of life'.

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THE MIGHT-HAVE-BEEN

'And the king was much moved, and went up to the chamber over the gate, and wept: and as he went, thus he said, O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! Would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!'—2 Samuel xviii. 33.

I. Besides the Absalom who was, there is the Absalom who might have been: this is the dead son whom David is lamenting, this is the son *he* knew, the son *he* cannot forget, whose image is not blotted out by the shamed figure of the murderer, rebel, traitor, which is the only Absalom visible to all the rest.

II. King David has been for Jew and for Christian a type of the Christ. For this once we will make him a type of something else: he shall be an image not of God the Son, but of God the Father: his fatherly love shall be symbol to us of the love of a Father Who is in heaven. May it not be that even the great Father loves and mourns a son as David did, yes, and for cause the same.

Consider it. Such an one is dead, gone (as we say) to his last account: it is a bad record which closes a life vicious, reckless, false: the world sighs with relief to be well rid of him: the Joabs have struck their spears into him as he hung in calamity's grip, and the multitude have cast each man his opprobrious stone to build up the monument of infamy over that disastrous life. But meanwhile the news of that shameful ending has been borne to the towers of heaven. Is it relief, exultation, is it opprobrium that greets it there? I think it not. Rather I think it is a Father, a Divine Father, mourning in His high place with a sorrow larger than the sorrow of man, over 'His son, His son'. That Father is mourning not the fool, the rebel, the profligate, but the son whom He knew before these evil days: the child of His desires, His hopes; the man who might have been, who was not, and now can never be.

III. Would Absalom, if he could have foreseen David's passion of grief over his ruin, would Absalom have been touched at heart, and chosen to have the father's love rather than his own ruin? One cannot know. And however that may be, one of us mortal children of the Father in heaven may find a power upon our wills in the imagination of that parental love which can so sorrow at our fall. If God so cherishes my soul, if He can so delight in the work of His own hands, and believe it so capable of good, mourn so over its failure of good, shall I not care for it myself, believe in it myself, covet to become that which I might be, was made to be?—J. H. Skrine, *The Heart's Counsel*, p. 134.

Reference.—XVIII. 33.—W. Howell Evans, *Sermons for the Church's Year*, p. 176.

BRINGING THE KING BACK

'Now therefore why speak ye not a word of bringing the king back?'—2 Samuel xix. 10.

The rebellion was over; Absalom was dead; the messengers had not hesitated to bring what they thought would be the good tidings to the king. But how could they be good tidings, remembering the wonderful love which he bore for his son? A plaintive cry went up from him when he realized the fullness of the news, and he wished he had died instead. The joy of victory was turned to mourning; the people heard of the sorrow of the king, and little could they rejoice when they found he was bowed with sorrow. Little could they realize the joy of victory or what it meant, and they sent messengers to him one after another, and they held consultations between themselves; and then we come to these words: 'Why therefore speak ye not a word of bringing the king back?' He was there. He was still their king, but there seemed to be a division between himself and the people for the time; they could not realize that he was their king, they certainly did not enjoy his presence. And so the thought arose, 'Why therefore speak ye not a word of bringing the king back?' You know the result—he sent an upbraiding but nevertheless a loving message to his son. And then he returned once more to his people. He realized what his return meant to them, as they felt that he was now again their king.

There is a spiritual truth in these words which appeals very continuously to some of us.

I. Rebellion Against the King.—Realizing that Jesus Christ Himself is our lawful King, our Sovereign, and Saviour, may we ask ourselves what our position is in respect to Him? Many of these men had been rebels against the king; they had ranged themselves on the side of Absalom, and were willing to cast in their lot with his. But, rebels as they were, there now came the opportunity of owning their allegiance to the true king. Is it not possible for us to be rebels against our Lord Jesus Christ Himself? We may set something or somebody else up in our hearts to the exclusion of Himself; we may not own Him to be our Lord. We may not bow ourselves before Him. We may live our lives, so far as we can, without reference to Him; all our influence may be cast absolutely in the wrong direction. We may really be helping forward the kingdom of Satan rather than the kingdom of Christ. It is only too possible for us to be out-and-out rebels against Jesus Christ Himself, and to be casting in our lot with those who are vaunting against the cause of truth, righteousness, and justice. If that be the case—if any of us are conscience-stricken and feel that we have been

rebels against our Lord and against His kingdom—shall we speak the word to bring Him back to us? The word must be a word of penitence, it must be a word of prayer, it must be a prayer offered up in faith, it must be a prayer to be followed by the subjection of ourselves, no matter what that may mean and involve in each individual case.

II. Separation from the King.—Or there may be many of us who have not, at any rate consciously, been rebels against our Lord Jesus Christ, but who nevertheless feel that there has been something which has separated us from Him. We know that no longer are we enjoying communion with Him. It seems as though He were a long way from us. We realize not His presence with all the joy, and hope, and light which that presence brought us in days gone by. It seems that everything is miserable that once was joy. We remember, for instance, the time when we could kneel down and pray; or we remember the time when we used to delight to read God's Word; or we remember when we could realize His presence in our daily life; or we remember when our communions were seasons of joy and spiritual refreshment; or we look back and recollect how we believed that He was not only in the world somewhere, but we believed that He was with us, we felt more joy in doing some work for Him, no matter how feeble it might be. Those were the bright, happy days of our spiritual life. But somehow or other there has been a change. We have lost the happiness which once we had, and things are not so clear and easy as they once seemed to be. We find ourselves walking in the darkness, groping our way and stumbling. We find all sorts of difficulties staring us in the face. We do not believe in prayer now, or, if we do, we do not pray; and we do not read God's Holy Word, and we have given up our communions, or, if we still attend, it is merely a matter of form. How is it? Many of us, I think, find it very difficult to hold on. We find it so easy to go back. It is so difficult always to realize the presence of the King with us, and there are so many distractions in this world, there are so many influences brought to bear upon us.

III. To Bring the King Back.—'Why therefore speak ye not a word of bringing the King back?' Do you think He will come back? Do you think He will give us the joy that once we knew? Do you think He will come to speak the word of consolation? Do you think He will come to give us that strength which His presence alone can give? Yes; speak the word to bring the King back, for He is wanted now. If we have forgotten Him He has not forgotten us. If we have been weak in our own love, if we have been an easy prey to our spiritual foes, speak the word to bring Him back. Send a message through prayer to the King to ask him to come back to the heart from which He has been expelled. Ask Him to return with all the light and joy and sunshine which ever come from His presence with us.

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FEWNESS OF DAYS

'How long have I to live?'—2 Samuel xix. 34.

Suppose we accommodate this inquiry of Barzillai, and apply it here and there along the sensitive line of our ever-changing life.

I. 'How long have I to live,' that I may make the most of what remains? That is a very proper question; we ought to ask ourselves that question every day. To make the most of what remains. What does remain? No man can tell. A breath. Where is your friend? He is dead. What thine hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; he that does it quickly does it twice. You have no time to lose; you have been haffling with yourself for the last six days, and you are six days nearer your end.

II. 'How long have I to live,' that I may set my house in order? You want a little time for preparation, you do not want to be hastened away so as to leave many things unarranged and unprovided for. What a beautiful thing it is to be able to stand over the grave of your friend, and to say, He did what he could; he was a sweet, heroic, valiant soul; in his own little way and sphere, take him for all in all, he was a man, we ne'er shall look upon his like again; so gentle as a father, so faithful as a friend, so wholly excellent and estimable in every capacity and aspect of life. If you want to set your house in order, make a just will. I know of no sweeter reading—and I myself have no recollection of ever having been named in a will, so I can speak the more without prejudice—I know no sweeter reading than a will after which men say, That is just, that is wisely conceived.

III. 'How long have I to live,' that I may do the most important things first? There is a gradation in importance; some things are important, others are more important, others again are most important, are indeed of superlative and inexpressible importance. That is a graduated scale which commends itself to common sense: why not apply it in all the regions and outgoings of life? It is not enough to be busy; you must be busy at the right time, in the right place, and in the right work.

'How long have I to live,' that I may pay all that I owe? This is not a question of money only, it is a far greater question. Pay the bill of thy neglect, and take a receipt from the hand of God.—Joseph Parker, *City Temple Pulpit*, vol. iii. p. 185.

References.—XIX. 34.—*Studies in Texts*, vol. i. p. 175. H. J. Wilmot-Buxton, *Common Life Religion*, p. 36. XIX. 34-37.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—2 Samuel*, p. 113.

CONTROVERSY

'And the words of the men of Judah were fiercer than the words of the men of Israel.'—2 Samuel xix. 43.

Here is the beginning of a long controversy which ended in the dismemberment of God's people, and in the permanent alienation of those who by tradition,

by hopes, and by privileges, were common children of a common Lord.

I. *Guard against the controversial spirit.* It has been well said by the late Bishop Moberly that the temper which prefers to denounce sin rather than faithfully and meekly endeavours to increase holiness in oneself and others; which rather likes railing at want of discipline, than sets itself in gentleness and prayer to bring about the restoration of it, is nearly connected with feebleness of moral fibre.

Guard against the controversial spirit. It more than anything else serves to damage the sensitiveness of the soul.

II. But while we deplore—as deplore we must—the divisions of Israel and Judah, the divisions which rend the seamless robe of Christ, we must not forget, at the same time, that as God can use the fierceness and the passions of men, so He can overrule for good 'our unhappy divisions'. Nay, we may go further and say that, bad as they are, divisions are not all bad; and sad as it is, disunion is no ground for despair. The presence of controversy, and even the sad spectacle of division, do bear witness to the intense importance of Truth. The Church of Christ does not deal with views and opinions, but with the Faith. The Apostle St. Jude entreats us earnestly to contend for the Faith once delivered to the Saints.

Sad as it is, religious dissension will try a man's earnestness, and will deepen conviction. Men do not contend for that about which they feel indifferent; sometimes it has been that the very sight of a quarrel has led men to believe that there was something worth contending for.

III. He who would use the weapons of controversy aright, whether in attack or defence, must look to it that he wears the right equipment, or he will find himself injured by the very force of the weapons which he was trying to wield. In a time of religious excitement, or among religious disputants, there is need for some very special excellences, which men do not always stop to perceive. And among these, not the least, we would put *knowledge*. If men knew more than they do of the Bible, a little of Church history, and a little of the true meaning of theological terms, there would be less misunderstanding and fewer religious bickerings.

And besides knowledge, the controversialist needs *love*. We need not think that this much-abused term commits us only to a vapid indifference, and a courteous surrender of vital truth. St. Paul was, if anyone, a practised controversialist. And yet he, in his writings, has supplied us with the most splendid and appealing utterances as to the power of love.

And more than all, the religious controversialist needs *piety*. The ark of God must be steadied with a holy hand, the fact that it is being shaken does not justify the unhallowed usage of Uzziah; not even Uzziah in the height of his prosperity can venture to take liberties in holy things. It needs a very chastened life, a very holy, refined touch to deal with things which concern the inner verities of the faith and the religious life of Christians. Purity, gentleness, piety, deep religious conviction—these are the healing bath in which all controversial weapon must be steeped.—W. C. E. Newbolt, *Words of Exhortation*, p. 40.

SPIRITUAL HEALTH

'Art thou in health, my brother?'—2 Samuel xx. 9.

There may be a healthy soul in a sickly body. But often within a sound body there is an unsound heart.

I. The Characteristics of a Healthy Disciple.

(1) A cheerful countenance.

(2) A good appetite. 'Hunger and thirst after righteousness.'

(3) Moral strength.

(4) Great powers of endurance.

(5) Buoyant spirits.

II. The Causes of Soul-sickness.

(1) Contagion. Evil company. But much depends on our previous state of health. We may be *predisposed* to certain diseases.

(2) Neglect. There are spiritual as well as physical laws which cannot be broken with impunity.

III. The Remedy.

(1) Go to the Good Physician.

(2) Avoid danger as much as possible.

(3) 'Exercise thyself unto godliness.' 'They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength.'—F. J. Austin, *Seeds and Saplings*, p. 67.

THE WISE WOMAN OF ABEL

'A wise woman out of the city.'—2 Samuel xx. 16.

Note some features of the chieftainess of Abel.

I. She was Reputed as Wise.—If her name is unknown her character is not unknown. Her fame, in her own time, was intensive rather than extensive. Abel was but a tiny city, and though she was well known there yet it was but a contracted sphere. But the quality of reputation is far more than its quantity. She was a good woman. Read her story and it is apparent. She loved her city. She cared for her neighbours. She reverenced Jehovah. She had genial and gracious qualities adorning her character. She resented treason and evil-doing. She had a virile sense of justice.

II. This Wise Woman was Conscious of Having Good Counsel to Give.—God had put a word in this woman's mind and soul, and she knew she had the needed word for the hour.

There is no counsel so inclusive, so always pertinent, so far-reaching, so universally apposite as the Gospel of Christ.

III. The Wise Woman of Abel Appreciated Noble History.—This woman was wise, in this as in much else, that she was a student of history. She was conversant with the records of the past. She knew the times that had gone over Abel. She was familiar with the great historical utterances. 'They were

wont to speak in old time, saying.' She knew the proverbs of the ancients. The hand of God in history should never be unrevealed to us.

IV. The Wise Woman Prized Proved Centres of Knowledge.—She protested against Abel being destroyed by Joab, and this is one of the grounds of her protest: 'They were wont to speak in old time, saying, They shall surely ask counsel at Abel: and so they ended the matter'. Abel means 'meadows'. Let meadows that were a delight to generations gone be sacredly preserved by succeeding generations.

V. The Wise Woman of Abel was Conscious of Uprightness.—She said, 'I am one of them that are peaceable and faithful in Israel'. She claims that there were many such in Abel. The epithets are plural in the original. 'I am *one of them* that are peaceable and faithful.'

She was possessed of peace. She had a quiet heart—God's best gift to men and women. Righteousness effects peaceableness. It is the very bloom of character. The consciousness of such qualities is a precious possession.

VI. This Noble Woman Lived for Others.—She described herself, whilst remonstrating with Joab, as 'a mother in Israel'.

VII. The Wise Woman Deprecated the Destruction of God's Inheritance.—'Why wilt thou swallow up the inheritance of the Lord?' she cries in sorrow and anger. Every city is God's inheritance. Christian believers are peculiarly the inheritance of the Lord.

VIII. This Wise Woman of Abel Used her Influence Well.—Influence is one of the subtlest and most effective attributes of mankind. It may be an incalculable good or an ineffable evil. With Joab she used her influence most skilfully and beneficially.

This woman of Israel used her rare influence with the people of Abel in equally felicitous fashion. Further, she used her great influence for the suppression of evil. And finally, her influence effected the salvation of her city.—Dinsdale T. Young, *The Crimson Book*, p. 269.

Illustration.—Bishop Hall, in his invaluable 'Contemplations,' forcefully applies the salvation of Abel. 'Spiritually the case is ours. Every man's breast is a city enclosed. Every sin is a traitor that lurks within those walls. God calls to us for Sheba's head; neither hath He any quarrel to our person but for our sin. If we love the head of our traitor above the life of our soul we shall justly perish in the vengeance. We cannot be more willing to part with our sin than our merciful God is to withdraw His judgments.'

RIZPAH

2 Samuel xxi.

Dr. John Brown's paragraphs on 'Rizpah' in 'Notes on Art'.—*Horæ Subsecivæ.*

References.—XXI. 8-10.—J. H. Jellett, *The Elder Son*, p. 90. XXI. 9.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons for Some Feast Days in the Christian Year*, p. 103. XXI. 12-14.—J. Mackay, *Jonathan, the Friend of David*, p. 217. XXII. 29.—R. E. Hutton, *The Crown of Christ*, vol. i. p. 205. XXII. 36.—A. MacLeod, *Days of Heaven Upon Earth*, p. 184. XXII. 40, 51.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—2 Samuel*, etc., p. 119. XXIII. 1-5.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xlii. No. 2450. XXIII. 1-7.—J. Monro-Gibson, *The Glory of Life on Earth*, p. 195. A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—2 Samuel*, p. 125. XXIII. 3, 4.—*Ibid.* p. 131. XXIII. 4.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vols. xxxviii. No. 2284; li. No. 2947; lii. No. 2998. J. Henderson, *Sermons*, p. 327. XXIII. 5.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons Preached in Sackville College Chapel*, vol. i. p. 37. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. i. No. xix. XXIII. 8.—J. McNeill, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lii. 1897, p. 153. XXIII. 11, 12.—J. Mursell, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lvii. 1900, p. 99. T. L. Cuyler, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxxii. 1907, p. 126. S. Baring-Gould, *Village Preaching for a Year*, vol. ii. p. 204. XXIII. 13-17.—T. Champness, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. liii. 1898, p. 230. W. H. Simcox, *The Cessation of Prophecy*, p. 20. J. McNeill, *Regent Square Pulpit*, vol. ii. p. 321.

HEROISM

'And David longed, and said, Oh that one would give me to drink of the water of the well of Bethlehem, which is by the gate! And the three mighty men brake through the host of the Philistines, and drew water out of the well of Bethlehem, and brought it to David.'—2 Samuel xxiii. 15, 16.

It is abundantly clear that no one sent the three on their splendid errand. It is highly probable that had David known of their project he would have forbidden it. Some one had heard a few words of the king's soliloquy. His wish was whispered through the camp. And these men went forth unknown to him to meet it. Nor was the journey of the three through the enemy's lines mere bravado, or for fame's sake. They of all men had least temptation in these directions. It were vain to boast a courage that all men knew, and unnecessary to seek a fame already won. Each man had found his place long since. They had been the heroes of many a fight.

I. Let us look for the lesson of their deed. Let us look for the gospel of heroism, the inner history of brave hearts. Heroism is one of life's timeless things. It belongs to no age or place. It needs no interpretation. It tells its own story and wins its meed of acknowledgment. Do not misunderstand that. Heroism is a quiet thing. The hero is not often an orator; and even if he should be, his own heroism would never seem to him to be a fit subject for an oration.

The hero does not think about the reward though he wins it. He does not think about the deed, he does it. He does not hold his life cheap. He does not think of his life. It does not enter into his reckonings. There are no reckonings for it to enter into. Calculation is never a strong point with the hero. The truest heroisms can be shown to have been part of the day's work for those who did them. Yes, and part of their essential character too. The deed does not make the hero: it manifests him.

II. We have looked and seen something of the heroic spirit. We have looked beneath the surface, and we have at least prepared ourselves to believe that the voice that spake to three soldiers one summer day and sent them cheerful and determined across

the death-haunted valley of Rephaim, is speaking also in our lives. We have looked at simple heroism stripped of any accidental trappings—taken out of those martial or romantic settings which have led so many to misunderstand it. We have seen that heroism is an inward and spiritual thing born of an unselfish attitude and a heart full of love. And now, I say, it is not such a far cry from the valley of Rephaim to the office in the city, the warehouse, the counter, and the street.

III. There is a sense in which we cannot have too high a conception of heroism. When in our mind we paint the picture of the ideal hero, we cannot make the light in his eyes too beautiful and the poise of his head too kingly. It is altogether good that we should so think of heroism as to prevent our offering the hero's crown to the essentially unheroic life. But we must lift our conception of life and the true terms of it and the spiritual setting of it and the constant issues of it till we come to see that the one man who can ever hope to do justice to life is the hero.

We have many ways of picturing the religious life. We have the picture of the pilgrim leaning on his staff and shading his eyes to catch a glimpse of the city of light. We have the picture of the steward ordering all things fitly against his master's coming. We have the soldier standing bravely by his comrades and his king. But there is one picture perfectly familiar to the mediæval mind that we can ill afford to lose, and that is the picture of the saint and the dragon. If there is one thing above another that the modern saint needs it is a personal interview with a dragon.

IV. And now, after all, we should leave the highest truth about heroism unuttered if we forgot to say that the central element of it is always personal. There is no exception to that. Men have done brave deeds for the sake of great causes; but even if they themselves knew it not, it was the response of their spirit to the spirit of those who had made the causes great. Here, in our story, it is plain to see that, though David knew nothing about the errand of his three soldiers, yet it was he who sent them out to do it. He had won their love and their loyalty. They went for their leader's sake. And when we turn to this great fight of life, this peril-haunted valley of the world, and see a man going forth unregardful of himself, uncareful of his life, to fulfil a ministry of refreshment and help, to offer some service of love, we know what to say of that man. We know he is a Christ's man; and that the hand that feels for the sword-hilt is tingling with the touch of that wounded palm.—P. Ainsworth, *The Pilgrim Church*, p. 147.

References.—XXIII. 15.—J. S. Maver, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. liv. 1898, p. 237. *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxv. 1904, p. 317. E. B. Speirs, *A Present Advent*, p. 292. R. J. Campbell, *Sermons Addressed to Individuals*, p. 191. XXIII. 15, 16, 17.—S. Baring-Gould, *Village Preaching for a Year*, vol. ii. p. 194. C. F. Aked, *Old Events and Modern Meanings*, p. 45. J. Baines, *Sermons*, p. 126. A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—2 Samuel*, etc., p. 141. XXIV. 1.—J. B. Mozley, *Sermons Parochial and Occasional*, p. 72.

LET ME FALL INTO THE HANDS OF THE LORD

'And David said unto Gad, I am in a great strait: let us fall now into the hand of the Lord: for His mercies are great: and let me not fall into the hand of man.'—2 Samuel xxiv. 14.

I. 'I am in a great strait.' How often we have all of us had to say that! Sometimes by our own sin, as David now; sometimes only by our own misfortune. But to whom did David say it? for that makes all the difference as to whether he said it wisely or foolishly. He asked the question of Gad, God's prophet; but mark you, David's seer, as it says also—the man who was the Lord's ambassador to David, and the man who also knew David best. We have prophets, it is true, no longer; but ambassadors from God we still have, namely, His priests. And as we shall never do wrong if we go to the great High Priest, and say to Him, 'I am in a great strait,' 'Lord, I am oppressed, undertake for me,' so neither shall we be wrong if we go to the priests whom He has appointed in His own name, the shepherds whom He has set over His own fold, and tell them our troubles. David did wisely; and so shall we.

II. And what choice did he make? He made none at all; he left the whole matter in God's hands. 'Let me now fall into the hand of the Lord, for very great are His mercies.' No one ever really and earnestly and heartily said that—'Let me fall into the hand of the Lord'—and was lost. And why? because those hands were for us men and for our salvation nailed to the Cross, and are therefore mighty to save to the uttermost all that trust in them. It matters not from what degree of sin; it matters not in what extremity of danger; there is no limit to either: those blessed hands that wrought so many miracles, that cast out so many devils, that raised so many dead, they are able to heal us, to cleanse us, yes, and to raise us from any death of trespasses and sins.

III. You all know how remarkable a type David was of our Lord. Now see the great difference and contrast between them. David sinned, and the people suffered for his sake: 'These sheep,' he said, 'what have they done?' But, afterwards, it was the people that sinned, and the Son of David that suffered; it was expedient, as the Holy Ghost said by the mouth of wicked Caiaphas, 'that one Man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not'. As it is written, 'But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities, and with His stripes we are healed'. In the one case the shepherd sins, and the sheep are punished; in the other the sheep wander, and the Good Shepherd dies to bring them back to the fold.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons Preached in Sackville College Chapel*, p. 85.

References.—XXIV. 14.—J. M. Neale, *Readings for the Aged* (4th Series), p. 161. XXIV. 24.—*Church Times*, vol. xxxvii. 1897, p. 240. E. S. Talbot, *Keble College Sermons*, 1870-76, p. 12.

THE FIRST BOOK OF THE KINGS

THE FIRST BOOK OF THE KINGS—DISRUPTION

THE books of Kings practically cover the whole period of kingly rule over the ancient people. This first book may be divided into four parts.

I. The passing of David. The days of David's feebleness created the opportunity for rebellion against him under Adonijah, in which Joab and Abiathar took part. In consequence of this rebellion Solomon was crowned before the passing of David. The last charge of David was one in which he indicated the path of safety for Solomon. It was that of absolute loyalty to God.

II. Solomon. Early in his reign came Solomon's great opportunity, both to manifest himself, and to obtain the best. His choice was characterized by great wisdom, as it revealed his consciousness of personal inability for all the work devolving upon him. He gave himself to a careful organization of his kingdom, gathering around him a company of officers of state each having his own department, for which he was held responsible. These were the days of the nation's greatest material prosperity. Directly he had set his kingdom in order Solomon turned his attention to the building of the Temple. The Temple being finished, it was solemnly dedicated. An account of the king's wealth cannot be read without the consciousness that the weaker, if not the baser side of his nature is manifested in the abounding luxury with which he surrounded himself. Suddenly the glory passed away, and in the rapid movements we behold his degeneracy and doom. At last there ended in gloom and failure a life full of promise, and that because the heart of the man turned from its loyalty to God in response to the seductions of his own sensual nature.

III. Division. Following the death of Solomon we have an appalling story of the break up and degradation of the people covering a period of about sixty years. Thus so quickly after David, the nation was steeped in idolatry, and utterly failed to bear to the surrounding peoples the testimony to the purity of the Divine Government which was the purpose for which they had been created. The throne of the chosen people was possessed by men of depraved character who came into power by conspiracy and murder. During this period there was hardly a ray of light, for although, as subsequent declarations reveal, a remnant still existed loyal to God, their testimony was overwhelmed by abounding wickedness.

IV. Elijah. With the appearance of Elijah the voice of the prophet was raised to that of national importance. From this point onward in the economy of the Divine Government the prophet was superior to the king. Elijah appeared with startling and dramatic suddenness. Without apology, he declared himself the messenger of Jehovah, and at his word judgment fell upon the people. The story of the trial by fire in Carmel is full of majesty. The slaughter of the prophets of Baal aroused the ire of Jezebel to such a degree that she sent a message full of fury to Elijah, who fled for his life. From this time of the failure of his faith he was largely set aside. The rest of the book is occupied with the story of the downfall of Ahab.—G. CAMPBELL MORGAN, *The Analysed Bible*, p. 169.

THE MESSAGE OF THE BOOKS OF KINGS

THESE two books were originally one in the Hebrew Canon, and the division being purely mechanical, may be overlooked in our treatment of them. The historian did not, as the modern historian does, write the whole story himself. He made large use of previous writers, and incorporated their narratives into his own. From the consideration of the literary method, we pass to the consideration of the period of which the book treats. This divides itself naturally into three sections:—

I. The period of unity and splendour.

II. The period of schism.

III. The period of decay.

I. Of the first period we have the account in chapters one to eleven of 1 Kings. The greater part of this section of the book is taken up with the account of the building of the Temple. And rightly so. God's Word never spends space on what is unimportant. The life and power of Israel as a nation were bound up with the Temple. The climax of Israel's glory was reached in that hour when, on the completion of Solomon's prayer at the dedication of the Temple, 'The glory of the Lord filled the house, and the priests could not enter into the house of the Lord, because the glory of the Lord had filled the house'. When Solomon allowed other gods to share in the worship due to Jehovah alone, the decline of the nation had begun.

II. Of the second period we have the account in 1 Kings XII.-2 Kings XVII. This is by far the largest section of the book. The story is, on the whole, a story of declension and departure from God. First we read of the sin of schism. Then to the sin of schism was quickly added the sin of idolatry. But while this period contains a story of sin, it also contains a story of grace. To this period belongs the rise of prophecy. While, on the one hand, we see the people bent on backsliding from their God, on the other we see God, in tenderest love, pleading with

His people, striving to arrest them in their downward career, and to turn them back to Himself. The books of the Kings, read in connexion with the prophets, constitute a magnificent theodicy, a perfect vindication of God's dealings with His people.

III. The period of decay might perhaps be better named the period of final judgment. Of this we have the account in 2 Kings xviii.-xxv. This part of the history deals with Judah alone. It is the record of her life after the Northern Kingdom had been swept away. It is a story full of pathos, for it shows us God's last efforts to save His people from ruin. The opinion very commonly held, that it is the work of Jeremiah, though capable of being strongly supported, cannot be said to be proved. It was written by a man like-minded with Jeremiah, and probably under his superintendence. The literary parallels between Kings and Jeremiah are numerous and striking. From the authorship of the book, we now turn to the lessons which it has to teach us. These are two. 1. This book, the record of Israel's national life, teaches us that it is impossible to preserve a nation's life except by preserving its moral condition. 2. It is impossible to maintain a nation's morality except on the basis of religion. But what is true of the nation is true of the individual. If you would live a true life you must be right with God.—G. H. C. Macgregor, *Messages of the Old Testament*, p. 143.

References.—I. 39.—G. T. Coster, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxvi. p. 92. II. 14.—*Ibid.* vol. xxv. p. 328. II. 20.—J. M. Norton, *Every Sunday*, p. 321. III. 3.—H. J. Wilmot-Buxton, *Sunday Lessons for Daily Life*, p. 100. T. Sadler, *Sunday Thoughts*, p. 238. III. 5.—H. J. Wilmot-Buxton, *Bible Object Lessons*, p. 211. *Ibid. God's Heroes*, p. 118. S. Gregory, *How to Steer a Ship*, p. 121. F. Corbett, *Preacher's Year*, p. 167. III. 6-9.—F. D. Maurice, *Prophets and Kings*, p. 72.

OUR WEAKNESS OUR STRENGTH

'I am but a little child; I know not how to go out or come in.'
—1 Kings iii. 7.

These were the words of a very wise and great man, when he was just succeeding to his high dignities and was on the eve of one of the greatest works which was ever given to a man to do. It is the Moseses, the Solomons, the Jeremiahs, who always feel their nothingness. The higher you ascend in the true scale of manhood, the more unaffected and entire is the acknowledgment 'I am but a little child'. One only who ever lived and achieved the greatnesses of life never used those words, but even He went as near to it as the omnipotence of the immeasurable spirit which dwelt in Him would allow, when He said, 'I can of mine own self do nothing'. The way to 'go out' and to 'come in' well is to have always in the mind the sense of utter incompetence.

What is it to be 'a little child'?

I. You must every day be born again, that so you may have the freshness of a constant regeneration.

II. Simplicity is closely connected with the freshness. The child is ruled by his heart. He loves more than he knows. Take simple thoughts of everything. What is beyond you, leave it. A mystery is the simplest of all simple things so long as you are content to leave it a mystery. This is what the child does.

III. A third characteristic of childhood is purity. It is a beatitude upon childhood: 'Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God'. And therefore a little child sees more of God than a man does, because of this purity of heart.

IV. Consent in all things to be undertaken for, as the little child does. Go leaningly, trustingly, and lovingly. 'Go in this thy might,' your weakness is your strength. The ivy that twines round the rock is surer than the cedar which stands alone upon the mountain. At every door, confess to helplessness, and through many doors you will go in and out quite safely.—J. Vaughan, *Clerical Library*, vol. ii. p. 66.

References.—III. 15.—T. Sadler, *Sunday Thoughts*, p. 238. III. 24-27.—A. Mursell, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxii. p. 172.

THE BUNCH OF HYSSOP

'And he spake of trees, from the cedar that is in Lebanon even unto the hyssop that springeth out of the wall. —1 Kings iv. 33.

These words imply that the hyssop must have been a weak and insignificant plant. And it must have been weak and insignificant because of its contrast with the cedar. And yet it played a by no means trivial part in the Old Testament Church. It was with 'a bunch of hyssop' the Passover blood was sprinkled 'on the two side-posts and on the lintels of the houses'.

I. Faith in Christ is a confession of helplessness. There was no particular virtue in the hyssop. It formed a link between the Israelite and the Blood of the Lamb. Perhaps Divine wisdom selected this frail object from the kingdom of nature to illustrate a truth in the kingdom of grace. Faith, like the hyssop, is only a 'means' or medium. Something that lies between the supply and the need, the salvation and the danger, the Saviour and the sinner. So when we speak of faith as a means by which the blessings of Christ's redemption become ours, we do not imply that faith saves us. We are saved by faith, but not with it; it is a means, not an end.

II. So the hyssop teaches us a needful lesson concerning faith. If our faith is weak, can it be strengthened, for 'according to your faith be it done unto you?' Shall we pray, 'Lord, increase our faith'? Let us not forget the circumstances which give rise to this prayer. It was offered by the disciples when they felt the difficulty of forgiving their enemy 'till seventy times seven'. It does not refer to that salvation, which comes by faith. Shall we then pray, 'Lord, increase our faith,' if we have not yet received His salvation and fear our faith is weak? Remember the words 'the hyssop that springeth out of the wall,' for it teaches us the secret of faith and the strength of faith.

III. Do we desire a strong faith? Then let us be occupied with our Saviour and not with thoughts of

faith. It is not profitable to worry over our faith and be constantly diagnosing it. Faith grows strong through the knowledge of Christ. As we read and think of His love and power faith springs up. Trust and obey and you will never have cause to mourn over a languid faith. How can you doubt His power or feebly trust Him when that favour is being daily manifested in your life? Faith is the means whereby we are united to Him and become 'partakers of Christ'—the link between our weakness and His power. Why did God choose one of the smallest and weakest of plants more than any other plant of the field which could serve as an emblem of faith? Can we not suggest an answer in its commonness and accessibility?—Lloyd Morris, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxxiv. p. 139.

Reference.—IV. 33.—S. Gregory, *How to Steer a Ship*, p. 68.

THE SPADE-WORK OF THE KINGDOM

'And Solomon had threescore and ten thousand that bare burdens, and fourscore thousand that were hewers in the mountains.'—1 Kings v. 15.

Alike as to its structure, furniture, and services, the temple of Solomon had a spiritual and an evangelical signification. Our Lord institutes analogies between Himself and the temple, and the apostles repeatedly refer to the sacred palace as typical of the Christian Church. The temple on Zion, with everything relating to it, was full of prophetic significance; and we do no violence to the text when we see in it an anticipation of a large class of evangelical workers and of a considerable branch of evangelical work. Tens of thousands to-day 'bear burdens,' are 'hewers in the mountains'—are servants of Christ, working in wild, difficult, and distant places; bending themselves to obscure tasks and the very drudgery of things that the living temple of a regenerate humanity may be built. About these particular workers of the kingdom we propose now to speak; to recognize the vastness and seriousness of their service, the greatness and certainty of their reward.

I. The Initial Service in the Salvation and Uplifting of Man is peculiarly the Vocation of the Christian Church.

1. The initial work of uplifting the race is spiritual.

2. The initial work of uplifting the race is by spiritual workers beginning at the basement.

II. The Initial Work of the Church of God Implies Immense Sacrifice.—The burden-bearers and hewers in the mountains encountered great trials and made severe sacrifices that the stone and timber necessary for Solomon's temple might be forthcoming; and the living temple of a regenerate humanity is possible only as evangelical workers are prepared greatly to deny themselves. And tens of thousands of such workers are to-day making manifold sacrifices for the world's salvation.

III. The Splendid Hopefulness of this Initial Work.—Out of the rugged mountain and wild wood these strenuous workers brought the wondrous temple. Coarse, dull, forbidding as their toil might seem, it at last took shape as the palace of God. 'Great stones, costly stones, hewed stones,' formed the foundation of the house. 'The doors were also of olive-tree; and he carved upon them carvings of cherubim, and palm-trees, and open flowers, and overlaid them with gold.' 'And the cedar of the house within was carved with gourds and open flowers.'

Our undistinguished brethren are occupied with raw material; they are subject to distressing conditions; the result of their strain and sacrifice is often ambiguous and disappointing, yet is their work grander than they know; they build a living temple of moral splendour which no Nebuchadnezzar shall spoil, a New Jerusalem no Titus shall destroy.

The sculptor can discern in the jagged quarry of Carrara galleries of beauteous imagery; in the wild forest of Lebanon the architect can see palaces and temples; and since Christ opened our eyes compounds and slums dazzle us with the most splendid possibilities of life and destiny.—W. L. Watkinson, *The Fatal Barter*, pp. 228-244.

Reference.—VII. 5, 6.—S. Baring-Gould, *One Hundred Sermon Sketches*.

SOLOMON'S TEMPLE

'So that the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud; for the glory of the Lord had filled the house of the Lord.'—1 Kings viii. 11.

The whole of this chapter is taken up with the account of the consummation of Solomon's *magnum opus*. The great work of his life, for the accomplishment of which he had been called to the throne, was the building of the temple. It was the sacred task bequeathed to him by his father David—the cherished dream of David's later years, for which he had prepared with all his might.

I. I read the account of the elaborate and magnificent preparations for the temple and its building with mixed feelings. Its opening seems to have been the water-shed in Solomon's career and to have exhausted him. I picture to myself the vast crowd of poorly paid or unpaid workers chipping at stones, shaping the planks of cedar to cover them, beating out the gold to cover the planks, and the king's whole thoughts being taken up with it, and then I thought of Solomon's after career—his decline and fall; the rending of the kingdom, the setting up of the calves at Dan and Bethel, the very little use that the temple was for so many years, and I found myself asking, 'Was it really worth while?' Would not something far simpler have sufficed? Was it the best policy to draw off the thoughts and labours of the people from other channels to this for so long, and to pour out wealth in such reckless expenditure on this elaborate scheme? And then other questions occurred. Is it in the most elaborate buildings that vital religion thrives? Take your stately English cathedral, which you delight to visit, and which is simply crammed with historical interest. You think of its wondrous arches, its pealing organ and sweet-voiced choir, of its prebendaries and canons, its dean and bishop, etc., would you, who know what vital religion means, con-

tend that these places had played a supremely important part in conserving and spreading the cause of vital religion in our land, and that the society clustering about a cathedral close is pre-eminently spiritual? Is there not a subtle danger lurking in all these, a danger of which Solomon, with all his wisdom, seemed scarcely aware, namely, that men shall be enslaved by mere form, that they shall come to worship the work of their own hands or of other men's hands? To see and admire a building is one thing, to worship God and cry to Him for mercy and guidance is another.

II. On the other side there is much to be said. This, for example, that so far as we can see, the motive of Solomon was absolutely pure, and because of the purity of his motive the house was accepted, and the glory of the Lord filled it. And there is this to be said; that if God did not need a house Israel needed it, and that Solomon perceived, something to remind man, and that in a striking way, of the existence of God, of His holiness, of the fact that men needed Him and needed to pray to Him.

III. There are two further things that impressed me about the dedication of Solomon's temple. The first of these is the part he himself plays in the opening service. He sets aside conventionality and custom if not ecclesiastical law. It is not priest nor prophet that offers the dedicatory prayer but the king, and it is the king that blesses the people in the name of the Lord; the highest act of sacerdotal benediction. The chief thing, the vital thing in connexion with the proceedings of that great day, was the Cloud which indicated the Presence and Glory of the Lord. —C. Brown, *The Baptist Times and Freeman*, 26 July, 1907.

Reference.—VIII. 12.—R. E. Hutton, *The Crown of Christ*, p. 91.

SOLOMON'S PRAYER

'An house to dwell in, a settled place for thee to abide in for ever.'—1 Kings viii. 13.

The prayer of Solomon at the dedication of the temple is the supreme prayer, it is all prayer; there is not one little petition or supplication anywhere that cannot nest in this grand adoration and entreaty. It is a Bible in itself, it is the total revelation of God; a man spake it—no man ever composed it. It is a recitation from the tablets of the heart; it is the wording and, so to say, the incarnation of a great movement of the Holy Ghost upon the whole nature of man; it stands alone; the stars pale before this diamond.

I. The prayer of Solomon was offered by a layman. All the great prayers of the Bible came from lay lips. There were priests enough at the dedication of the temple; they were present, they were silent; it was the layman, the *man* that prayed: and it is only the *man* that can pray. We cannot have official prayers, mechanized and scheduled prayers. Men can only pray now and then in great heart-cries and in great heart-breaking misery. Aaron was born dumb. It was Moses, the layman, the man, the great representative of human nature in its deepest need and sharpest pain. The prayers of David the son of Jesse are ended: was the son of Jesse an official priest? He was a man, a great man, a man with God in his heart. He offered the great poetic, ideal prayer; he struck the harp unto supplication and startled music into a new voice.

II. There is nothing in human nature or human need that is not to be found in Solomon's prayer when he dedicated the temple to the service of God. I find that prayer to be intensely evangelical. How can we show that the prayer of Solomon at the dedication of the temple was intensely evangelical? By the frequent use of one of the greatest words in evangelical terminology. 'When Thou hearest, Lord, forgive.' That is the evangelical faith; that is the evangelical conception of the universe: that God can go back upon human history, and cleanse it; God can go into the human heart, and rid it of every stain and taint of guilt.

III. It was also a most experimental prayer: 'If they sin against Thee (for there is no man that sinneth not)'. That is human history; that is the right conception of human nature. And 'sinneth' is the right word to apply to the history of human life. We cannot conceal ourselves within the shadow of some perfect respectability. It must come to penitence, to brokenheartedness, to making a clean breast of it in the sanctuary when we are alone with God. After that will come forgiveness, restoration, adoption, steps on the road to sanctification.

IV. And what a pathetic prayer it is! At one point the great pleader says, Forgive the people, have pity upon them, save them, 'for they be Thy people' (v. 51). That is the fundamental fact. They are bad. Yes, but they are still Thine. They have gone astray. Truly, but they still bear Thine image and likeness, in Thine image didst Thou create them; Thou wilt not forsake the work of Thine own hands. Thus human nature is read in its deepest mystery, and thus the Divine clemency is interpreted in its most essential pathos.

V. You like a practical prayer? You will find the prayer of Solomon at the dedication of the temple one of the most practical prayers in all history. For he says, 'When heaven is shut up, and there is no rain'—he is going now to pray for the fields, the crops; he is now going to anticipate hunger, and anticipate God in its prevention—'If there be in the land famine, if there be pestilence, blasting, mildew, locust, or if there be caterpillar, plague, and sickness'. If you wanted a practical prayer it is here; your story is told by this man in words that are tears; he knows and interprets you to God. There is a theology of providence; there is a theology of domestic life; there is a theology of national circumstances.

VI. Ah! but it was all Israel, Israel, Israel; it was a Jew's prayer; it was patriotic, but not philanthropic. You have not read the prayer. Hear verse 41: 'Moreover concerning the stranger, that is not of Thy people Israel, but cometh out of a far country for Thy name's sake; (for they shall hear of Thy great name, and of Thy strong hand, and of Thy stretched out

arm;) when the stranger shall come and pray toward this house; hear Thou in heaven Thy dwelling-place, and do according to all that the stranger calleth to Thee for'. How the Bible widens; how it takes in nation after nation; how sometimes quite suddenly it claims the whole earth, and promises to One fairer than the fairest of men the heathen for His inheritance and the uttermost part of the earth for His possession. It was, therefore, not a patriotic prayer only, but a philanthropic prayer. It is right to pray for our own family if we make that a starting-point of a still larger prayer; it is right to pray for our own monarch or our own republican president if we make that the starting-point of a grand cosmopolitan prayer, in which we bathe the whole earth, asking for the total globe the forgiveness and the pity and the sovereignty of God.—Joseph Parker, *City Temple Pulpit*, vol. vii. p. 146.

UNREALIZED PURPOSES

'And the Lord said unto David my father, Whereas it was in thine heart to build an house unto My name, thou didst well that it was in thine heart.

'Nevertheless thou shalt not build the house; but thy son that shall come forth out of thy loins, he shall build the house unto My name.'—1 Kings viii. 18, 19.

Here is an incident which supplies abundant material for reflection; a man with a dear and cherished ambition, believing it to come from God. He has brooded over it long. On many a night as he lay awake, he has woven his plans and painted his picture of what he meant to do. He sends for his confidant in all such matters, and imparts to him the plan which has formed in his mind. Instantly Nathan blesses it, 'Go and do all that is in thine heart'. He has reckoned up his resources, and means to pour them all out at the feet of God for this end. Suddenly there comes a message through the very man who has approved his plan—a message from God. And this is the burden of it; your plan is good, but you are not the man to carry it out. It was well to think of it and plan for it. It is right, and it will come to pass. 'Nevertheless, *thou* shalt not build the house.' So the fond plans were shattered, and lay in a heap at David's feet by God's denial and forbidding. And it must—for he was intensely human—have caused him a momentary pang of disappointment and dismay.

We ought to be able to learn some lessons from such an incident. It is recorded for our instruction.

I. Think first of the purpose which was denied. It was pure and beautiful, and it was evidently in accord with the will of God. That makes its denial perplexing. We can understand the defeat of a desire that is unworthy, of an ambition that has mixed with it the desire for self glorification. To be rich or famous, to set men talking of your exploits, is an ambition which you can understand the breath of God blowing on and withering for the health of a man's soul. But this—was there ever anything more beautiful? Here is what the historian tells us about it: 'It came to pass when the king sat in his house, and the Lord had given him rest from all his enemies'. As soon as he came to a clear space in life, and after all the tumult and conflict, he had time to think; he said to Nathan: 'See, now I dwell in a house of cedar, but the ark of God remaineth within curtains'. And he had ever the conviction that if a man served God at all, it must not be with the margins and dregs left over when everything else had been lavishly provided for. He simply refused to serve God with that which cost him nothing. And it was out of this pure and pious sentiment that this ambition and desire grew. He had earned the right to repose and ease, to enjoy the fruit of his labour, and we could well have understood it if he had said, 'Let my son build the temple; I have struggled hard in my time, let me rest'. But it was not in him to say it. He wanted to crown a life's work by devoting the whole of his days of leisure and his gathered gold to the building of a house for the Lord. That became the dear desire of his heart, and it was that desire that was vetoed. So then I draw the inference from the incident that some of the purest and highest and best purposes of our lives may be unrealized. I do not mean that they may be thwarted by human opposition or demoniacal obstruction, or by your own hindering weakness, but they may be defeated by the will of God.

II. I draw another inference from this denial, viz. that every man has his limitations even in spiritual service. The reason given to David for this denial of his dear purpose was, 'Thou hast shed blood abundantly, and made great wars'. This was not work that David had sought, or that he loved. It had been thrust upon him for the defence and rescue of Israel, but apparently it was the work for which God had designed him, and the other which he had the means and which he had thought he had the ability to do was not for him. One of the lessons to be gathered from this is that spiritual work is a matter of such high importance, that God has regard to the fitness of men to perform it.

III. Thirdly, observe David's behaviour under this disappointment. I am not aware that David ever acts more nobly than when this dear wish is denied.

1. There is no murmuring, no soreness, there is no surprise expressed, but a ready and adoring acquiescence in the will of God.

2. He does all he can to provide for another to carry the work through. That is the crowning grace of the incident. I attach more importance to that than to the fact that after this forbidding David went in and sat before the Lord and worshipped. The temple would never be called by his name, he would never see it, but he went on accumulating materials for it as generously and lavishly as if he had known that he would stand in the centre of its splendour on the day of its opening, and be recognized as the originator of the whole glorious plan.

The last lesson of all is that it is a good thing to have high desires and aims, though they should never be realized. 'Thou didst well that it was in thine heart.'—Charles Brown, *God and Man*, p. 5.

KING SOLOMON—THE TEMPLE-BUILDER

'But will God indeed dwell on the earth? behold the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain thee; how much less this house that I have builded?'—1 KINGS VIII. 27.

I. THE actual history of the building of the temple is rooted in the life of King David. David after an act of sinful presumption, which was terribly and speedily punished, wished as a thankoffering, for the removal of the pestilence which followed on his numbering of the people, to build this house on the site of the threshing-floor of Ornan the Jebusite. But it was speedily revealed to him that, though he might design and prepare, this honour was not reserved for him. God revealed to him, 'Thou hast shed blood abundantly, and hast made great wars: thou shalt not build an house unto My name. . . . Behold a son shall be born unto thee who shall be a man of rest; he shall build an house for My name.' And at last Solomon entered on the achievement of his great purpose, and the temple was built as the House of God, and God in the emphatic words of the Bible came to dwell there. In the long-drawn out description of Solomon's temple, in which God willed to interest Himself, and to inspire the designers, the builders, and the offerers, we recognize a great principle: That God, who is pure beauty, wills to be worshipped with all that is reverend, costly, and beautiful, in that humanity which he has so richly endowed.

II. We should miserably fall short of what God designed to teach us, if we saw in Solomon's temple only a consecration of religious sentiment and an apotheosis of the beautiful. God has said again and again that He wishes to dwell with man, to have a House in the midst of us, and definite modes of approach, and we can see how potent this feeling is where men have accepted and welcomed it. Not only here have we a presence of God nearer and more intimate than that which was vouchsafed to any few, but we may feel that these churches of ours are not large empty tombs, architectural monuments, or meeting-places for instruction, but that they are the dwelling-place of God.

III. But if the House of God appeals to us by an influence mysterious yet real, where the mind sweeps across from the very heights of the higher heaven, it is to us, or at least it may be, even more than this—it may be a sanctuary. The Church is still the place where the pursued may flee before the talons of an overmastering temptation and find rest for the soul. We cannot scold people into being good, we cannot persuade them into seriousness, but we may elevate and attract them by God's exceeding beauty, and His tender gentleness. It is not only the sick body that needs to be taken out of its deadly environment: it is the sick soul which, when perishing from the dead monotony of unrelieved evil, passes in here into the presence of beauty, health, and goodness, and is saved by the sweetness and peace which breathe forth their fragrance from the sanctuary of God.

IV. But Solomon's temple meant more than this to a few: our own churches mean much more to a Christian. They are charged with definite grace. Here is the complete and unflinching declaration that a progress without God is a progress downwards, that nature, left to itself only leads us away, and that 'ye must be born again' is no ecclesiastical misreading of a symbolical saying, but a solemn fact and the foundation of all spiritual life.—W. C. E. NEWBOLT, *Words of Exhortation*, p. 1.

REFERENCES.—VIII. 27.—P. McAdam Muir, *Modern Substitutes for Christianity*, p. 65. VIII. 38.—H. J. Wilmot-Buxton, *The Master's Message*, p. 45. VIII. 38, 39.—J. Keble, *Miscellaneous Sermons*, p. 245. VIII. 44, 45.—E. J. Boyce, *Parochial Sermons*, p. 293. VIII. 57-60.—C. A. Berry, *Vision and Duty*, p. 79. X. 1.—H. J. Wilmot-Buxton, *Sunday Lessons for Daily Life*, p. 112. X. 2.—R. E. Hutton, *The Crown of Christ*, p. 173. X. 8.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons for Some Feast Days*, p. 362. X. 12.—G. W. M'Cree, *Christian World Pulpit*, 1890, vol. xx. A. Gray, *Faith and Diligence*, p. 133.

SOLOMON AND TOLERATION

'And Solomon did evil in the sight of the Lord, and went not fully after the Lord, as did David his father.
'Then did Solomon build an high place for Chemosh, the abomination of Moab, in the hill that is before Jerusalem, and for Molech, the abomination of the children of Ammon.
'And likewise did he for all his strange wives, which burnt incense and sacrificed unto their gods.'—1. KINGS XI. 6-8.

I. THERE is a proverb that tells us that 'no one became thoroughly bad all at once,' 'Nemo repente fit turpissimus'. And so it was with Solomon; as the stream of his career sweeps by us in Holy Scripture, windows, as it were, are opened for us through which we gaze out on that sunny flood, so full of promise, carrying on its bosom such rich opportunities and varied treasures, and we note that as it gets wider it loses its pure beauty, as it gets deeper it parts with its simplicity. When we see Solomon again he is the liberal patron of error. He is not an idolater; it would not be fair to call him that. But he would tell us that 'he is no bigot,' that the Sidonians and the Moabites were sincere in what they believed and practised, that his first duty was to the empire, and to consolidate the acquisitions which he had made; that after all there is an element of truth underlying all religion; 'all worships are true'. It always sounds well to be tolerant; but believe me it is a deadly thing to be indifferent. Depend upon it, when Solomon says 'I do not care in the least what form of religion I follow,' when he attends the temple services in the morning, and some other imported religion in the afternoon, and lets his Egyptian wife take him to a third in the evening, he is not tolerant; he is indifferent.

II. But Solomon does not stop at undenominationalism. No one does. It is an impossible position. He settles down a step further into æstheticism, the worship of the beautiful, the luxurious, the fascinating. We detect and we detest the hollow ring of insincerity which hangs round the utterance which does not come from the heart. And so it is with worship that means nothing, which does not spring from any conviction, any sense of God, but which only tickles a man's sense of novelty, or languidly appeals to his æsthetic tastes.

Solomon was not spreading religion when he erected the numerous shrines for the manifold superstitions of the East, and their attractive rites. He was degrading it, he was vitiating the religious instinct and depriving the religious sense. Let us remember that all the beauty, all the magnificence of the services of the Church are for the honour and glory of God, and that if we fail to honour Him, fail to find Him, fail to worship Him, they only add to our own condemnation.

III. But the worship of æstheticism has no finality about it. Do not suppose it, for one moment, if any of you have given up vital belief, if you have ceased to believe in God and his Sacraments, that you will be able to go on finding religious satisfaction in beautiful sounds and artistic sights: you will either get better, or you will get worse, and it is terribly easy to get worse. The end of Solomon's career is not encouraging; the least you can say of it is, that it is shrouded in gloom. Wise Solomon, who began with building the temple, goes on by tolerating error, to become a besotted voluptuary and to insult God. It is the history of many a man who has forgotten the lesson of his youth, who is false to his tradition, and falls below his own standard.—W. C. E. Newbolt, *Words of Exhortation*, p. 20.

References.—XI. 11.—H. P. Liddon, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 745; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. iv. p. 84.

SOLOMON'S DECLINE

'And the Lord was angry with Solomon, because his heart was turned from the Lord God of Israel, which had appeared unto him twice.'—1 Kings xi. 9.

This is a very sad chapter. It recalls at once the greatness of the opportunity that Solomon had—what Solomon might have been. Solomon is a type for us of degeneration—that falling away from that which we might have become, wasting the opportunities that have been given to us, and so slipping downward instead of progressing upward. When we look on the character of Solomon, remembering all that he knew of God, all that had been revealed to him, and how he had in his earlier days responded to the call of God, then the picture is more sad, and it holds up to us a warning of what may come to others, however great their blessings and their opportunities, if they deal with the evil influences surrounding them.

I. Solomon's Folly.—Solomon, we know, recognized his own folly. Nothing is more sad than the way in which Solomon, in his book of Ecclesiastes, said of the world, 'All is vanity,' and yet he himself held to the influences of the world, and checked not the evil influences that surrounded him. He has handed down some wonderful writings—wonderful thoughts—in the book of Proverbs, in the book of Ecclesiastes, and in that spiritual love song, 'The Song of Solomon'. And how often in his later years must his own words have seemed to come back to him, like heavenly voices of angels! To have known higher things and more glorious conditions, and yet to have fallen away from them! No man was ever born to greater opportunities probably than Solomon. He came to the throne of the kingdom at the very zenith of its power. It was the heyday of Hebrew history. Jerusalem was at this time queen of the cities. The navies of three continents gave up their treasures for the building of the House of the Lord. The splendour of his court is brought before us in the first lesson of this morning, as described in the visit of the Queen of Sheba.

II. His Spiritual Decline.—But it was not only earthly greatness that led him astray; there was a certain spirituality, too, in his early days which he seems to have lost. For instance, he makes noble choice of proper gifts when he chose not riches and honour, but wisdom as the gift of God. The energies of the early part of his life were occupied with the building of the temple, over which he bestowed much thought, labour, and interest; and when we read his prayer at the dedication of the temple, full of earnestness and reality, we begin to see from what wondrous heights this man seems to have slipped back, not only in worldly greatness, but even in his spiritual position in relation to God.

III. The Secret of his Fall.—What was the secret of his failure? It was rather the passive than the active characteristics which led to his degeneration. Unused powers, spiritual as well as physical, are lost if they are not exercised. There must be force at the back if there is to be any real result in what we do in the worldly life; and in the spiritual life if we just let things go, and fall in with the circumstances by which we are surrounded, then we soon lose that which we might have had. When the body has lost its vitality, how soon it goes to decay; how soon the influences around absorb the dust which returns to dust. And if this is so with the body—so even with any limb of the body which we do not use rightly—then is it not true also of our spiritual life? We are so inclined in spiritual things to take things as they come, falling in with the sort of influences by which we are surrounded. If it is customary to go to church we go. If it is customary not to go, perhaps we do not go. If it is something a little more than the ordinary to become communicants, then we say, 'Oh, it is not for me, it is making some profession!' In other words, there is no force of spiritual power, no individuality. That seems to me the sort of position, spiritually, that Solomon took up in his later days. He just yielded himself to the influences of the world around him. As the head of a great court, as the king of a race that had now become great, he took all the homage that was brought. He sucked the honey from every flower; and the influences which were surrounding him in his earthly greatness were such as would actually demoralize, pull to pieces, and bring to decay all that was spiritual. So the morality which was his in the earlier days became demoralized, and was gradually lost—in degeneration!

IV. The Lesson for Ourselves.—What then does this character teach us? It teaches us that we must

not put too high a premium upon our surroundings in life; because the influences of the world, the flesh and the devil, which will surely come, will pull to pieces our higher spiritual powers. If God grant us privileges of any kind, let us see what we are doing with them, because the higher spiritual nature, the higher spiritual life, will not be brought to its fullness in us unless there be effort, unless there be spiritual push and force of character, submitting to the will of God, seeking continuously guidance and power from God. If we just 'let be,' we shall soon find that the evil influences by which we are surrounded, wherever we may be placed, whether in the court, or in some back alley where all is sin and wickedness, will demoralize our character, unless there be effort, a seeking of God's power, God's help, and God's grace as well as His mercy. There have been noble lives, with the wisdom and the fear of God, in the vilest surroundings, but, in either case, it has not been the surroundings that have brought about the greatness or the beauty, but the seeking God's help, the using of the opportunities, the rising above the real influences by which we are surrounded. We are so inclined to think that we could do better under different circumstances or surroundings. Now here is a man put before us who had all the world at his disposal given to him from above, and yet what a picture of degeneration! Let us see to it, then, wherever God may have placed us, that there may be none of that spirit of 'let be,' of letting the influences take their course. There must be an individuality, an exercise of will, a personal individual seeking of God's help, and a using of the gifts He has placed at our disposal. Then, whatever may be the results of our life here as regards worldly prosperity, there will be a strengthening of the roots, a growth of power, and the blossom and fruit of spiritual life. Let us beware, when we read of the degeneration and the backsliding of Solomon, of yielding passively to the influences by which we are surrounded; and let us constantly exercise that spiritual life which God has granted to us, ever and continually seeking His power and help, that our life may bring forth its true harvest to glorify God.

REFERENCES.—XI. 21.—S. Baring-Gould, *One Hundred Sermon-Sketches*, p. 158. A. Young, *Thursday Penny Pulpit*, vol. ii. p. 121.

THE PURPOSE OF GOD

'Thus saith the Lord, the God of Israel, Behold I will rend the kingdom out of the hand of Solomon, and will give ten tribes to thee: (but he shall have one tribe for My servant David's sake, and for Jerusalem's sake, the city which I have chosen out of all the tribes of Israel).'—1 KINGS XI. 31, 32.

I. LOOK at some portions of the plan of God, regarded from the side of His wise omnipotence. Is this world a failure? Does it whirl unchecked and uncontrolled along an aimless path, where luck and fortune and chance are the apparent and only guide to its caprice? Have vice and violence and cunning on the whole the upper hand in the control of the world? No! Remember that God is dealing with a fallen world, where the measures which He takes must be largely remedial, and tending towards a future rather than self-sufficient in the present. This power of God is displayed in the progress which is made, in spite of all the broken surface of storm-water scattered by the wind and driven by the tempest. Look out over the world and you will see progress—you cannot deny it—tending towards a renewal of that time when in the beginning God saw everything that He had made, and behold it was very good; while by the side of progress we see the unerring punishment which overtakes sin and evil—retribution we call it—a sign that God has given us a law which cannot be broken.

II. Equally shallow is the criticism which would believe the purpose of God to have failed in his Church. The Church is God's kingdom set up for the better management of the world. Wherever you go, even to the remotest parts of this realm, you find the beneficent action of the law securing you freedom and enriching you with privileges. If you pause to think at all, you will feel that life is fuller and richer for you by means of the civilization which shelters and develops it. In like manner the Church was meant to embrace us with a scheme of beneficence, to protect us from spiritual evil, to secure us our rights, and privileges, to help us in the midst of a fallen world. It is God's method of government that we may get the greatest good and the least harm out of the world where He has placed us. And most emphatically the Church has not been a failure. When Judaism despises the Gospel, the Gospel is carried to the Gentiles; when the wave is driven back on the shore of the West it laps up in a wider flood on the East; when it surges back from the East and West it is driven up with vigour further into the North or down into the South.

III. But there is another region yet, a region of which all of us know something, where we are apt to charge God with failure, and upbraid Him with the fickleness of His gifts. I mean the region of our own souls. Men turn round on the Old Bible and say it has failed; on the simple life of prayer and devotion, and say it has proved powerless to effect its purpose. Would that we realized more fully the love, the wonderful economy of the purpose of God. What can be more sad than the complete breakdown of the moral sense in the heart once alive unto God. Wise Solomon sunk in sensuality; David, whose heart was responsive to every ripple of the Divine breast, dull and insensate; the altar of God spurned, Sunday desecrated; evil eagerly followed; the shame of vice causing no blush, the meanness of it no compunction! And yet God's purpose survives in another way. Magdalen stands before the world to cheer it with the sight of a penitent love, more deep, more ultra, because like a precious flower, it has been snatched out of the abyss of sin. If ever you have been religious, when you are now cold and dead, cherish that seed of life. God means yet again to revive it, if you will let Him.—W. C. E. NEWBOLT, *Words of Exhortation*, p. 63.

REFERENCES.—XII. 8.—R. Hiley, *A Year's Sermons*, vol. ii. p. 78. XII. 21-24.—F. D. Maurice, *Prophets and Kings*, p. 87. XII. 23-25.—W. G. Horder, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xi. p. 62.

RELIGION MADE EASY

'It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem.'—1 KINGS XII. 28.

HERE was an adroit and subtle appeal to human nature. Tell the people they are tired; seem to be very anxious about their health; assure them that nothing but a true concern for their physical condition could ever have impelled you to consider the long distance to Jerusalem. Keep them away from Jerusalem, keep them away from the old songs and the old memories, from the reminiscences that start up and make a powerful appeal to human pathos; as it were, lay your petting hand upon them and say, 'It is too far for you to go to Jerusalem; you could do the same thing much nearer home'. This is a powerful appeal to human nature. Here is a grandfatherly king; here is a king who, even upon his throne, thinks it worth his while to save us walking or otherwise journeying to Jerusalem: what an excellent man, what a thoughtful king, what a treasure of a friend! He is trying to keep you away from Jerusalem, the city of God, the tabernacle and temple of the Most High; he is seeking to keep you away from the vision that would do good to your eyes, and mayhap might bring you back to old ways and ways forsaken.

I. Jesus Christ never made religion easy. There is where the great difficulty lies with Jesus Christ. He will not allow us to be at ease, and He will not allow us to think that the acceptance of His religion will bring us into a state of lulling, self-easing, and self-considering sentimental reflection. He said, 'If any man will follow Me, let him take up his cross daily'. He made Himself unpopular, He made Himself utterly disagreeable; He would not rest content with things as they are, but only with things as He would make them, and what He preached He practised.

II. It is very curious, is this study in human nature. It opens up so many possibilities; it touches so many weak points. He says, 'Now, don't you think that you are giving away too much money? I say that it is all right to be giving away a certain proportion, but I think that all things ought to be done with a clear eye towards proportion. Now you have been giving away money at the rate of—let me see—at the rate of ten per cent; you have been giving God a tenth part of your income. Now, although I quite approve of giving God some part of your income, I suggest that you give too much. Don't give it all at once; certainly not, you are perfectly right to give a certain proportion, but I think less than you do give.' When a man is so very anxious that you should do less, suspect him, and show him the door. When he is so very anxious that you should lay up for a rainy day at the Lord's expense, turn him out into a very rainy day.

III. What does the Bible claim? Only one-seventh of your time, but when it claims the seventh, it means that the six-sevenths also belong to God. Jesus Christ never set any man an easy task; Jesus Christ never said, 'You might do much less; you give away too much, you worship God in spirit and in truth too much'. What He did say could be done too excessively was false worship, to be making new moons and Sabbaths, and fastings and observances, and all these things which were really nothing better than luxuries, to be turning all these into excess and surfeit. The moment religion becomes easy to you, give it up!—JOSEPH PARKER, *City Temple Pulpit*, vol. VI. p. 165.

REFERENCE.—XII. 28.—Archbishop Temple, *Rugby Sermons*, p. 79.

THE SIN OF JEROBOAM

'And he set the one in Beth-el, and the other put he in Dan.'—1 KINGS XII. 29.

THE death of Solomon brought a crisis in national affairs that his successor and son did not know how wisely to meet. Rehoboam's vacillation and impolitic conduct gave the opportunity, as well as formed the pretext, for a revolt that the ten tribes had long meditated, owing to the jealousy on the part of Ephraim of Judah's pre-eminence as the ruling house. The dissentient tribes found in Jeroboam a capable leader and a willing abettor of their movement. He had been designated to this position by the prophet Ahijah. The apparent cause of the revolt was political discontent, but a deeper reason underlay the irruption—it was God's method of marking His displeasure with the conduct of the house of Solomon in permitting and fostering idolatrous practices. This reason was known to Jeroboam (1 Kings XI. 31-33). He was made aware of the fault to which he owed his elevation. But this knowledge proved of no advantage in the regulation of his own conduct. Jeroboam had the courage and capabilities of the ruler, but he lacked confidence in the providence of God. He gave himself up to finessing in religious matters that wrought his own undoing and his people's shame. He knew that he owed his position, not only to the suffrages of the people, but to the election of God, and yet he fell into the very sin which had resulted in part of Rehoboam's kingdom being wrested from him. While leaning to his own understanding, and failing to conciliate the malcontents among the people, Rehoboam's more serious fault lay in his not removing the idolatry which had fastened its fangs upon the national life.

I. Jeroboam's Sin.—This blunder is repeated, or rather aggravated, by Jeroboam, for he initiated a new religious cultus, which was the more mischievous because it was a specious representation of the Jehovah worship, while utterly alien to its central principle. Jeroboam could not himself trust to the wisdom of God to devise means whereby the hearts of the people should be kept loyal to their own chosen king. To obviate the necessity of the people going up to Jerusalem as often as occasion required, Jero-

boam set up the calves, one in Beth-el, and the other in Dan, saying, 'Behold thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt!' We see that Jeroboam takes counsel with himself (v. 26), and forgets what he owes to God, and what God could do for him; that in fostering the people's loyalty to God he would be strengthening their loyalty to his own throne. He suffered the penalty of his folly, as all must who seek to circumvent right by the practices of expediency. He suffered in the direction of his fears, though not as he anticipated. Domestic loss, the extinction of his family, the utter destruction of the kingdom. The people never recovered from the evil effects of his example and influence. The idolatry he established laid hold upon their habits of mind and heart, so that its spell could only be broken by the nation becoming utterly disorganized, and carried into captivity. Going up to Dan and Beth-el was the beginning of a march that ended in disruption and bondage. Jeroboam's expedient branded his name with infamy.

II. As an Expedient.—This act of Jeroboam's was wholly false and impolitic. Our acts have issues of which we little dream. The attainment of our purpose forms but a very small part of the consequences of our conduct. What may seem to us at any given time as an act of simple expediency may in the long run prove to have been the beginning of irreparable mischief. We have to regard tendency, as well as consider the wants of any special occasion. Acts that we may think (as Jeroboam evidently did) will consolidate our power, may prove but the cause of its decadence and overthrow. We cannot step outside the bounds within which God would have us move without being involved in shame and loss. Whatever we substitute for God will bring about our ruin. Thus, as an expedient, it was ill-conceived, dangerous as a precedent, and fraught with mischief. For however right a thing may be in itself, whatever the motive that suggests it, and howsoever necessary circumstances may seem to make it, put in the place of God, it can only be to our hurt. Only in doing right is there safety. It may be inconvenient, there may be fears, but the strong arm of the Almighty is with us—*that* controls all that may be against us, and *that* can make seemingly adverse things minister to our good. We cannot bound our life with schemes of prudence and political sagacity, if at the expense of rectitude and justice, without discovering we have set up a leakage of strength which ultimately will drain us absolutely dry. Jeroboam's expedient has nothing in its favour.

III. As a Policy.—This act of Jeroboam's overreached itself, it went too far. There must be no competition set up between God and expediency. The contest is unequal, and there should be no rivalry. What can the calves at Dan and Beth-el do? If they divert attention from the claims of the true God, they leave the real necessity of life unmet; if they turn the thoughts from the main issues of obligation to God, they render less stable all authority and power; if they satisfy the craving for the simple observances of worship, they cannot release the soul from sin. Business, culture, pleasure, success, these as expedients may serve a healthy purpose, provided they are not brought into competition with God; as a policy entered upon in order to supersede or ignore His claims, they are fatal to well-being. Jeroboam is not the only one who has set up idols. Recreation is in danger of being substituted for godliness. A gospel of culture is being vigorously preached as indicating the path of safety for the nation's future life. When shall we learn that godliness is great gain, having the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come? We cannot set aside the claims of God, either from fear or from jealousy, without finding we have parted from our best friend and chief counsellor. Strength is lost, confidence goes, we fall a prey to the policy upon the inauguration of which so much stress was laid, and from which such different results were anticipated.

Human substitutes for godliness may seem eminently plausible. But we must beware of reasons, however plausible, by which men seek to turn the heart away from God; whatever the character of the object for which they would win your worship, God alone has the right to be heard and obeyed in all that affects worship and godliness. How often have men turned the mercies of God into reasons for rejecting His claims to the allegiance of heart and life!

THE DISOBEDIENT PROPHET

'It is the man of God, who was disobedient unto the word of the Lord.'—1 KINGS XIII. 26.

I. JEROBOAM had just successfully completed his idolatrous stroke of policy. He had set up a form of religion which, however much it might offend against God's truth, had at least this merit in his eyes, that it would strike a great blow against the established Church at Jerusalem, and be a serious injury to the State religion whose influence he abhorred and whose prestige more than anything else he dreaded as a dangerous political menace to his separatist policy. It was all-important therefore that there should be no hitch in what was now practically the inauguration of a new religion. Certainly it was a bold stroke, and at this moment when the scene is depicted he was in the very agony of his crafty device, restless, no doubt suspicious, and pledged to desperate measures—for men are most suspicious when they are most conscious that they are doing wrong and have 'bribed themselves to disbelieve things which their conscience tells them are true, by doing acts which their conscience tells them are wrong'. And it is at this moment that the nameless prophet out of Judah bursts in upon him, a prophet from God—in itself an unwelcome phenomenon just then; as a prophet from Judah doubly hateful. It seems likely to end in his death had not God intervened to save His prophet. Jeroboam while raising his hand to order his arrest, finds it paralysed and useless, while the altar is rent by invisible powers and the ashes are poured out. So

far you see the man of God had done his work well. He had executed a commission dangerous enough to try the strongest nerve. The hardest part was done. He could relapse now. There were certainly three distinct temptations which the prophet had to face. First, there was the temptation, which comes from the natural fear in a man's heart, not to deliver his message, to hesitate to confront the fury of the king in the moment of his pride and successful sin. Then there was the still more dangerous temptation of flattery and bribery, for Jeroboam turned round and, when force had failed, tried to take the edge off his humiliation by feasting and entertaining the prophet. Then there was the more subtle temptation still, namely, to forget his instructions which were three: first, to deliver his message, which he did; secondly, not to eat bread, nor drink water in the place; and thirdly, not to return by the way by which he came. And in these two last, the easiest of all to execute, he failed.

II. We feel at the outset that there is an appeal to us here in that title which we have heard more than once this afternoon, 'The Man of God,' a title wonderful in its dignity and grand in its significance; for it speaks to us of many things. It tells us where the man comes from, straight from the court, straight from the presence, straight from the inspiration of the Almighty, from God Himself. The man of God, God's representative, God's ambassador; here is a service in which, alas! there are many vacancies. And we notice now, once more, where the man of God in the Bible fell. He fell in the easiest point of his duty, he fell by the neglect of the details of his mission, 'troublesome restrictions,' 'irritating items,' as he might think them, in which, to put aside the strict letter of obedience, he might say involved, could involve, no principle. And is not this the very region in which so many a man of God fails? The main duties are done with bravery, activity, and vigour—no waste of time, no waste of money, no frivolity, no unseemly gaiety, no foolish idleness, no serious, gross, open sin. But in some little matter at home by peevish ill-temper, or exacting selfishness, or from disregard of Christian practice, as the outcome of Christian principle, in these things the man of God falls. Exact obedience, attention to minute trifles, involve principles of the highest authority. These same prohibitions are given now to every man of God who has wisdom to follow them out. 'Eat no bread and drink no water there.'—W. C. E. Newbolt, *Words of Exhortation*, p. 276.

References.—XIII. 1.—Bishop Bickersteth, *Sermons*, p. 238. XIII. 6.—R. Heber, *Parish Sermons*, vol. ii. p. 92. A. Rowland, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxix. p. 165. XIII. 21, 22.—Bishop Bethell, *Sermons*, vol. ii. p. 277. XIII. 26.—E. A. Askew, *Sermons Preached in Greystoke Church*, p. 214. T. Arnold, *The Interpretation of Scripture*, p. 76. H. P. Liddon, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxx. p. 136. T. Arnold, *Sermons for the Christian Seasons*, vol. iii. p. 729. XIII. 33.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons Preached in Sackville College Chapel*, vol. ii. p. 102. XIV. 13.—J. H. Evans, *Thursday Penny Pulpit*, vol. ii. p. 169. C. Bosanquet, *Blossoms for the King's Garden*, p. 216. XVI. 7.—F. D. Maurice, *Prophets and Kings*, p. 105.

SOME LESSONS FROM AN UNFAMILIAR TEXT

'And Omri wrought evil in the eyes of the Lord, and did worse than all that were before him. . . . And Ahab, the son of Omri, did evil in the sight of the Lord above all that were before him.'—1 Kings xvi. 25, 30.

I. Very bad men may have worse sons. We are told that Omri was a worse-living man than any other man that had lived up till that time, but he had a son, and it is said of his son that he was worse, worse even than his wicked father.

II. Bad men may make things worse by unholy friendships. Ahab was worse than Omri, but Ahab was worse in his manhood than he was in his youth, because he married a woman who stirred him up to do wickedly. Bad men may make things worse by unholy alliances; ay! and good men may make it much more difficult for themselves to be good by choosing their friends among the evil.

III. Look on the other side. The story of Ahab goes to show that wickedness, however powerful, cannot prevent the existence and development of goodness. He was a very shrewd and clever man, and he knew when he was well served, and he had a man as his steward Obadiah by name, and Obadiah lived with Ahab and managed his affairs for him. And when you come to study the character of Obadiah you see very plainly that bad as Ahab was, his conduct, evil though it was, did not prevent the goodness of Obadiah developing even in the presence of Ahab. This virtuous character lived in the time of Ahab and lived in the neighbourhood of Ahab. Bad as your surroundings be, God can make you beautiful. You may live in a Christless home. You may live where oaths are the staple part of the conversation, or you may be mixed up with those who use the name of the Divine Being to make their conversation more terribly wicked, but God can keep you pure and true in spite of it all, and He can make fair flowers grow upon the edge of a volcano.

IV. God takes great pains to save very wicked people. See what pains he took with Ahab, how Elijah, under God, was brought into conflict with Ahab to save him. Nobody can read the story of Carmel without reading that God does take great pains to save wicked men.

V. Wickedness cannot hide itself from death. Ahab was a powerful man, he was a man of great strategy and skill. In his desire to elude death he disguised himself and put on somebody else's armour. But there was a place where two iron plates did not join together. There was room for death to enter there. Wicked men cannot elude death.—T. Champness, *British Weekly Pulpit*, vol. iii. p. 305.

References.—XVI. 30.—J. Baines, *Sermons*, p. 154. XVII. 1.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons Preached in Sackville College Chapel*, vol. iii. p. 9. H. J. Wilmot-Buxton, *Sunday Lessons for Daily Life*, p. 125. W. M. Taylor, *Elijah the Prophet*, p. 1.

THE MIRACLE OF THE DROUGHT

'And Elijah . . . said unto Ahab, As the Lord God of Israel liveth, before Whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word'—1 KINGS XVII. 1, etc.

THIS miracle of the drought is one of the few which have received the countersign and imprimatur of our Blessed Lord. The statement that 'The heaven was shut up three years and six months' 'in the days of Elias' (St. Luke IV. 25) does not rest on the unsupported authority of the compiler of the books of Kings, or the unknown writer from whom he derived it. We are told that this history is largely fabulous, but this part of the 'fable' at any rate has been accepted by Him who is 'the Truth'. Of course this fact will count for nothing with the infidel or the Agnostic, but surely it should have some weight with the Christian. We cannot have 'Christianity without miracles'.

I. Man's Extremity is God's Opportunity.—It was in the fullness of time, when the Egyptian oppression had reached its very worst, that Moses, the founder of the Law, appeared. It was also in the fullness of time, when an altar was reared to Baal and an image to Astarte, and when the nation was rapidly drifting into idolatry, that Elijah, the restorer of the Law, came upon the scene. The darkness is greatest just before the dawn. 'The greatest prophet is reserved for the worst age. Israel had never such an impious king as Ahab, nor such a miraculous prophet as Elijah. The God of the spirits of all flesh knows how to proportion men to the occasion' (*Bp. Hall*).

II. The Weak Confound the Strong.—'*God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty*' (1 Cor. I. 27). '*Elijah the Tishbite . . . of Gilead.*' 'Can any good thing come out of Gilead?' the men of Israel might contemptuously ask. To the dwellers in courts and cities Gilead represented a rugged, unsettled uncivilized region, inhabited by an uncouth nomadic, unlettered people. Yet it was from those wild uplands, not from the Holy City, not from the schools of the prophets, that the greatest of the prophets came. How often are we taught this lesson, 'that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty are called!' The vessels of God are cast 'in the clay ground' (1 Kings VIII. 46). He took David from the sheepfolds, Amos from the farm, the Apostles from their ships, and the Lord Christ Himself went forth from Nazareth, from the carpenter's shop, to bless the world.

III. Those who Honour God, He will Honour.—For why is he, the Gileadite peasant, chosen to this high distinction? Was it not because he had chosen the Lord to be his God? Surely the name '*Elijahu*,' '*My God, Jehovah is He*,' is not without significance. His choice was made (cf. chap. XVIII. 21). The cry he would wring from Israel, 'The Lord, He is the God' (v. 39) was the echo of his own heart's cry.

IV. The Dominion over Nature belongs to God.—It was claimed for Him by Elijah; it is everywhere claimed for Him in Scripture (see e.g. Lev. XXVI. 4; Deut. XI. 17; Ps. CXLVII. 8; Jer. V. 24; Acts XIV. 17). But there are those who tell us otherwise. Their science leaves no room for His working in the world. If they concede that He made it, they will not allow Him to interfere with it. 'No room for Him in the inn.'

THE BROOK THAT DRIED UP

'And the word of the Lord came unto him, saying, Hide thyself by the brook Cherith. . . . And it came to pass after a while, that the brook dried up. . . . Get thee to Zarephath.'—1 KINGS XVII. 2, 3, 7, 9.

THERE is no stranger story in the lips of men than the story of God's providence. Sometimes very manifest in its workings, sometimes very obscure, always full of love, always working out the best, always right in the end. It is one thing to be in God's hands—as we all most surely are; it is another thing to know this is so. The sense of dependence is easily lost. God does not stamp all His gifts with the broad seal of heaven. The one Divine touch that testifies to the other-world origin of life's commonest bounty is sometimes like the hall-mark on precious metal-work—put where you won't see it unless you look for it. God is ever helping us to help ourselves, and ever weaving His ministries of help through and around our human efforts, till we cannot say where the one begins and the other ends. And often we say, 'I alone did it'.

I. 'The brook dried up.' This is an aspect of the Divine providence that sorely perplexes our minds and tries our faith. We can more easily recognize the love that gives than the love that takes away. 'How providential!' When do we say that? It is when Cherith is singing and babbling in our ears. We say it when a life is spared, a wish is granted, an undertaking is completed, a need is met. With some people providence is another word for getting what they ask for, and being able to complete their own plans. The education of our faith is incomplete if we have not learned that there is a providence of loss, a ministry of failing and of fading things, a gift of emptiness.

A desperate situation may prove a great and notable blessing. Before a man can say to the deep satisfaction of his soul, 'God is true,' he may have to find a good many things false. It is easier to trust the gift than the giver, easier to believe in Cherith than to believe in Jehovah.

II. Providence is a progressive thing. It is a development. There is nothing final in it. That dwindling stream by which Elijah sat and mused is a true picture of the life of each one of us. 'It came to pass that the brook dried up'—that is a history of our yesterdays, and a prophecy for our morrows. I do not mean that these words tell the whole story of life, or even a very large part of it, for any one of us; but in some way or other we all have to learn the difference between trusting in the gift and trusting in the Giver. The gift may be for a while, but the Giver is the Eternal Love. The abiding thing

in life is that word of the Lord that comes afresh into our hearts day by day.

III. The providence of God leads us into some hard places, but it never leaves us there. Cherith is only a halting-place, it is not our destination. We need to-morrow to explain to-day. We must get to the end before we can interpret the beginning. The explanation of the hard words of life lies in the context. Elijah looked into the eyes of famine, and then upward into the face of God. And then was he brought from the brook that failed to the meal that failed not.

The ministry of all that passeth away is meant to beget in our hearts a growing confidence in all that endureth for ever. The lesson of all fading things is not the brevity of life, but the eternity of love. When the pleasant and comforting babble of some Cherith falls on silence, it is but that we may hear the low deep murmur of the river of God that is full of water. It is the note of uncertainty in the voices of time that sets our heart listening for the unfaltering message of the eternal.—P. AINSWORTH, *The Pilgrim Church*, p. 176.

REFERENCES.—XVII. 1-7.—*Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxx. p. 376. XVII. 2-4.—H. Banks, *Thirty-one Revival Sermons*, p. 15. XVII. 2-6.—W. M. Taylor, *Elijah the Prophet*, p. 20. XVII. 4-5.—H. Banks, *Thirty-one Revival Sermons*, p. 77. XVII. 6.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons Preached in Sackville College Chapel*, vol. iii. p. 9.

THE FAILURE OF THE BROOK

'And it came to pass after a while, that the brook dried up.'
—1 KINGS XVII. 7.

ELIJAH was sent to the Brook Cherith by the express commandment of his God, and it must have been a strange and staggering thing for him when the waters of the brook began to fail. It was enough to crush an ordinary faith; but then the faith of Elijah was not ordinary. And I want to show you how that faith was justified. And how there was deep meaning in that discipline that so you and I may be a little stronger in those dark seasons when the brook dries up.

I. First, then, the failure of the waters was meant to deepen the prophet's sense of brotherhood. You must remember it was a time of drought. Everywhere drought and cruel pangs of thirst, and men and women entreating God for water—and all the time in the little vale of Cherith, the coolness and the murmuring of the stream. And so, that he might be a brother among brothers, and feel his kinship with his suffering nation, it came to pass that after a while the brook dried. In a thousand lives that is still the secret of the failing brook. It is not because God is angry that it fails, it is because our Father wants us to be brothers. There is no sympathy so deep and strong as that which springs out of common suffering. Exclude a man from what others have to bear, and you exclude him from his heritage of brotherhood.

II. Again Elijah was taught by this event that in certain matters God makes no exceptions. God has his chosen and peculiar people, but He never spares the rod to spoil His child. And one of the hardest lessons we must learn is that the name and nature of our God is love. Yet for the man who trusts and serves Him best there is to be no exception from the scourge.

III. The deepest lesson in our story is that the ceasing of the prophet's brook was the beginning of larger views of God. And as it was with Elijah long ago so I believe it often is to-day. There are the blessings we enjoy—our health, our prosperity, the love of those who love us. There are many people who never lose these blessings, moving beside still waters to the end. But there are others with whom it is not so. They have suffered terribly, or had sharp and sore remorse. I ask them, Has not God been nearer—has not religion been more to them since then? And if it has taken the failing of the stream to cast them utterly upon the arm of God; if they have risen from an empty brook to drink of an ocean that is ever full—perhaps it was not in anger, but in love that the waters ceased to be musical at Cherith.—G. H. MORRISON, *The Wings of the Morning*, p. 108.

REFERENCES.—XVII. 12.—H. Banks, *Thirty-one Revival Sermons*, p. 69. XVII. 13.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons Preached in Sackville College Chapel*, vol. iii. p. 24. *Readings for the Aged* (4th Series), p. 184. XVII. 14.—J. Keble, *Sermons for Lent to Passiontide*, p. 159; *Sermons for Sunday after Trinity*, part i. p. 363. XVII. 16.—H. Banks, *Thirty-one Revival Sermons*, p. 26. Bishop Bickersteth, *Sermons*, p. 219. XVII. 17.—H. Banks, *Thirty-one Revival Sermons*, pp. 7 and 51.

A PERSONALIZED CONSCIENCE

'And she said unto Elijah, What have I to do with thee, O thou man of God? Thou art come unto me to bring my sin to remembrance, and to slay my son!'—1 KINGS XVII. 18.

ELIJAH must have been surprised. He had come into this woman's home when she was in the direst misery and poverty. When he first saw her she was picking up sticks with which to kindle her fire for a meal preparatory to death. Nevertheless, she shares her scanty meal and oil with him, and he is her guest for many days. And all the while the miraculous is about her. The meal is never finished, the oil never fails. Then, as if to demonstrate that troubles never come singly, her son, her only child, sickened and died. A very anguish of despair possessed her. Then an extraordinary thing occurred. Her heart let out its secret. The sin she had guarded with vigilance and terror leaps to her lips. Elijah was a conscience to her. Remorse and terror held her in their sway. Elijah's presence was doomsday. In his presence she was conscious of sin.

I. The Tragedy of Sin is the callousness it produces. This woman had almost forgotten her sin. She had grown accustomed to its thought. That is the tragedy of guilt. It corrodes the heart. All the subtle and tender sensibilities are hardened. What a callous world we live in! We live on day by day hardly conscious, seldom seeing the evils that are, the shame of human life. We are callous to the liquor traffic.

We pass the public-houses, we smell the odious fumes, we hear the ribald laughter, we see debased men, wretched women, pinched and shivering children. It is hateful, terrible, loathsome. But we have grown accustomed to it. We are callous to the miseries of the poor. We have seen the slums and hovels in which they herd. We admit that society, the great abstraction, is at fault, but familiarity has wrought callousness. We are callous to the pains and wrongs of children. We know that thousands are starved, famished, thrashed, exposed. We applaud the work of men like Dr. Barnardo, George Müller, and Dr. Stephenson, but we are really callous to it all. It is part of English life as we have always known it.

II. A Personalized Conscience is the Divine Exposure and rebuke of sin. History is the illustration of this. The prophets of Israel were consciences incarnate. God was in them. Luther was a conscience. Papal Europe crouched before him. The priests gnashed their teeth and hissed in wrath, but the people saw God in him and heard the word of Eternal Life. John Wesley was a conscience. He convicted the State Church of supineness, ineptitude, and throughout the length and breadth of the land he convicted tens of thousands of sin. A conscience personalized has ever been and always will be an exposure and condemnation of sin. No matter how callous men may be, their hearts will be pierced by the living God in a great man's conscience.

III. Godliness is the secret of this Ethical Authority. Godliness is the greatest power in human life. It is influence, authority, sovereignty. Every Church should be a conscience. The Church is a community of godly men and women, and their united influence should reflect the God they love and serve. Every Christian should be a conscience. We should be so full of God that everywhere our ethical influence should be felt. This is the need of the times. Better Christians, the best Christians. Let us go to God, let us keep near Him, and we will be consciences to others. The callous and the cynical will be shamed and saved.—J. G. Bowran, *The Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxxiv. 1908, p. 131.

References.—XVII. 18.—J. Keble, *Sermons Preached in St. Saviour's, Leeds*, p. 59. XVII. 19, 20.—H. Banks, *Thirty-one Revival Sermons*, pp. 23, 35, 60, 69, 104. C. O. Bell, *Hills that Bring Peace*, p. 203. XVII. 23, 24.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons Preached in Sackville College Chapel*, vol. iii. p. 31; *Readings for the Aged*, (4th Series), p. 195. XVII. 24.—H. Banks, *Thirty-one Revival Sermons*, p. 69. J. O. Davies, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxviii. p. 269. XVII. 40.—H. Banks, *Thirty-one Revival Sermons*, p. 69. XVII. 44.—W. H. Hutchings, *Sermon-Sketches*, p. 222.

OBADIAH—A PALM IN THE DESERT

'Obadiah, which was over the household.'—1 Kings xviii. 3 (R.V.).

The name Obadiah means 'servant of Jehovah,' and it will appear that his life and character answer to his sacred name.

I. Obadiah is an Example of Early Piety.—'But I thy servant fear the Lord from my youth' was his meek avowal to Elijah, the stern Tishbite, as he confronted him in the way. It was a splendid thing to say. Yet a man who so speaks assumes an immense responsibility. I wish each youthful reader would take the words 'my youth' and ponder them. Begin the fear of the Lord in youth; it is the chosen season; and beginning early, as did Obadiah, like him you may achieve great spiritual prestige.

II. Obadiah Retained the Religion of His Youth.—He was not a young man when he spoke these words to Elijah. Youth was gone, but not his godly fear. He entered the paths of righteousness in his boyhood and never forsook them.

III. Obadiah is a Pattern of Religious Intensity.—In verse three we find the gladdening assurance, 'Obadiah feared the Lord greatly'. His piety was ardent, it glowed. How much force that 'greatly' carries. A very different adverb would characterize some people's religion. They fear the Lord faintly, lukewarmly, inadequately.

IV. Obadiah is an Illustration of Religion under Trying Conditions.—He dwelt in Ahab's court. He stood alone in his splendid piety amid the idolatry and wickedness of the Israelitish palace. Learn from Obadiah's case that: (*a*) *A character may be independent of circumstances.* No Christian need be barren or unfruitful whatever his temporal condition. Obadiah kept a glowing piety in Ahab's palace. (*b*) *We may be a blessing to godless homes wherein we may dwell.* You cannot estimate how much an ungodly home, or house, or business may owe to some servant of God who dwells there. Obadiah is an embodied benediction to Ahab's house. (*c*) *The faithful performance of duty may make us indispensable to bad masters.* Obadiah had never scamped his work. He had done his duty loyally. So Ahab prized him. We further our religion by fidelity in earthly service.

V. Obadiah's Religion was Philanthropic.—When Jezebel cut off the prophets of the Lord, Obadiah took an hundred of them and hid them by fifty in a cave and fed them with bread and water—which was scarce in the kingdom. Obadiah's deed was as brave as it was benevolent, and as courageous as it was kind. Our religion must always prove itself by its philanthropy. True goodness demonstrates itself by doing good.

VI. Obadiah's Good Deeds were Matters of Common Report.—Expostulating with Elijah (chap. xviii. 13) he says, 'Was it not told my Lord what I did'. He does not speak boastfully. In the perilous circumstances in which he conceived himself to be placed he appealed to the report of his good deed as a reason why his life should be saved. He had done good by stealth and now found it widespread fame.

VII. Obadiah was Overshadowed by Fear.—Elijah had bidden him tell Ahab that 'Elijah is here,' and it fills Obadiah with alarm. He dreads lest Ahab should slay him. But Obadiah was blessed beyond all his fears. No calamity overwhelmed him such as he dreaded.

VIII. The last thing I note concerning this faithful soul is that *he unconsciously contributed to a glorious Triumph of Religion.* His obedience to the monition of Elijah lead to the wondrous scene on Carmel. His work was fraught with grander issues than had ever entered his heart.—Dinsdale T. Young, *Neglected People of the Bible*, p. 113.

FEARING THE LORD FROM ONE'S YOUTH

'I, thy servant, fear the Lord from my youth.'—1 Kings xviii. 12.

There are two valuable lessons we are to carry away from these words of Obadiah.

I. The importance of early decision for God. Our subject was not a particularly young man at this time: that is plain from his language; but his religious earnestness had dated from early life. It is the bitter regret of many an old Christian, and will be so to his dying day, that he only began truly to fear the Lord when the best part of his life was gone. The Bible teaches us much by example as by precept, and it seems to me that the grand lesson of Obadiah's life—and it is but a very brief biography we have—is the unspeakable value to a man, all through his career, of starting with fixed religious principles, and sticking to them at all hazards.

II. The importance of courage in openly avowing our religious decision. The first thing is to have sound principles; and the second thing is not to be ashamed of them. The best way to get over the dread of opposition or ridicule is to have the constant feeling that God Himself is at your side, looking upon you, pleased when you confess Him, grieved when you disown Him. A man is none the worse a Christian for having occasionally to stand up for his principles. It makes your religion more real, and gives you greater confidence in its power. Oh, it is a grand thing to see a man taking his stand as a pronounced and thorough Christian and meeting all the solicitations of vice and assaults of ridicule with the manly declaration of Obadiah, 'I fear the Lord from my youth'.—J. Thain Davidson, *The City Youth*, p. 96.

References.—XVIII. 12.—J. C. Harrison, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xix. p. 209. XVIII. 13.—J. W. Bunyan, *The Servants of Scripture*, p. 35.

CONFLICTING FORCES

'When Ahab saw Elijah.'—1 Kings xviii. 17.

There are no Elijahs now. We are obliged to read about them when we wish to refresh the heroic sentiment. Think what a moment that was 'when Ahab saw Elijah'! The two great forces of the world met, the kingly and the prophetic. We should think of these sensitive moments in history; they would quicken us into better endeavour, and increase the force which belongs to the sons of God. It was a terrible and most memorable meeting.

I. When Ahab saw Elijah the two great forces of the world met, the forces that have always been in conflict, the kingly and the prophetic, the secular and the spiritual, this world and the next. God never made any king; when He gave the people a king in answer to their clamour, it was to punish them, and punished they were. The Lord is King, and he who would dispute His throne brings wrath on the land. 'When Ahab saw Elijah' the physically mighty and the morally strong were face to face. Ahab had great resources; Ahab was very careful about the horses and the mules, and anxious to keep them alive in the time of the water famine. That is right.

What other instance is there in which the two kingdoms met? The most notable case was when Judas and Jesus stood face to face, and Judas 'went backward and fell to the ground'. That is so; the nation that fears God will ultimately win.

II. Ahab had great resources, but the resources of a king are mere nothings when God arises to judge the earth. There are times when we are ashamed of our greatness, and when our glory is proved to be but a veering wind of vanity. It is well to have such moments in history; they ventilate history, they disinfect history, they bring in a new birthday of historic relations. Who are these men? The one, the pampered king; the other, the raven-fed prophet; and the raven-fed prophet was the stronger of the two. God will command the ravens. They eat weakness who eat luxuries. Take what God gives, the little simple meal, and you may be the strongest man in the world.

It is well that secular kings should look upon anointed prophets. How do these men live? They live in the wilderness, and are strong; they never sat at a king's table, and yet there is pith in their muscle and there is meaning in their voice.

III. The rebuke was turned upon the king. 'Art thou he that troubleth Israel? And he answered, I have not troubled Israel; but thou, and thy father's house.' He had a bad record. Men's record comes up against them again and again. 'When Ahab saw Elijah' he saw a man who was the king's superior, and the king knew it, owned it. Superiority has not to be proved by testimonials; superiority has to be tested by personality. When you come near the king you will know it. I mean the moral king, the spiritual king, the intellectual king, in any department of life whatever. You know the leader, you give place to him.

'When Ahab saw Elijah' he saw judgment. There was judgment in those gnarled, knitted eyebrows, and Ahab felt the scorching of the hidden lightning. 'When Ahab saw Elijah' he saw for the first time unconsciously an honest man—a terrible sight to the wicked. There is no more terrible judgment upon an ungodly man than the presence of a man who is godly. —Joseph Parker, *City Temple Pulpit*, vol. vi. p. 262.

THE GREAT DECISION

'And Elijah came unto all the people and said, How long halt ye between two opinions? If the Lord be God follow Him; but if Baal then follow him.'—1 Kings xviii. 21.

The Old Testament is full of sharp, decisive phrases like this; the utterance of a spirit for which there is

a very broad line of division drawn between good and evil, truth and falsehood, and which is almost more tolerant of the open enemy than of those who will not take their share in the conflict. To the strong and unhesitating spirit that sees the right on the one side as if it were written in letters of fire, and absolute wrong on the other, nothing is so uncomprehensible as the lukewarm temper, that will not be kindled either to love or hatred, and seeks rather to avoid any decisive choice.

I. In the present day there are many things which tend to modify such a temper of mind. Christianity itself has taught us to sympathize with men of all classes and nations, to see the same humanity manifesting itself in them all; and this sympathy and insight will not let us regard our national foes as essentially the servants of an evil principle. But there is a dark side to all this; for those very wider views of things which produce tolerance are apt to produce also a sceptical spirit, which weakens the springs of manly energy. We are not able to split life in two with a hatchet as our fathers did, or to see all white on one side and all black on the other; and therefore we are apt to lose the consciousness that there is a real battle between good and evil going on in the world; and find it hard to realize that we are called to take up arms on the one side or the other.

II. We cannot in our day have so much of the zeal that comes from a narrow and concentrated view of one aspect of things, from untroubled faith in unquestioned dogmas, and unhesitating subjection to fixed rules of conduct. But on the other hand, it is easier for us to escape an evil that went with such faith and obedience, namely, the tendency to identify what is essential with what is accidental, the ideas of truth and right with some particular form in which they are embodied; the cause of God with the cause of our party, our nation, or our Church. It is easier for us than it was formerly to learn to recognize good in all the different shapes in which it presents itself, and to avoid the error of fighting against it because it comes before us in some unfamiliar guise. And when we remember the awful calamities brought upon the human race in former times by men who honestly thought they were doing God service in forcing upon others the exact type of institution or belief with which, in their own minds, all goodness was identified, it cannot be regarded as a little thing that moral and religious principles have become, or are becoming disconnected from what were at best particular, and, it may be, transitory forms of their manifestation. The wider toleration of modern times may be regarded as due only to indifference and scepticism, and clever books have been written to show that it is so. But in reality there is always a positive behind every negative cause; and what the chilling of men's faith ultimately points to is that the great truths are separating themselves from the little ones, the eternal verities of the Divine life in man from the passing phases and adjuncts of human tradition.—E. Caird, *Lay Sermons and Addresses*, p. 181.

References.—XVIII. 21.—G. W. Brameld, *Practical Sermons* (2nd Series), p. 224. T. H. Bell, *Persuasions*, p. 335. Bishop Gordon, *Parish Sermons*, p. 63. W. Anderson, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xvi. p. 309. W. M. Taylor, *Elijah the Prophet*, p. 96.

AN ANSWER BY FIRE

'The God that answereth by fire, let Him be God.'—
1 Kings xviii. 24.

What is to us the value of this ordeal of the God that answereth by fire? It is an ordeal by which we can be convinced, our faith stands on the issue of whether ours is a God who answereth by fire.

I. What are the grounds of our belief? They are many; they are the Bible story, the history of the Christian Church, the reasonableness of the Christian faith; but there is a ground stronger than any, it is the ground of personal experience. We believe in one God because we know what He does in us. We know Him as the helper, the guide, the consoler, the deliverer. But most and best of all, we know Him as the God who makes our sacrifice to burn.

II. Our sacrifice, what is it? Everywhere and always sacrifice is the same thing, it is the giving something to God. The subjects of King Ahab gave a sheep or an ox from their herd. We give ourselves, our life. It is the beginning and the end of faith, it is giving of self. That is the reason why faith saves, why it unites us to Christ; faith is giving self to God.

III. How do we know our offer is not a mistake, there being no one who can receive it? We are sure because we find that God answers by fire; we find that God makes our altar flame to burn, God completes our sacrifice, God makes us to carry out the offering of ourself.

(*a*) Perhaps it came about this way. In early life, quite early life, for a boy or girl, it happened that a vague, unshaped, wistful feeling of living for Christ, instead of for pleasure and honour, suddenly took shape; the spark had fallen from heaven, and the heart was aflame. God had offered the sacrifice; we knew He was God.

(*b*) It does not always happen that way. The man or woman betrays the boy or girl, letting worldliness steal away the first love, but the fire of God falls to renew the sacrifice. It is God completing the sacrifice, God fanning again the flame.

(*c*) God's fire can fall even to recover us. Our sacrifice is failing, worldliness has come on us like a flood, sin burst on us in a storm; the drenching water has soaked the wood upon the altar. It never can burn any more, we say. The fire of the Lord falls and licks up the water that was in the trench. The Lord who answereth by a fire that can inflame again our sin-sodden hearts, surely He is indeed the God.

IV. God's fire is with us to help us persevere, continue unto the end. Answer it to yourself, you who

are half-way through a life-task, which you took up with joy, but are carrying on by patience only. There is a touch comes from somewhere and will not let go out the fire upon our heart. God answereth by fire, let Him be God.—J. H. Skrine, *The Heart's Counsel*, p. 111.

References.—XVIII. 38.—C. Cross, *The Pulpit*, vol. v. XVIII. 38, 39.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons Preached in Sackville College Chapel*, vol. iii. p. 40. XVIII. 40, 46.—W. M. Taylor, *Elijah the Prophet*, p. 112. XVIII. 42-44.—J. Keble, *Miscellaneous Sermons*, p. 143. XIX. 1, 2, 3.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons Preached in Sackville College Chapel*, vol. iii. p. 47. XIX. 4.—H. Woodcock, *Sermon Outlines*, p. 195.

THE HOLY EUCHARIST

'Elijah himself went a day's journey into the wilderness,' etc.
—1 Kings xix. 4-8.

God has given us the blessed Sacrament to be to us the Sacrament in which He will give to us continually the grace of perseverance.

I. The Sacrament of Perseverance.—The one thing that we need for perseverance is continual spiritual renewal. The Holy Eucharist is the Church's great offering to the Father; and in each aspect it is a sacrament of renewal.

II. The Bread of Life.—In this Holy Eucharist we not only plead before God the sacrifice, but we feed upon the sacrifice. And in the consciousness of a will strengthened for life and endurance we turn our backs upon God's house and altar and go out reinvigorated to face the conditions of life in the world.

III. The Renewal of Fervour.—The Holy Eucharist is not only the Sacrament of the renewal of peace, it is the Sacrament of the renewal of fervour. In the Holy Eucharist we pass into the highest expressions of worship which man can know upon earth. And we go upon our way renewed with joy, and the joy of the Lord is our strength.

IV. Spiritual Vitality is the essential condition of spiritual feeding. The condition of our really carrying away with us from the Church into the world the abiding strength and joy of our Communion depends upon the reality of thanksgiving. Rise in thanksgiving to Him for His great gift, and you shall know what it is to be renewed by His grace from Communion to Communion, and in the strength of that Divine food you shall go on your way.—George Body, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxxv. p. 232.

References.—XIX. 7.—J. Keble, *Sermons for Lent to Passiontide*, p. 159. XIX. 10.—J. Keble, *Sermons for Sundays After Trinity*, part i. p. 363. XIX. 11, 12.—J. Thomas, *Myrtle Street Pulpit*, vol. ii. p. 192.

THE DIVINE VOICE IN MAN

'And after the earthquake, a fire; but the Lord was not in the fire: and after the fire a still small voice.'—1 Kings xix. 12.

There is a thing deeply to be deprecated—that God should actually speak to the man, and that the man should be unaware of any Divine communication.

Consider what God's 'Voice' is, that, if it be possible, He may not speak without our knowing it. The fact that His voice is, at least sometimes, 'still and small,' indicates the danger that we may miss it; in a word—

I. God generally speaks to men in a way they do not expect. We must guard against this mistake.

Men look for something great and magnificent, as they would like to be spoken to. But the Lord does not often do that. Indeed, He is too great to do so. It belongs to that which is really great to act simply. When the machinery is great, the mover is often little. The infinite God who made the machinery often chooses to act apart from it; and God is greater when He does a thing by His 'Voice, still and small,' than when He works by the 'earthquake'.

God is ever jealous to show that great external phenomena, displays of His power which are the vehicles of His grace, are, nevertheless, not the grace itself. They prepare the way for its conveyance and working, but man must patiently wait for the gift till the wild prelude that ushers in the harmony is over.

II. Consider the matter briefly from the standpoint of God's dealings with mankind at certain great epochs of the world's history.

(*a*) Before the Fall, man (the creature) enjoyed communion with God (his Creator); in a beautiful paradise the Lord God 'talked' with man; but the 'Voice' grew silent. Then God proclaimed Himself in the 'wind,' the 'earthquake,' and in the 'fire'. The deluge swept in its tempestuous fury; the earth trembled at its Creator's descent; Sinai glared with His lightnings. The law was promulgated in all its terrors; judgment rolled over judgment. Every supernatural display represented the offended holiness of His dreadful Majesty. Yet God, in all His attributes, was still an unknown God, on His own creation—earth.

(*b*) Then it was that, in a force so mean, in a scene so poor that men regarded not, the Eternal Word—'the still small Voice of the Father'—came to Bethlehem, and walked the plains of Galilee. He came to declare what the law could never tell, that God was not in 'the wind,' nor in 'the earthquake,' nor in 'the fire'; but in 'the still small Voice,' even Himself; He declared His Father's glory and His Father's will. The bruised reed He never broke, nor quenched the smoking flax. He did not strive, nor lift up His voice in the street. Nevertheless, that 'Voice' was the great power of Jehovah; evil spirits cowered at His presence; sickness, sorrow, and death fled before Him. And when, on the Mount of Beatitudes, that 'Voice' was heard in its own peculiar gentleness—'Blessed are the poor in spirit'—Sinai's trumpet was silenced! And the darkness, and the tempest, and the hopelessness of fear and despair were all forgotten when those loving lips cried, 'Come unto Me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest'. And when, at the last, He cried, 'It is finished,' men and angels testify that no display of the Divine power and love can equal in magnificence 'the still small Voice' of Calvary.

(*c*) Then came another day, that eventful Feast of Pentecost. The infant Church of 120 souls assembled together, when suddenly the house shook, the cloven tongue-shaped flames descended upon the heads of the Apostles; but it was not the 'rushing mighty wind,' nor the mysterious 'shaking,' nor the 'forked flames,' but 'the still small Voice' of the Holy Spirit, speaking through the Apostles, proclaiming in divers tongues the Gospel of God's grace, which filled men's hearts with wonder and conviction, and gathered in 3000 souls for Christ.

III. Listen to the 'Voice of God' as it now speaks to the souls of men.

It is an established principle, in God's ordinary dealing with individual souls, that His Voice, when it speaks, is 'still and small'. It is within you, like a whisper, at all times, in all places. A man may not at first, or for some time, recognize that the 'thought' arising in his mind or conscience, the mysterious 'drawing,' slight but strong and persistent, is the Voice of God speaking to his soul. Something has whispered in his ear, 'that is wrong'; that will come up for judgment; 'I must change my mode of life, now, at once; there must be no delay; God will forgive; go to Him, and sin no more; this is the way, walk thou in it'. Or, he is listening to a sermon, when, suddenly, 'the still small Voice' is heard distinctly, apart from the preacher's tones, whispering, 'thou art the man'. Or you lie upon a bed of sickness, and you can hear 'the still small Voice' breaking the stillness of your lonely chamber, 'Prepare to meet thy God'. So also when, in penitence, you grieve over 'some foul dark spot' of sin, you hear the same Voice, coming to you from the Cross: 'The Blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin'. And for the dying saint, who shall measure the confidence and joy which that 'Voice' inspires: 'Fear not, I am with thee'? If uncertain about the Voice, or whence it comes, then we shall be safe if, like Samuel, we cry: 'Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth'. We shall not then have to wait long for a token of His love. He will reveal Himself to us as to His saint of old, for He is the same, and changes not. He will make His glory to pass by, and His Voice to be heard, but the eye will not be blinded by the vision, and the Voice will fall like sweet music on the ear, 'The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin'.

THE STILL SMALL VOICE

'And after the fire a still small voice (Heb. "a sound of gentle stillness"). And it was so, when Elijah heard it, he wrapped his face in his mantle, and went out, and stood, in the entering of the cave.'—1 KINGS XIX. 12, 13.

ELIJAH has achieved an astonishing and, he believed, a Divine success. The prophets of Baal had been met, vanquished, destroyed. The victory of the prophet of Jehovah appeared complete. Then he receives Jezebel's message: 'So let the God do to us, and more also, if I make not thy life as the life of one of them by to-morrow about this time'. His victory has only availed to anger and to make more resolute the unscrupulous woman who is the centre and mainstay of the national apostasy. And in an agony of desparation at the collapse of his hopes and the weary way of struggle and peril yet to be trodden, Elijah loses heart and flees for his life.

I. Such an experience is not peculiar to any one man or to any one age. The great prophet of Israel is but representative of almost every man who has undertaken a courageous war on behalf of goodness. The way of advance is like the path up many a mountain-side. The climber sees a single peak and concludes that if he reach that he will have gained the summit. He reaches it only to find a higher peak in view. That, too, he scales, and lo! a yet loftier lies beyond, and wearily in the gathering darkness he abandons all hope of reaching the mountain-tops. So Elijah; one peak has been attained, the priests of Baal are overthrown, but the pernicious royal influence lies beyond; and at sight of the arduous path by which it, and with it the deep-seated irreligion of the people, must be overcome, he loses heart and runs away.

II. Now whenever there is such a withdrawal or such a loss of faith, very much depends upon the attitude of the man himself. And Elijah is not likely to remain a runaway and a weakling. In the desert Elijah gains a profounder vision of the dealings of God with himself and with His people, and comes to see that all things (including even the sin of a Jezebel) work together for good to them that trust God.

III. How came Elijah to regain his peace? Elijah reaches the rocks of Horeb and at first nature about him seems full of his own restless confusion. From one of the mountain crags he beholds the raging of a hurricane. But soon the storm has fallen, and upon the whole face of the mountain passes a strange peace, the more impressive by contrast with the preceding tumult. No sound is heard save 'the sound of a gentle stillness,' 'a still small voice'—the quiet rustling of a light breeze through the tree-tops that seems to make the calm yet calmer and the stillness more still. Panic is dispelled, Carmel and its struggle is far off; the threats of Jezebel are forgotten, the weariness of his journey is overcome; in this stillness the calm of heaven enters his being, and the breezes whisper the peace of God.

IV. The applications of my theme are manifold. Even to those who have not taken sides with God this experience of Elijah is not without meaning. It is not necessary to summon you to withdraw from the whirl of self-seeking to meditate, to listen to what your best manhood has to say, to the voice of your soul within, to the still small voice of conscience which is the representative of God. To you who rejoice in fellowship with God the reminder comes that seasons of stillness and of meditation have their place and make for the renewal and health of the soul. When we are still and receptive He makes His voice heard

within; and like Elijah we cover our faces, listen reverently, and then go back to our work with a quickened sense of the Divine comradeship and a new hope.—J. H. Rushbrooke, *The Baptist Times and Freeman*, 30 August, 1907.

GOD'S CURE FOR A HERO'S DEPRESSION

'And it was so, when Elijah heard it, that he wrapped his face in his mantle, and went out, and stood in the entering in of the cave.'—1 Kings xix. 13.

Notice first, God's cure for a hero's depression; and then secondly, that there is more power in a Divine voice than in Nature's mightiest efforts.

I. Let us notice God's care for a hero's depression. It will be necessary for us briefly to review the prophet's history. He has had that grand triumph of Mount Carmel. He means to consummate the magnificent victory he had already commenced; he means now to go to head-quarters to carry out the work of reformation. He is going to attempt the tremendous task of sweeping away the impurity of a palace. He knows Jezebel's character well enough, but there is no hesitation. But what came of his mission? Elijah's faith failed at the critical moment; and just as we are expecting him to do a deed of daring which shall eclipse all his previous conquests, we find all his courage evaporating out of him, and he who could stand before Ahab is now fleeing for his life before a woman's wrath. Now Elijah, terrified almost out of his life, leaves the land of Israel and flies to the kingdom of Judah. He goes away to the solitude of Sinai. There he is amongst those rugged wilds, those gigantic crags, and he gets him into a cave. He is waiting there, and the Lord sees His servant and determines to bring him out of that depression and lead him back to his work. Then there sweeps by a hurricane, and the might of that wind rends the rocks; yet Elijah remains half-stupified, in awful depression. Then there comes an earthquake, and all Senai shakes. Elijah does not: he is still unmoved. Then there came fire which wreathed the crest of the mountain in its flame; but all the fire that ever fell from heaven could not move that stern, depressed prophet. And now there is a still small voice; and you read in the thirteenth verse that, when he heard it, he wrapt his face in his mantle and went out and stood at the mouth of the cave. That still small voice was more than a match for the prophet; and what earthquake, fire, and tempest could not do, that the still small voice did. God's remedy for a depressed child of His and a desponding servant is His own voice.

II. There is more power in the Divine voice than in Nature's mightiest efforts. What we want in our services is not merely Nature convulsed or Nature making mighty efforts. We want that still small voice of God, for that alone has power to bring Elijah, out of their caves. Is it not true in the sinner's conversion? Referring to our own experience we can bear testimony that this is so; we have known what it is to be brought before Mount Sinai. Often in the old Surrey Music Hall we have heard the thunder roll among the crags; we have seen the lightning flash; but there was something in our proud desperate heart which only rose and said, 'I will never be frightened into it'. And no earthquake and no fire moved me one step from the cave. But one day there came a still small voice. It hailed from Calvary; and what all else had failed to accomplish that voice did in one moment. The face was bowed; the mantle cast over it; the spirit was broken—not by fearful force, but by loving power.—A. G. Brown, *The Penny Pulpit*, vol. xvi. No. 928, p. 125.

ELIJAH'S DISAPPOINTMENT

'And, behold, there came a voice unto him, and said, What doest thou here, Elijah?'—1 Kings xix. 13.

I. This chapter shows us a picture of Elijah in his weakness. No sooner has the victory at Carmel been gained than it appeared that it was not yet to be decisive. Jezebel's heart was neither turned nor broken; she meant to continue the fight for Baal; Ahab would not resist her, and how could the people resist without him? 'When he saw that, he arose, and went for his life, and came to Beer-sheba, which belongeth to Judea, and left his servant there.' But Elijah did not stay there. He himself went a day's journey into the wilderness. His soul was vexed within him, and he would carry his trouble alone to God; he was troubled, not by the dangers of his life, for that was past, but by the failure of his work. Elijah felt: 'I have laboured in vain; I have spent my strength for nought, and in vain'; and he prayed to be allowed to retire from the hopeless battle: 'It is enough; now, O Lord, take away my life, for I am not better than my fathers'. And as yet the Lord does not answer him—certainly does not rebuke him; He only sends him strength and comfort to sustain him until an answer should be sent; He gives him heavenly food, in the strength whereof he went like Moses before him and Jesus after him, fasting for forty days and nights, yet not worn out nor weakened, through the wilderness, unto Horeb the Mount of God. 'There God appeared unto him'—not as to Israel of old, in the likeness of devouring fire, but as we read: 'The Lord was not in the wind: and after the wind an earthquake; but the Lord was not in the earthquake: after the earthquake a fire; but the Lord was not in the fire: and after the fire a still small voice. And it was so, when Elijah heard it, that he wrapped his face in his mantle, and went out, and stood in the entrance of the cave. And, behold, there came a voice unto him saying, What doest thou here, Elijah?' A very gentle rebuke, no doubt spoken by the still small voice, but a rebuke still.

II. Elijah is not sent back into the land of Israel, but 'to return on thy way to the wilderness of Damascus'; there he is bidden to anoint Hazael to chastise all Israel, and Jehu to chastise the house of Ahab; even Elisha, it is said, shall carry out any portion of God's vengeance that is not executed by these. The Lord goes on to tell of a work for Elijah

to do, and a fruit of the work he has done, very different from the cruel vengeance of Hazael, or even of Jehu: 'Yet I have left me seven thousand in Israel, all the knees which have not bowed unto Baal, and every mouth that hath not kissed him'. And Elijah felt that that was his truest comfort and his highest duty. All Elijah's own care was that the faithful seven thousand might not be left without a prophet—yea, that there might be a prophet who might even recall some of the faithless to their God. He learnt the spirit of those words which the prophet ascribes to a greater than Elijah: 'I have laboured in vain; I have spent my strength for nought; yet surely my judgment is with the Lord, and my work with my God; and now, saith the Lord, that formed me from the womb to be His servant, to bring Jacob again to Him, though Israel be not gathered, yet shall I be glorious in the eyes of the Lord, and my God shall be my strength'.—W. H. Simcox, *The Cessation of Prophecy*, p. 134.

References.—XIX. 13.—J. Keble, *Sermons for the Christian Year*, part ii. pp. 2, 5, 63. XIX. 19-21.—W. M. Taylor, *Elijah the Prophet*, p. 149. H. P. Liddon, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 593, *Old Testament Outlines*, p. 79.

THE PARTIAL EXCLUSION OF GOD

'The Lord is God of the hills, but He is not God of the valleys.'
—1 Kings xx. 28.

I. There are scenes with which we naturally associate God; and how true that was of the Syrians a glance will show us. It was among the hills that Israel fought them; it was on the rough hill-side that Israel conquered. For us no less than for the Syrians there is a suggestion of God about the hills. It was on a hill that our Saviour blessed the world with the priceless preaching of the Sermon on the Mount. And on a hill-top having said farewell He ascended to the mansions of His Father. Somehow right through the Bible story there clings to the hills the thought of the Divine. As it is with nature so it is with our lives, for they, too, have got their hill-tops mystical. There are great hours when we rise above ourselves and in such hours God is not far away. For just as the fierce north wind catches the clouds and drives them apart till through the gap we see the sun, so our great sorrows and joys and passions and despairs scatter the clinging mists and show us God.

II. We are often blind to God just where He is most active. You see at once how true that was of the Syrians. They saw Him on the wild torrent-swept hills, but not in the tenanted and fertile valleys. They denied the Infinite in its sweetest revelation, and were blind to God just where He was most active. Perhaps we are all in danger of that sin, as the Syrians were, even in regard to nature. There are certain set places we can admire enthusiastically, but to all the rest of God's world we are half-blind. The man who can see hardly needs to go abroad. The wonder and bloom of the world are at his hand. But perhaps our great danger lies in ignoring God in the valley-lands of common life. It is far easier to see God upon the hills than to discern His presence in the valleys. It is far easier to see Him in the crisis than to detect His going in our common days, yet He is never nearer than in these simple duties that meet us every morning when we rise, in these common joys that consecrate our homes, in these common burdens that we all must bear.

III. To exclude God always spells disaster, in friendship and home and State, even in business. And the more a man prospers in a godless business, the worse is the disaster in the eye of heaven. Exclude God altogether if you will, but do not give Him the hills and keep the valleys. That did not save the Syrians in the battle, and it will not keep you and me from being lost.—G. H. Morrison, *The Unlighted Lustre*, p. 144.

BUSINESS HERE AND THERE

'And as Thy servant was busy here and there, he was gone.'—1 Kings xx. 40.

The words of the text are a part of a parable spoken by the prophet to King Ahab. The King of Syria had been given over to the hands of Ahab, whose duty it was, for the sake of the religion of God and of the people of Israel, that Ben-hadad, the king, should be slain. Instead of that, in a moment of weakness, weakness which cost Israel dear, the king let Ben-hadad go free, and the words of the text are really a portion of a parable spoken by the prophet against the act of the king. Now we will get away from the context, and look upon our own age.

I. A Busy Age.—It is, all will acknowledge, a busy age. It is a mere truism to tell you that the life you lead is a busy one, it is from Monday morning till Saturday night full of business; but the warning which the prophet gives the king is quite as good for you as it was for Ahab. 'And as thy servant was busy here and there the great opportunity was gone.' It does not require much paraphrasing. Now in a great town it is business that holds sway. We are all of us conscious of the evil influence that this rush and hurry has on our spiritual life. In our better moments we are ashamed to think how very far behind business religion comes. We try, some of us at any rate, to climb the steep incline to heaven with a burden tied to our back. Is it to be wondered at that your steps are feeble and tottering and faint? Religion strikes most of us as a thing for heaven only. It is for the eternal spheres and not for the temporal. 'Business is the thing here,' you say. It requires the exercise of moral qualities. A man must be honest, his integrity must be above reproach, he must be truthful, he must be diligent. These are moral qualities which in themselves are glorious, but after all they are not the best qualities, are they? How about unselfishness, meekness, considerateness for other people, purity, rightness of motive, do they thrive on the milk of business? No, business does not touch them because they are higher than business.

II. What will Business Do for You?—It will give you a certain amount of comfort. Quite so, it will. It will give you a fair share of pleasure. Yes, there is

nothing wrong in that. It will give you a certain influence with your fellow-men. That is right; there is nothing wrong in that. But what more can business give you? Can it give you anything that you will take away when you go to a better realm than this? No; I will tell you why. The things of business are temporal, and when the things of time finish, the things of business end. Therefore whatever you gain here in quantity you must leave behind. There is no arguing with it. All the credit that a man has got will end when his will is proved, and it is known that he has left so many thousands. Notice the word. He is *leaving* them. He does not benefit. The issues of business have to do with quantity, not quality; with time, not with eternity.

III. 'Good Business.'—There is nothing in the Bible against making a man a diligent business man. Diligence, skill, perseverance, will always have their due reward. The business man who is a Christian should be second to none. The working man who is a Christian should need no watching. The servant man or the servant girl who are Christians should be above complaint, because the Christian, whatever his sphere, should be the very best.

IV. The Noblest Standard.—Now it is very practical for us to consider that religion after all is the only thing that gives us the noblest standard of purity. The noblest standard of purity is to be had in the religion of Jesus Christ, and in the religion of Jesus Christ only. Religion demands truthfulness. You cannot be a Christian and a liar at the same time. You must be absolutely truthful in word and deed. Religion is utterly opposed to the modern fashion of putting on appearances, trying to induce people to think that you are what you are not. Religion will not permit you to start a dishonest business. You cannot, if you are a religious man, start your business on a fictitious character. Let no man go beyond and defraud his brother in anything. That is religion. Be busy; be as busy as you can; be diligent, work hard in the fear of God and in the love of Christ. You will not then lose your opportunity. No, you will be busy here and there, but the love of Christ will be in your hearts. You will be better Christians and better business men, and in the long run, when the adding up and counting is done, you will find the incorruptible crown which God, the righteous Judge shall give you.

References.—XX. 40.—J. Angell James, *The Penny Pulpit*, No. 1938. XXI. 1-10.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons for the Feast Days*, p. 27. XXI. 19, 20.—C. Kingsley, *Town and County Sermons*, p. 317. XXI. 20.—H. J. Wilmot-Buxton, *Holytide Teachings*, p. 128. XXI. 29.—J. Keble, *Sermons for Sunday After Trinity*, part i. p. 283.

UNPOSSESSED POSSESSIONS

'And the King of Israel said unto his servants, Know ye that Ramoth in Gilead is ours, and we be still, and take it not out of the hand of the King of Syria.'—1 Kings xxii. 3.

I. What is ours, and not ours? Every Christian man has large tracts of unannexed territory, unattended possibilities, unenjoyed blessings, things that are his and yet not his. How much more of God you and I have a right to than we have the possession of.

(*a*) How much inward peace is ours? It is meant that there should never pass across a Christian's soul more than a ripple of agitation, which may indeed ruffle and curl the surface; but deep down there should be the tranquillity of the fathomless ocean, unbroken by any tempests, and yet not stagnant, because there is a vital current that runs through it, and every drop is being drawn upward to the surface and the sunlight. The peace of God is ours; but ah, in how sad a sense it is true that the peace of God is *not* ours.

(*b*) What 'heights'—for Ramoth means 'high places,' what heights of consecration there are which are ours according to the Divine purposes, and according to God's gift. It is meant, and it is possible and well within the reach of every Christian soul, that he or she should live day by day in the continual and utter surrender of himself or herself to the will of God. But instead of this absolute submission and completeness and joyfulness of surrender of ourselves to Him, what do we find? Reluctance to obey, regret at providences, self-dominant or struggling hard against the partial domination of the will of God in our hearts.

(*c*) What noble possibilities of service, what power in the world are bestowed on Christ's people. The Divine gift to the Christian community, and yet look how, all through the ages, the Church has been beaten by the corruption of the world.

II. Our text hints for us not only the difference between possession and realization, but also our strange contentment in imperfect possession. Ahab's remonstrance with his servants seems to suggest that there were two reasons for their acquiescence in the domination of a foreign power on a bit of their soil. They had not realized that Ramoth was theirs, and they were too lazy and cowardly to go and take it. Ignorance of the fullness of the gift and slothful timidity in daring everything in the effort to make it ours explain a great deal of the present condition of Christian people.

III. My text suggests the effort that is needed to make our own ours. God does exactly in the same way with regard to a great many of His natural gifts as He does with regard to His spiritual ones. He gives them to us, but we hold them on this tenure that we put forth our best efforts to get and to keep them. His giving them does not set aside our taking. —A. Maclaren, *Christ's Musts*, p. 127.

References.—XXII. 8.—A. G. Mortimer, *The Church's Lesson*, vol. iii. p. 185. J. Keble, *Sermons for Sunday After Trinity*, part i, p. 363. XXII. 13, 14.—*Christian World Pulpit*, 1891, p. 194. XXII. 19-23.—F. B. Woodward, *Sermons* (2nd Series), p. 299. XXII. 23.—T. Arnold, *The Interpretation of Scripture*, p. 85. Bishop Bethell, *Sermons*, vol. ii. p. 293. T. Arnold, *Sermons*, vol. vi. p. 85. XXII. 32.—M. Briggs, *Practical Sermons on Old Testament Subjects*, p. 153.

THE WORD OF THE LORD

'And Jehoshaphat said unto the King of Israel, Enquire, I pray thee, at the word of the Lord to-day.'—1 KINGS XXII. 5.

THIS was a suggestion worthy of the pious King of Judah in his best moments. What are the thoughts for ourselves?

I. The Bible is the Great Index of the Will of God.—You have missed the great intention of your Bible if you have not taken it, day by day, as the guide-book of life. The Bible is altogether a practical thing. You lose yourself in it the moment you begin to theorize. It was not intended to satisfy the curiosity, but to rule conduct. It could not help having deep mysteries, but even the mysteries are always subordinate and conducive to right action. It is not, indeed, a book which draws lines, and makes out specific paths for each individual, under separate circumstances; it does better—it gives great principles, which you are to expand at leisure. It gives motives which, if imbibed, will influence the whole man and his nature. It breathes a spirit by which everything is sweetened and alleviated. It warns with judgments; it comforts with promises.

II. It is the Holy Ghost which Teaches; and the result of all is one comprehensive and magnificent development of the mind of God. Were one assurance, were one undertaking, were one warning, were one principle, were one argument taken out of that system, the great portraiture would be lost. But now it is exactly what you want—an everyday directory; what you are to think, what you are to feel, what you are to do, to glorify God and get to heaven. There is not a phase of life which is not represented here: there is not a doubt which is not met; there is not a question, affecting any part of man's being and responsibility which cannot answer itself and find a resting-place here.

III. Go to your Bible more in this its Oracular Character.—When you open the book have a distinct question, for which you look for a distinct reply. Read consultingly. Probe its high principles and its holy motives. Attend to the little occurrences of everyday experience. Do not read a chapter, but explore a truth. Do not generalize a system, but particularize a duty.

THE THINGS THAT MATTER

'Now the rest of the acts of Ahab, and all that he did, and the ivory house which he made, and all the cities that he built, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the Kings of Israel.'—1 KINGS XXII. 39.

I. WHO can doubt that if Ahab had been asked for what he expected to be remembered after his death, it would have been for those very things that the sacred writer dismisses in this one sentence—'The ivory house that he made, the cities which he had built?' And who can doubt, too, that to the ordinary historian the reign of Ahab, which we have come to regard as infamous, would have appeared in a different light? Ahab, from one point of view, might evidently have been regarded—and would have been regarded—as a wise and successful ruler. If we want proof of 'the inspiration' of the Old Testament history, I do not think we can find a better one than in the fact that to the writer of the book of Kings the reign of Ahab appeared in such an entirely different light. To him, we may say the great central fact of interest in the reign of Ahab is his treatment of Naboth the Jezreelite. We know the story. Naboth was a little man, perhaps, an obscure man, the owner of a vineyard, which his royal neighbour desired to annex. Naboth refused to surrender the inheritance of his fathers. Then we have the vivid picture of Ahab and Jezebel—the weak husband 'letting I dare not wait upon I would'; the strong determined wife; the plot by which Naboth was betrayed and slain; the king walking in his new possession only to meet the stern form of the prophet. It is on this—this great injustice, this great moral failure—that the eyes of the sacred historian are centred. It stands out, this glittering injustice, above and beyond all else; the rest compared with this, mattered little.

II. We cannot recall this old story without being reminded once more how different lives may appear from what we may call the human and Divine points of view. In writing, for instance, of the times of Ahab, the writer of the book of Kings does not pause to deal with the commercial advantages arising from the marriage of Ahab and Jezebel. He is intent on what seems to him a much more important matter—the moral results of their union; the social corruption resulting from contact with the impure rites of Baal and Ashtoreth; and we sometimes wonder how it would be if a prophet were to apply such tests to our own day.

III. And what is true of the age at large is true of each single life. There are three points of view from which our lives can be regarded: (*a*) There is our own estimate of ourselves. (*b*) There is the judgment of ourselves by others; and (*c*) finally there is the judgment of ourselves by God, and the life of Ahab as recorded in the book of Kings tells us this very clearly, if we only listen to the message, that when we 'sleep with our fathers' it is not by the cities we have built, or by the ivory palaces which we have made that we shall be judged at the last, but by our secret choices, by our fidelity in small things, by our hidden and obscure loyalties or disloyalties to God and man.—H. R. GAMBLE, *Christianity and Common Life Sermons*, p. 1.

HUMAN SOLIDARITY

'So Ahab slept with his fathers; and Ahaziah his son reigned in his stead.'—1 KINGS XXII. 40.

I. PUT yourself back into the time of these events which the Church has put before us in the chapter from the book of Kings. And then think of it all passing away. All this conglomeration of passion and impulse apparently as if it had never been; the history of Israel gathering to a point at Ahab, and then snapping and letting him vanish as if he had never lived. Think of the hundreds and thousands who have lived and moved with all their throbbing cares and eager lives, as if all this universe

was made for them and depended upon their efforts; and then think how few names, even comparatively speaking, survive. One generation passeth away and another generation cometh. Our greatest power becomes little, our greatest trouble seems light as we stand beneath the majesty of God, who sits unmoved and unchanged as new empires rise and fall before His eternal presence. This is the just and obvious thought which strikes us as we read of king succeeding king and of power and cruelty and evil buried in the silence of the grave.

II. But there are other and more solemn thoughts still, to which we should do well to turn our attention. There is no life, did we but know it, which can be said to have absolutely no bearing upon anything but itself. Mankind is a great whole, bound up in its solidarity, in its nations, its cities, its communities, its families; and on one life depends the well-being or the reverse of other lives as well. When Ahab died that was not an end of him. Ahaziah succeeded to that which Ahab had made. He succeeded to a kingdom made idolatrous, to a kingdom alienated from God, to great political mistakes, to embittered enemies and estranged friends, to the dower of a curse. He leaves the kingdom more weakened still to his successor. It is a wonderful thing this solidarity of life. God apparently so prodigal of human life, is yet so careful for the work of His hands, so sparing in His expenditure of human failures. And yet it has become almost a commonplace of the unbelieving controversialist in the case against his opponents: 'What a curious conception,' he says, 'you must have of a beneficent God, who you imagine is a Being, Who, you tell us, is perfect love, Who, you confess, has infinite forethought and prescient accuracy with which He can measure every temptation, knowing the exact force which they will exercise on man, and Who yet creates or suffers to enter the world a creature like Ahab, who, according to all known laws, is bound to go wrong, and merit the awful punishment of his wrongdoing.' God Almighty can never have before Him, we may say with reverence, a sole, an isolated individual, not an Ahab alone, nor an Ahaziah alone, but the whole race of Israel and of all the kingdoms of the world. To suppress a man may be to suppress a race. In refusing existence to one bad man He may be refusing existence to a hundred good ones.

III. 'So Ahab slept with his fathers; and Ahaziah his son reigned in his stead.' Do not make a mistake, do not think that it is unimportant what we do, that we are but dolls held in the steady hands of God, who will play our parts for us whether we consciously move or not. No; we are dowered with free will, and it makes the greatest difference in the world, not only to ourselves but to those who come after us how we act. Surely we need to feel more than we do our responsibility to the nation not only in the vote which we give, or in the influence which we shed abroad or in the party principles which we follow, but in the life of the good citizen, law-abiding, reverent, dutiful, and true. Ahab slept with his fathers, and Ahaziah his son succeeded him; but both Ahab and Ahaziah went to swell, if it were only with tiny drops, the stream of national life to which they belonged.—W. C. E. Newbolt, *Words of Exhortation*, p. 215.

Reference.—XXII. 48.—T. Spurgeon, *Down to the Sea*, p. 204.

THE CONTAGION OF SIN

'Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin.'—1 Kings xxii. 52.

We are studying once more the history of a fall; we are studying one of those failures of God's agents which are histories always full of warning and full of disappointments. And it is not without a sad significance that we see here, as elsewhere, that—we will note it in passing—the father is associated in the record of his son's failure.

I. Why, we may reverently ask, is Jeroboam dowered with this heritage of doom? Why has he been placed there before others as the prominent agent in a national disgrace 'who made Israel to sin'? Because he made the calf in Bethel and the calf in Dan, and said, 'Behold thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt'. We have surely here God's eternal disapproval, cut in deep letters, of the doctrine known as expediency. It is a common opinion that the precept 'Let us do evil that good may come' is the peculiar property of a certain religious order not unnaturally distrusted and feared. There cannot be a greater mistake than to suppose this. It is ingrained in the very texture of human nature. It was so here. Jeroboam was definitely commissioned to sever the ten tribes from Rehoboam's influence. If he was to do this completely, he must sever utterly, and once for all, that centripetal force which would draw these tribes constantly back to Jerusalem as the religious centre of the whole nation with its tradition, its prestige, its opportunities for a political propaganda. Antecedently it was not desirable to multiply centres of devotion; politically there was nothing else to be done. And so principle bows down its head before expediency. Jeroboam's calves of gold were put up, no doubt with the best political motives, and with a minimum of religious rancour, to represent in the least offensive way a religious use whose exercise had become dangerous. But the first step in expediency was the very spot over which God raised the epitaph of his far-reaching sin, 'Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin'—the man who sacrificed principle to expediency.

II. It has been pointed out that there are three stages of decline in the downward career of the wicked with regard to sin against truth. First the obstinate setting of self against it, 'they received not the love of the truth'. This by a wilful act of self. Then the judicial infatuation which overtakes the sinner at a certain point. 'For this point God shall send them strong delusion,' followed by the final punishment which overtakes those who 'believe in

the truth but have pleasure in unrighteousness'. Trifling with truth is a serious matter, wherever we find it. The worship of God enshrined in the second commandment was not a positive order merely, which Jeroboam might obey or disobey as he liked with impunity. It rested on the fundamental needs of man and the axioms of religious appreciation of God. Truth is not a series of propositions which we keep in a book and polemically defend in argument. Truth is a spiritual force which penetrates every corner of our religious life. 'Who made Israel to sin.' In the end after all, it is God's verdict against the underlying selfishness of sin. It is a sad end no doubt to a life meant only to be glorious, and to snatch the good out of evil circumstances, but it is the end which awaits all selfish working, all tampering with the commission which God entrusts to us.—W. C. E. Newbolt, *Words of Exhortation*, p. 199.

THE SECOND BOOK OF THE KINGS

THE SECOND BOOK OF THE KINGS

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ELIJAH'S FAREWELL TO ELISHA

'And Elijah said unto Elisha, Ask what I shall do for thee, before I be taken away from thee.'—2 Kings ii. 9.

I. We see here the last act of a great life. It is not perhaps what we should have expected from a man like Elijah the Tishbite. But, in truth, the greatest and the strongest men are not unfrequently the simplest and the tenderest; and Elijah, whose life had been passed in vehement speech and in heroic action—Elijah is thinking, just like any humble peasant, of what he can best do for his, as yet, undistinguished follower. 'Ask what I shall do for thee before I am taken away from thee.'

All that had preceded in Elijah's career led up to that incident as to the very crown and flower of his life. It was an act of pure unselfishness, of simple thought for the needs of another. A death-bed does two things. It puts the finishing stroke on life, and it yields a revelation of character. When there is nothing more to be looked for here, men are real and simple, if simplicity and reality are ever possible for them at all.

II. The solemnity of the scene consists in this, that Elijah is visibly about to take his departure for another world. 'Before I be taken away from thee.' Elijah was, indeed, taken in body as well as in spirit. It is the survival, the certain, the necessary survival, of the soul of man, which, in Christian eyes, gives to death its tremendous meaning.

III. The doctrine which denies that there is any spiritual element in man, which survives death, ordinarily rests itself upon two propositions, each of which may be shown to be inaccurate.

1. There is the assumption that all a man's knowledge comes to him through the activity of his senses. Now, in point of fact, just as many perceptions of our senses elicit no thought at all, so many thoughts present themselves every day, every hour of our lives, which cannot by any means be traced to the mechanical action of sense. Memory—that is, thought acting upon the past—is independent, from the nature of the case, of any present activity of sense.

2. And he can test the second of the two propositions or assumptions to which I have referred with equal facility, namely, that all mind is merely an effect of matter, so that, if the brain be irritated in a certain way, thought must necessarily follow. Why if this were true, the orang-outangs ought to be great thinkers. Their brains, as we are constantly reminded, differ from those of men only in a lesser degree of intricacy, and in a certain peculiarity of form. The weight and size of their brain is substantially the same. The more you insist upon the similarity of their brain substance to ours, the more obvious it becomes that man can only compass results so astonishingly beyond them in virtue of a higher something that acts upon, but is independent of, his brain—a something that is himself.

We do not need a voice from heaven to suggest to us that our whole being will not be destroyed at the moment when our hearts shall cease to beat. But considering the pressure of the things of sense—considering the indecision with which we men habitually lay hold on the unseen if it be not certified to us from without, we are mercifully—we are altogether—lifted up by the resurrection of our Lord and Saviour out of this region of high probabilities that commend themselves to the reason, in favour of our immortality, into that of certainties which are known to be such to faith.—H. P. Liddon, *Penny Pulpit*, vol. xiii. No. 751, p. 189.

'Elijah said unto Elisha, Ask what I shall do for thee, before I be taken away from thee.'—2 Kings ii. 9.

Elijah was soon to be taken away from his friend and successor, Elisha, in a very wonderful way. Elisha was soon to have to call out, with a well-nigh crushing sense of loneliness and weakness, 'My father! the chariots of Israel, and the horsemen thereof' in the day of trouble. And this is a fine and noble feature of Elijah's character that comes out during these last hours—his sympathy with Elisha, and his thoughtfulness of him and his work, amid the strange and hallowed musings and prospects that must have filled his heart at the time. The

fiery chariot did not blind his view of his lowly friend and fellow-worker. It reminds us of the Saviour's thoughtful and tender message from the cross, 'Woman, behold thy son! Son, behold Thy mother!'

I. God's Goodness in Giving us Human Friendships.—Elijah and Elisha have a time of sweet communion and mutual helpfulness before Elijah is 'taken away'. God setteth the solitary in families. How strange and beautiful is the attraction of one nature to another! This world and the town and house in which we live might have been as full of men and women, and among them all there might not have been one whom we could call friend, or, with the peculiar tenderness and confidence with which the words are steeped and coloured, father, mother, brother, sister, son, daughter. We know that the loneliest of all places is a city of thousands or millions in which we have no friend. But common friendships, as well as marriages, are made in heaven. There are wonderful affinities and pre-established harmonies which are potent, if not resistless, at almost every point of our lives. The boy goes to school, the young man to a university or work or business, and among the hundreds whom he meets there is one whom he soon learns to call friend. Such friendships are cemented and strengthened by interest in and pursuit of some common work, or the sharing of some common danger and trouble. The words comrade, fellow-worker, companion in tribulation, are pure and tender words. David and Jonathan, Elijah and the young prophet over whom he had cast his mantle, Jesus and John, Paul and Timothy, Luther and Melanchthon, are friendships of fragrant memories; and they all grew out of common work, and were purified by common trials.

II. The Brevity of Human Friendships.—Ten short years ago or thereabouts Elijah's and Elisha's friendship was formed, and now the time has come when Elijah must be taken away. A few short years and the closest of friends must part on earth. This thought should surely nip in the bud any growing estrangement, and silence unseemly and unkindly words and feelings towards each other. If a man has only a little garden, every foot and inch of it must be turned to account by growing fruit or flower. The garden of sweets which men have in human loves and friendships is very small; let no root of bitterness spring up to disfigure it, and draw the nourishment from its soil.

III. Mutual Help.—'Ask what I shall do for thee, before I be taken away from thee.' How unspeakably sad if we do our friends harm rather than good while we are by their side. It cannot be but that we are doing them either good or harm. There is an unconscious influence ever going out from us. What can we do for them? should be a serious question with us. Can we strengthen goodness in them? Can we plant loving memories in them? Can we present Christ and religion to them in such a lovely guise that they must almost perforce be drawn to these if as yet they are strangers to their influence?

IV. Seek the Good.—'*Ask*,' says Elijah, 'what I shall do for thee.' By sincere sympathy and desire we must *ask* the good which we receive from our friends. Our minds must be enlightened and our hearts enlarged. A child in his father's house, an ignorant and inexperienced man in the society and sharing the friendship of a wise man, a young friend with an old, or an old man with a young friend, will derive benefit in proportion to their docility and humility and openness of mind and heart. A round piece of marble brings up no water when plunged into the well; when hollowed it brings up its fill. And this is specially true of our relations with Christ, the great Friend. 'Ask and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full.'

'And Elisha said, I pray thee, let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me.'—2 KINGS II. 9.

'I PRAY thee, let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me.' Elisha's words to his master are a noble expression of the ideal relationship which ought to exist not only between teacher and taught, but between young and old, between the waning and the rising generation. Could there be a finer statement of the true principle of progress?—a more excellent motto for the guidance of human affairs? The transmission of spiritual heritage is a concern of our individual lives: the relationship of father to son, of young to old, of those who are passing away to those who are to take their place. A relationship of some kind there must be; and it concerns us all. The next generation will consist of the children of this generation; and these children will largely owe their characters to their parents' example and precepts. Elijah might be conscious of his failures, but Elisha could carry on his work. There may be an Elijah and an Elisha in every home. Is this the case? Do men work for this result? Too frequently we find a wall of separation between the old and young. The young complain that the old are hard, unsympathetic, unreasonable, interfering, exacting. The old complain that the young are ungrateful, arrogant, disrespectful: too often the father complains that he does not understand his son; the son, that he can find no sympathy from his father. A gulf once formed soon widens, and the natural link between generations is unnaturally severed. Much might be said in either case in excuse of one or the other. The duties of children to parents are perhaps sufficiently emphasized; let us consider the duties of the old towards the young. The old are masters of the situation; if the young break away from them, the fault must be largely theirs.

I. The duties of parents to children.

1. It is useless to demand a respect, an affection, from others which you are conscious in your own heart that you do not deserve. Could all parents honestly wish that the young should say to them, 'Let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me'? Would they be

content that their own spirit should rule their children?

2. The pressure of business is often an excuse why a parent sees little of his children. He is from home during the day, at night he is weary. He intends to see more of them later on in life, when they are older and more appreciative. Meanwhile they grow up strangers to him; and later on he will find it difficult to establish relations with them on his own terms. However busy a man is, he may and ought to spare a few minutes regularly with his children, to watch their development, to keep his hold on their affections. He will find true relaxation in this. Moreover, a man's character and truest social gifts ought to be exhibited most fully in his own home, and brighten his immediate circle. Nothing can excuse a neglect or scant performance of domestic duties.

II. This duty is one of general and universal application.

All of us, in our respective stations, are influencing the character of the next generation. There is nothing which more entirely brings its own reward than sympathy with the young. Old age divides men sharply into two strongly contrasted classes. Amongst some we find isolation and querulousness; amongst others, geniality and contentment. Strive so to walk that the last wish of others towards you may be, 'I pray that a double portion of thy spirit may be upon me'.

III. The following practical hints will enable us to use our influence aright in the most intimate relationships of life, especially in connexion with the young.

1. Beware of beginning to treat a young man with a sympathy which you are not prepared to carry beyond a certain point.

2. Beware of demanding gratitude from the young. It is selfish to expect it; it is useless to demand it. Take it thankfully when it is proffered. The young are always ungrateful on account of their inexperience. They do not know, and so they cannot appreciate, the acts of self-sacrifice of which they have been the objects from their earliest days. Let the sincerity of your own efforts for their good be its own reward; let the motive of your action be the sense of duty that you owe to the future of your race.

3. Do not aim at making the young mere copies of yourself. Years are rolling on, and opinions are changing. The world is not the same as it was in the old man's youth; its problems are different in many ways: new difficulties require new armour; new dangers, new precautions. Do not try to alter, try rather to direct, the development of a young heart.

No subject so much repays our study as the development of the young mind. We see it in the germs of the future, and the sight strengthens us to look more trustfully, more hopefully on the present. Think of the last thanksgiving of Jesus: 'Of those whom Thou gavest Me have I lost none'. How beautiful! And God commits others to our charge. Let us accept the gift for the Giver's sake, and try to realize its greatness. Let us set ourselves to illumine by our example the path of those who are to come; to aid them by our precepts; to strengthen them by our love; striving to hand on to sturdier runners in the race of life the torch which we have borne with too unequal steps.

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"IF THOU SEE ME——"

'And he said, Thou hast asked a hard thing; nevertheless, if thou see me when I am taken from thee, it shall be so.'—2 KINGS II. 10.

WHAT is the meaning of this test? It was a searching, it was the essential test. God help us, and God help those whom we seek to help, if we have not had experience of it! For, consider what happened at Elijah's departure. Something evident and startling, something that could not be unseen—a blaze and a parting. And something else—something that a prophet's eye alone could see.

I. What Elisha Saw.—'Elisha saw it,' we are told. What did he see? He cried, 'My father, my father!' What thrust forth that cry from his heart? The vision that a prophet sees? Nay, it needs no prophet's sense to express the pain of physical parting. It is the natural cry that sounded in the air when the first father died, and has been sounding ever since. 'My father! the chariot of Israel and the horsemen thereof.' Ah! that is a different cry. It is no mere natural plaint: 'Change and decay in all around I see'. It is not a revelation due to flesh and blood. It is not a recognition of the merely visible occurrence of the moment. It takes—this cry does—the incident of the moment, and sets it in the light of the Eternal Providence. It carries the heart to the consolation and security of the Everlasting Arms. 'Lord, Thou hast been our dwelling-place in all generations.'

II. Not Elijah's but God's Chariot.—It is the cry of one who sees the real significance of life, the real dignity of work, the real background of sorrow. For what chariot bears Elijah away? Not Elijah's, but God's. The great prophet has not by some never-to-be-repeated spiritual achievement fashioned for himself this dazzling apotheosis. Else by his going—this mighty 'father's' loss—the good earth had been wretchedly impoverished; and Elisha might have gone back to Jordan to trim his and his pupils' aspirations to fit the times and the court and the common length of a man's days. But 'Elisha saw'. He saw the passing away of a beloved master, but not of the power that had worked in the master's life. He saw the 'chariot of Israel'. He saw that the admired prophet was not the source of the wonders that had flowed forth during the years of protest and

ministry. It is God—the everlasting God of Israel—Who has worked by Elijah, Who is working in His departure, and Who will work by His holy prophets and with His own right hand for all ages. God—God alone—is the source of the prophet's power; and God is not passing away. He will not forsake His Israel.

III. So Elisha can be a Prophet.—He need not lament that Elijah has not left his like; that his successors cannot do more than conjure with his name. He is doubtless insufficient—a poor figure to wear the mantle and follow the gait of the elemental Tishbite. But what matter? Ministerial fitness is not a case of flesh and blood. Able ministration is 'of the Spirit'. It is not the prophet or the charioteer of to-day or to-morrow, it is the 'chariot of Israel' that is the Church's strength and cheer in all the ages.

Do we face duties, troubles, shall we some day face death, in this faith, and in this temper of freedom and triumph? Do we know 'how to be abased and how to abound'; or, are we happy to-day for trifling reasons, and shall we to-morrow, for trifling reasons, be wretched—because our landscape is too small for God's chariot to be seen in? There are men who do valiantly—there have been men who have said joyful things in martyrdom—because amid all changes and chances their hearts' love and trust are surely set upon their God. In times when heart and flesh have failed, God has been the strength of their heart and their eternal portion. They have seen Jesus. They have seen Him because they have run their race looking unto Him.

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FELLOWSHIP WITH THE PAST

'My father, my father, the chariot of Israel and the horsemen thereof.'—2 KINGS II. 12 and XIII. 14.

THE words recall the continuity of work which marked the service of two widely different men. They are, in the first place, the witness of Elisha to the worth of Elijah. And, long after, King Joash repeats the same witness as he stands by the death-bed of Elisha himself. It points a lesson of continuity developing itself in contrast. The work is the same, the men differ. The spirit of Elijah rests on Elisha; and Elisha receives his training under the eye and in the service of Elijah. The continuity is complete, and yet the difference between the two men is manifold. We can see the same spirit manifesting itself in a diversity of gifts.

I. It is a Commonplace Remark that the Present Age Produces Few Great Men.—There were giants, they say, in those days, but the race of giants is dying out. It is at best but a half-truth. Great men have not been, as it were, sown broadcast all down the world's pathway, but rather have been raised up at special turning-points to deal with special needs. We are easily tempted in this way to foreshorten the distant views of history. Just as we look back on a tract of country through which we have passed, and, seeing mountain piled upon mountain, and hill upon hill, forget the deep impressions of valley and plain which separate them, so we look back on the days that are gone and remember the years that are past, and we only count the giants and forget that the majority of men were small of stature. And that is not all. We also forget that the world often knows little of its greatest men until their work is done. Are we quite sure that there is no work now being carried out patiently and unobtrusively, by some who stand amongst ourselves, which shall help to make this present age as useful, if not so brilliant, as some that are past? There are still some chariots and horsemen left in Israel.

II. The Work of One Generation Prepares the Way for the very Different Work of Another.—Elijah may strike the imagination as a greater man than Elisha, and yet the more human prophet who dwelt in the town of Samaria, and lodged in the little chamber on the wall of Shunem, and entered into the social life of the sons of the prophets, was doubtless the better implement in God's hand to carry forward and to complete the work of the stern recluse of Gilead, and Cherith, and Horeb. The prophet of the desert and the mountain had done his duty and had passed in glory, the times now needed another type of workman. Thus the great thinkers of the early eighteenth century, Butler, Warburton, and Waterland, were very different men from their enthusiastic successors, John Wesley and George Whitefield. Yet how many forget that the work of the one was the essential to the work of the other, and that if Butler had not reasoned even Wesley might have preached in vain!

III. The Contrast of Character and Service is as Marked in this Story as the Continuity of Work.—There were new responsibilities of service which belonged to the age of Elisha, and for which God had trained him through the discipline of ministering to Elijah. Faithful as he was to the traditions of the past, sternly as he refused to the last to leave the company of his master, he yet struck out his own line of service, and sought to employ his own gifts and not to imitate those which he did not possess. It was by this happy combination of the spirit of loyalty to the past with that of devotion of his own personal gifts to the present service of mankind that Elisha was able to serve his generation by the will of God. There can be no doubt that we have at this time responsibilities peculiarly our own. To be loyal to our past, and yet to reach out wisely to the new arrangements of the age, needs men, who, like Zachariah in the days of King Uzziah, 'had understanding in the visions of God'. We have to hold fast to the great traditions that we inherit, and to inspire them with such fresh life and meaning

as God shall reveal. Now such revelation can only come by the willing devotion of personal life to God's work in self-denying service for mankind. Elisha's history tells us that the culture of the gifts which God has given to each of us, and the consecration of those gifts to the work which God appoints, is the great means by which we may fulfil our true destiny.

IV. This Estimate of the Value of Continuity Brings us to One Other Thought, the Inspiration of Hope.—There is no trace of discouragement in the life of Elisha. The mighty works of Elijah might have led to despairing thoughts of his own powers, but they simply beckon him on to do his part, to use his gifts, to make proof of his own peculiar ministry. That last glimpse of the great prophet as he passed in glory must have made Elisha feel the insignificance of his own service. But to that vision was attached a promise, and its very brightness left an afterglow of hope. And so he bravely takes up the mantle of Elijah, calls upon 'the Lord God of Elijah,' smites the waters as Elijah had done, and passes over to his own altered stage of service. Just so, our fellowship with the great ones of the past is unbroken, for we with them and they with us are in union with the same Lord, and share the same service. We cannot all soar and reach the heights which some of them reached, but we can patiently climb upwards, remembering that God does not call us to do what they did, but to do what we can. The retrospect must not dishearten us, as we think of our own feebleness and failures in the past, but rather quicken and cheer us, as we see beyond the cloud of difficulty, perplexity, and doubt, the bright hope of some small usefulness even for ourselves in the service of God. For of Elisha as Elijah, those words were true, 'My father, my father, the chariot of Israel and the horsemen thereof'.

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DWELL AMONG YOUR OWN

'And she answered, I dwell among mine own people.'— 2 Kings iv. 13.

The whole incident is full of idyllic beauty, and is also vital with modern suggestion and application. Said the woman in effect: I am quite content, I do not want the king's notice, the captain of the host can do nothing for me; I have my husband, my house, my daily task, I am well content; if I were otherwhere I should feel as if I were a stranger: I would rather be just where I am. If this woman's spirit should take hold of us the most precious blessings would immediately and permanently be realized by every soul. It is vanity that disturbs the world; it is illegitimate, unnatural ambition that troubles and divides and torments lives that might otherwise be placid and content. A man is not always able to pass from one environment to another, and to retain the full use of his faculties. He who is really of consequence in one place would be of no consequence in another: the same man, but not the same environment.

I. It is so socially. If you allow the man to remain upon his native heath; if you allow him to pursue his honest, quiet, healthful occupation of ploughing the land which he owns or rents; the man is quite content, he feels that he is in his right place. Disturbance of environment is loss of power and loss of peace and loss of self-respect.

II. It is so educationally. A man may be well informed and what is popularly called well read, and yet not be an educated man, and not be qualified to take any part in educated society. Much better that a man should know exactly what he is, what he can do, and what place he can adequately occupy.

III. It is so in commerce. It is an infinite mischief for a man to get it into his head that he ought to be somebody else; he loses his own power; he is not really what he might be and what God intended him to be; he is a wavering and double-minded man, and he can receive nothing of the Lord and he can receive nothing of men; for he is here and he is there, and he is nowhere.

IV. Christians must remain amongst Christians. You do not know how good the very meanest Christian is until you get into the society of men who have no God, no reverence, no religious aspiration. You need not leave Christ if you want to enjoy the most exalted and the most exalting communion. We are come to the spirits of just men made perfect. All history in its saintliest moods and influences is at our service.—Joseph Parker, *City Temple Pulpit*, vol. ii. p. 78.

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NOW NAAMAN WAS A LEPER, BUT——

'Now Naaman, captain of the host of the King of Syria, was a great man with his master, and honourable, because by him the Lord had given deliverance unto Syria: he was also a mighty man of valour—but he was a leper.'—2 KINGS v. 1.

As a rule our interest in the story of Naaman centres round the dramatic incident of his healing in the waters of Jordan. Looking at the story as a whole, and seeing it in its true perspective, it is inevitable that this should be the case. But I am going to ask you to look at the history of Naaman from another point of view. What can we gather from the story of Naaman's life before there came into it the whisper of hope through the lips of the little captive girl—his wife's lady's maid? Leprosy, the most terrible disease of the East, had developed in him. It had come in a form that did not involve exclusion from society. It was the white leprosy, which is one of the most slowly developing forms of the disease. In this particular form the leprosy is all under the skin, and the disease, which may run its course for more than twenty years, results in the end in an utter absence of feeling—unless it changes its form in the later stages and becomes virulent and loathsome. It is possible that Naaman had been suffering from this incurable disease for a number of years before the light of hope broke into his life. Assuming this to be so, let us read our text in another way.

'Now Naaman was a leper—but he was captain of the host of the King of Syria, a great man with his master, and honourable, a deliverer of his country and a mighty man of valour.'

There is a picture of a man living out his life fully and bravely in spite of a terrible handicap in the form of an incurable disease, which must year after year gain a stronger hold on his body and eventually end his life.

I. I do not think that Naaman in his popularity and success was a much-envied man. There was the fame and the power—and the leprosy. There was the honour—and the suffering. It is always so. There is always the other side of things. And if we could change personalities, we should have to be prepared to take not only the joys and the opportunities and the satisfactions of that other man's life, but also the martyrdoms, the bafflements, the burdens and the uplifting shadows. And remembering this may help to make us less envious and more sympathetic. Naaman the leper may be looked upon as typical of the widest and most familiar range of human experience.

II. And the question comes, How do we face this side of things? Naaman faced it with courage. And it was courage of no mean order. It was not born of hope. We say sometimes, 'While there is life there is hope'. But that was not true in the case of the leper. He saw the long years of suffering, and knew, humanly speaking, that the way would only get harder the farther he went. Part of the work of life for him was to carry one of the heaviest burdens that a man ever has to carry—the burden of a dead hope. He could not say with regard to his disease, 'While there is life there is hope'; but he found a better and a nobler thing to say, 'While there is life there is duty.' There is no braver story in history than the story of them who have had to stoop and lift and bear the hope that might have lifted and borne them, if only both its wings had not been broken. The faith to remove mountains is not a complete equipment for life. We need also the courage and strength to climb them. Of all the luxuries of life, perhaps the most unwarrantable and in the end the most wasteful and costly is the luxury of despair. And how many there are who indulge in it! A man may have to walk in a deep shadow, but he has no right to sit in it. Much less has he the right to assume that that shadow loosens for him the bonds of duty, or absolves him from the claims of the world's work. Naaman did not let his leprosy spoil his career.

III. Note the thing that was wanting in the courage and endurance of Naaman. His suffering had not sweetened his life. He had borne it; but he had not understood it. He had not been able to interpret a word of it. That was not his fault. And there is a sense in which his brave conquest over a disability which held for him no high or beautiful meaning may well beget in our hearts much shame—shame that we for whom the pain of life has been made somewhat intelligible should still find it in nowise bearable. If only Naaman had known that it is not every man who is counted worthy to suffer, if only he could have sat at the feet of St. Paul, and could have heard all which that troubled and yet triumphant life could have told him of the ministry of pain and of the Divine fulfilment that lies concealed in earthly frustration, how much richer would have been the story of those brave years! He did not know these things, and doubtless he was judged according to his knowledge; but we know them, and we shall be judged according to ours.—P. AINSWORTH, *The Pilgrim Church*, p. 184.

THE STORY OF NAAMAN

'But he was a leper.'—2 KINGS v. 1.

IT is said that there is a crook in every lot. A wise divine of a good many generations ago has written a very large book to prove that this must be and is so.

I. The Imperfection of the Human Lot.—Holy Scripture brings to us many reminders of the imperfection of the human lot. There was Eve planted down in the Garden of Eden under circumstances which might have seemed of the most consummate felicity. She was not, however, altogether happy, for there was one tree the fruit of which she might not pick. There was Rachael, beyond question one of the sweetest and most charming figures in all Scripture history—and yet so long childless, the saddest sorrow that could fall upon women of her race. There was Isaiah, a man unquestionably of great personal attainment; yet, judged by the results of his great ministry, he would have been deemed a failure. There was Haman, who rose to the pitch of human ambition as he had supposed it; yet he said, 'All this availeth me nothing'. And there was Naaman, unquestionably a man of high distinction, but—he was a leper. It is often so outside the pages of Holy Writ. God forbid that we should ever read the Bible as though it spoke of human life in a manner remote from our own experience. Have we not heard of a brilliant intellect and a poor shattered frame to carry it about and limit its exercise of vast possessions, yes, and passing away presently to a distant heir, who scarcely bears the name of that long line now almost extinct; of high position and bodily infirmity, and so on. Yet see, the Book of Life and of Holy Scripture tells us this, that as these things come not by accident, they need not be allowed to poison the cup of life for any man or woman. A great poet like Milton hands down his imperishable treasures to subsequent generations, though himself a poor blind man. Bunyan leaves us an immortal allegory, one of the most widely translated books ever written in our language, and yet he was a persecuted tinker. A Darwin devotes himself for long and trying years of experiment and thought to the elucidation, if he can, of some of the mysterious problems of nature, all the while fighting against such pain as left him for the most part only very few hours in every working day. Disraeli rises to be a leader of his country, to control its difficulties in time of peculiar peril, and yet he began life a sneered-at member of an often despised race. Naaman triumphed over his leprosy. There were lands in which it would have been a fatal bar for everything: henceforth he must have gone away. The disease slipped from him like a shell torn from a kernel. But his leprosy had not unmanned him, his mind was not thrown off its balance; his intellectual powers—whatever gifts God had given him the use of, these gifts were not soured by the thought of his sore affliction. And though he was a leper he still remained his country's honoured benefactor.

II. Discipline Meant for our Profit.—Here is comfort for those who discover in their daily life something they do not understand. Let us assure ourselves that the very proofs of how noble minds triumphed over difficulties may serve to remind us that God cannot have sent them to us in a cruel and arbitrary spirit. That which comes with His mercies in a guise which at first we cannot believe to be merciful is after all meant for our profit. A man or woman will say, 'If I had not had this I might have been something better'. What would they have been without it? Many a man laid low by a grievous accident has found God by the pillow of his bed of suffering. He never knew Him in the days of unimpaired strength and vitality, when it seemed as if he was powerful enough for anything. What would he have been without that crook in his lot? Before you and I say 'If it were not for this we might have been something other,' let us ask ourselves, What might we have been without it?

III. Affliction no Bar to Usefulness.—Shall we not learn, too, through these things that God's purpose in giving us a crook in our lot cannot possibly be to deprive us of the opportunity of filling our part in life. You know men whose crook has not confined them to idleness, to a wasted life. It must not keep us from fulfilling our path in life. As Naaman watching the cruel spot grow upon his flesh, and thinking perchance of the deadly fate that was creeping surely and certainly over him, still addressed himself to the day's business, and still met, I suppose, with a gallant countenance those who worked beneath him; so every man and woman with a crook in their lot should believe that God Who sent it did not mean to make them sour or idle, or disappointed, or lost souls in the world. 'In the love and mercy of Christ I will be up and doing as if I were as free from anxiety as the happiest of God's creatures.' If like Naaman they find a prophet they may go out in the spirit which needs must be if we would understand the crosses and trials of life and come to God. Happier we than Naaman. It is not necessary for us to approach the door of the human prophet to supplicate him for us. The Son of God is our Intercessor, and it needs no voice of human priest to declare His pardon. Each of us, with or without prophet and guide, can draw unto our Saviour Christ, and if we find Him Who suffered so sorely for us, we can go out whatever cross we have to bear, still following Him and joyfully declaring as Naaman did that there is no God in all the world like unto the Saviour we have found.

A NAMELESS GIRL HEROINE

2 Kings v. 1-4.

The name of the architect of the fine cathedral at Chartres is unknown, and most of the artists, in stone and colour, wrought with the same anonymous humility. Although they knew much of their work was to be hidden in the shadow of a cavern, they finished it with exquisite care. 'What artists must they have been to work thus for the glory of God, and for their own satisfaction, creating marvels while knowing that no man would see them.'

There is a tradition (idyllized by Browning) connected with the battle of Marathon, that a peasant fought with great prowess on the side of the Greeks, using a ploughshare as weapon. When the battle was

over he was nowhere to be seen, nor would the oracle divulge anything beyond this:—

Care for no name at all!
Say but just this: We praise one helpful whom we call
The Holder of the Ploughshare! The great deed ne'er grows small.

References.—V. 1.—R. D. B. Rawnsley, *Village Sermons* (3rd Series), p. 186. R. W. Hiley, *A Year's Sermons*, vol. ii. p. 126. H. Hensley Henson, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxiv. 1903, p. 169. W. J. Woods, *Outlines of Sermons on the Old Testament*, p. 74. V. 1-19.—C. Perren, *Revival Sermons in Outline*, p. 139. V. 2.—T. Sadler, *Sermons for Children*, p. 24. V. 2, 3.—A. G. Mortimer, *The Church's Lessons for the Christian Year*, part iv. p. 197. *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxxiv. 1908, p. 51.

THE MAID OF ISRAEL

'Thus and thus said the maid that is of the land of Israel.'—2 Kings v. 4.

From this well-known story we may learn valuable lessons about God's dealings, and about the mutual duties and feelings that different classes of people owe to one another.

I. How Wonderfully God Works for the Good of the World.—A little maid is carried captive, and Naaman is thereby healed and brought to the knowledge of the true God. God's Word has often had free course and been glorified by means of the captivity of its preachers. The captivities of the Jews did a great deal to spread the knowledge of God in the world. Joseph did a great deal of good in a prison, so did St. Paul, so did John Bunyan, and many more. 'The Word of God is not bound!' It would be endless to try to show in what strange ways God brings about people's good. How can we pretend to understand them? If you go into a factory, at what pains must the manager or foreman be to explain to you the steps by which the web of cloth, or sheet of paper, or a common dish is made ready for the market. And after all, you likely come away with a very defective knowledge of it. But you know that somehow the thing is done, and that it needs a great many processes that you would never have thought of, to get it done. 'Trust also in God, and He will bring it to pass.'

II. Gather Some Lessons from the Part which the Maid Plays Here.

(*a*) *She does not harbour grudges against her captors.* Render good for evil.

(*b*) *She interests herself in the good of her master.* She is not content with merely doing her bit of work. People might call her a slave, but she was not really a slave. Her spirit was not slavish. The apprentice, the scholar, the servant girl, are *free* when they give themselves with a good will to their work. It is not our outward condition, but our own hearts that make us slaves, or free. A gentleman has a nice brook in his estate. It is *his*; but it is free all the same, for it flows just as it is in its nature to do. He calls the trout in it his; but still they are free, for they are just where they want to be, and swim and hide in it as they choose. 'I have learned in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.' If we have learned that, we have learned the secret which snaps the strongest fetters as if they were spiders' threads.

III. Gather Some Lessons from the Part which Naaman Plays.

(*a*) *He does not despise good advice because it is spoken by lowly lips.* People often value opinions according to the wealth or poverty of those who give them.

(*b*) *He does not think that there is nothing and nobody of any account outside of his own country.* It is good to be patriotic; but it is both unchristian and foolish to despise everything that is not English. Learn to be fair to all, large-hearted and ready to learn. 'The earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof.' God hath made of one blood all nations of men to dwell in the face of all the earth.

References.—V. 9-12.—G. H. Morrison, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxviii. 1905, p. 93. V. 10.—W. H. Hutchings, *Sermon-Sketches*, p. 235. V. 10, 11.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—2 Samuel and 1 and 2 Kings*, p. 359.

"I THOUGHT"

'Behold, I thought, he will surely come out to me, and stand, and call on the name of the Lord his God, and strike his hand over the place, and recover the leper.'—2 Kings v. 11.

I. God's thoughts are not our thoughts. There is no such difference as to make the Divine thought utterly and always unlike and inconceivable. If it were so, we should have no God. But as in earthly relations the father is compelled by love to thwart many times his child's wishes, so God, Who knows us and knows all, in the very exercise of His love has to deny us what we most set our hearts on, what we most passionately desire. He answers us indeed, but He answers us in a manner at variance with our dreams. The lovely mystical use of the story of Naaman may be recalled. How many times has a human soul agonized over the life of the dearest when it was slipping away! How often those who loved life and saw before them a work to do in this world have prayed to be raised again from the bed of sickness! The life was not denied, but it was given in another fashion. 'I *thought* that he would strike his hand over the place, and recover the dying.' Not so. The True Prophet led the sufferer down to Jordan. In the waters of death the perfect healing was found. This was the true recovery, to wash in Jordan, to climb up the bank, and stand on the eternal shore in the presence of the Lord Himself.

II. There is no prayer more blessed and more availing than the simple, disinterested prayer for guidance. If we have a right to anything, we have a right to an answer when we plead, 'Show me the way'. Is this prayer answered? Yes, assuredly, but often not answered as we thought it might be. There may be those who always understand the reason of God's dealings with them. But there are many who think they see, that if at this point and that they had made another choice, they would have had much more sunshine and much more peace. Were they guided? The answer is that often and often the fact of God's guid-

ance does not become plain until years of pain and disappointment have passed away. Suddenly, it may be, a light flashes on the darkness of past and present. We see in a moment that if we had gone down that path we should have missed the consecration and crown of existence.

III. In the advancement of God's kingdom our thoughts are often strangely crossed. The temptation is to say, 'If the methods are right, the results are sure'. We are only to do our best and wisest in dependence on the Divine blessing, and that blessing will come.

The Lord of the Kingdom, Whose name for a while was humbled beneath every name, has taught us the way to victory. He reached the throne by the Cross. This was His thought, not ours. We should have said with His disciple, 'Be it far from Thee, Lord; this shall not be unto Thee'. But He knew, and amid reviling foes and unbelieving friends, He went on without flinching, without failing, without turning back. 'If Thou be the Son of God, come down from the Cross.' But He was doing a great work, and could not come down. We serve Him because He first served us, and He calls us to take up His cross if need be, not for an hour, but for a life.—W. Robertson Nicoll, *The Garden of Nuts*, p. 189.

Reference.—V. 11.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xx. No. 1173.

THE DISLIKE OF THE COMMONPLACE

'But Naaman was wroth, and went away, and said, Behold, I thought, He will surely come out to me, and stand, and call on the name of the Lord his God, and strike his hand over the place, and recover the leper. Are not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? may I not wash in them, and be clean? So he turned, and went away in a rage.'—2 Kings v. 11, 12.

Following the suggestion of our text, I wish to speak on the commonplace; and I shall cast what I have to say into this shape: First, the dislike of the commonplace is well-nigh universal. Second, there are few things more dangerous than this dislike.

I. The Widespread Irritation at the Commonplace, so clearly manifested in the case of Naaman. I think I need hardly remind you of another Bible story where the same intense dislike makes itself manifest. 'Is not this the carpenter's son? Do we not know His brothers?' It was with such words that the Jews discredited Jesus. Like Naaman they were intensely irritated at the commonplaceness of the Messiah's advent.

Are we not all prone to the same irritation? The fact is we are half-savage at the heart yet, and have never lost the savage delight in glaring colours.

I cannot help thinking that much of men's world-weariness—much of the disappointment that unfolding life brings with it—is connected, by very real yet subtle ties, with this deep-seated vexation at the commonplace. How many avoid the path where the cross lies, who would tread it to-morrow if there were only some glamour there! It may be hard to follow the ark into the deeps of Jordan. Perhaps it is harder to wash in Jordan seven times.

And in our Christian experience are we not also like Naaman, and have we not known something of Naaman's disappointment? I think that many men come to Jesus Christ as this commander of Syria came to the Prophet Elisha. He is a thousand times more willing to cure us of our leprosy than Elisha was to cure that curse of Naaman. But when we come and when we cannot see Him, when we only hear a voice that bids us wash, when instead of great deeds there is dull and dreary service, have not men been moved even against Jesus with the very feeling which animated Naaman? To turn away from Elisha in a rage was a very poor and pitiable thing. But to turn away from Christ Jesus in a rage is the one fatal act of a man's life.

II. There are few things more dangerous than this Dislike.—Let me give you three reasons that make it so perilous to nurse this irritation.

1. The commonplace is the warp and woof of life. It is the material out of which our days are made.

2. Then the commonplace is God's preparation for the great. Simple obedience to a very plain command for us as for Naaman is the path to glorious hours.

3. Then think how Christ insists upon the commonplace. The more I study Christ's life, the more I am impressed by the value that He set upon the ordinary. Whatever Naaman did, it is clear that Jesus of Nazareth never turned away from the commonplace in a rage.—G. H. Morrison, *The Unlighted Lustre*, p. 48.

References.—V. 11, 12.—H. P. Liddon, *Sermons on Old Testament Subjects*, p. 255. V. 12.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. vi. Nos. 297 and 298. V. 13.—*Ibid.* vol. xv. No. 892. R. J. Campbell, *Sermons Addressed to Individuals*, p. 107. R. D. B. Rawnsley, *Village Sermons* (3rd Series), p. 186. V. 14.—C. W. Furse, *Sermons Preached in Richmond*, p. 273. V. 15.—W. Redfern, *The Gospel of Redemption*, p. 101. V. 15-27.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—2 Samuel and 1 and 2 Kings*, p. 368. V. 17-19.—G. Salmon, *Gnosticism and Agnosticism*, p. 158. Simeon, *Works*, vol. iii. p. 493. Hall's *Contemplations* (O.T.), Book xix. 'Contemplations viii.' Kitto, *Daily Bible Illustrations*, vol. iv. p. 315, etc. Geikie's *Old Testament Portraits*, p. 275. Hasell, *Scripture Partings*, iii., and in *Day of Rest*, 1881, p. 402. Jacox, *Secular Annotations on Scripture Texts* (2nd Series), p. 37. Ryley, 'Gratitude to God and Earthly Policy,' *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. v. p. 330. Gasquoine, 'Modern Hypocrisy,' *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. vi. p. 24; and see vol. xi. p. 399. Krummacher's *Elisha*, chap. xvii. V. 18.—R. W. Hiley, *A Year's Sermons*, vol. iii. p. 285. V. 19.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons Preached in a Religious House*, vol. ii. p. 431.

GEHAZI

'Gehazi, the servant of Elisha, the man of God, said,' etc.—2 Kings v. 20.

I. Gehazi is the representative of a certain type of character. As Solomon stands to us for the sage, and Daniel for the righteous judge, so does Gehazi stand for the liar. A lie is an exposure of character. It is the deep-seated covetousness of Gehazi that is emphasized. He was determined to get for himself something that belonged to Naaman. He got it; for

the leprosy of Naaman was to cleave to him and to his seed for ever.

II. Gehazi was one who made shipwreck of great chances. He was 'the servant of Elisha'—that is, he was looked upon as the successor designate of the prophet. He belonged to very serious times, and never realized their importance. He had the great example of his master before his eyes, and had wholly missed its significance. Elisha was his paymaster and nothing more.

III. Gehazi's error has its faithful copyists still. Hidden under fair names, the sordid, selfish spirit works within us. We are called servants of God and soldiers of Christ. It is our redemption by Jesus that has in it the secret of every stimulus and every check, if we faithfully remember that 'we are not our own,' and so bound 'to glorify God in our body and in our spirit, which are God's.'—W. W. Merry, *The Sermon Year Book*, 1891, p. 341.

References.—V. 20.—D. T. Young, *Neglected People of the Bible*, p. 129. V. 21.—H. C. G. Moule, *Fordington Sermons*, p. 9. V. 25.—H. P. Liddon, *Sermons on Old Testament Subjects*, p. 270.

THE TRAVELS OF THE HEART

'Went not mine heart with thee?'—2 Kings v. 26.

Ponder the travels of the heart as suggested by this penetrative inquiry of Elisha's.

I. The Man of God Says this to the Sinner in His Courses.—The man of God must always send forth his heart after the sinner. By God's grace, it may put an arrest upon his wickedness. It will be as a judgment on his guilty courses.

The heart of the man of God should pursue the sinner with *indignation*. If we hated sin more intensely, we should strive to save sinners more earnestly.

The heart of the man of God should go *pitifully* towards sinners.

The heart of the man of God should follow sinners with *prayer*. Can the heart travel in two directions at once? Can it chase the transgressor, and at the same time ascend in supplication to heaven? It can. And herein it reflects the omnipresence of God. Here is another sign that it is made in the image of God.

The heart of the servant of God should follow the sinner with *hope*. 'Despairing of no man' is a New Testament maxim. Every evangelist must be an optimist.

II. The Man of God Says this to Servants of God in their Errands.—The heart of the believer travels after the apostles and prophets of Christ with *sympathy*.

Our heart should travel with God's servants in *consecrated imagination*.

Let your heart travel after the servant of God in his service by means of *interested reading*.

III. The Man of God Says this to Friends Amid their Career.—How wise and good it is to cultivate a travelling heart of sympathy! It was said by one who knew him well that the secret of Bishop Wilberforce's success was 'in his power of sympathy'. He was the father of the modern bishops. He was eloquent and brilliant. But the master-secret of his influence was sympathy.

IV. The Man of God Says this to Departed Loved Ones.—Project your heart after the departed, and how real and near the better country seems! Moreover, these journeys of the heart prepare us for that grander realm.

V. The Man of God Says this to the Crowned Lord.—No words could better express what we oft-times cry to the Saviour on His holy seat: 'Went not mine heart with Thee?' We travel with Him through His Incarnate life, from the rude manger to the bitter Cross. We travel with Him from 'the purple heights of Olivet' to the glowing heights of heaven. Our heart is ever with Him as He pleads His powerful blood at God's right hand.

VI. A Greater than Elisha Says this to Us All.—The travels of the heart of man are great beyond our estimation. But who can follow the travels of the heart of God?—Dinsdale T. Young, *The Travels of the Heart*, p. 3.

References.—V. 27.—J. Baines, *Sermons*, p. 186. VI. 1.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons Preached in a Religious House*, vol. ii. p. 365. VI. 1, 2.—W. B. Carpenter, *The Anglican Pulpit of To-Day*, p. 157. VI. 1-7.—John McNeill, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lviii. 1900, p. 275. VI. 3-18.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture*—2 *Samuel and* 1 and 2 *Kings*, p. 376. VI. 6.—T. Champness, *New Coins from Old Gold*, p. 222. J. M. Neale, *Sermons Preached in Sackville College Chapel*, vol. iii. p. 93. VI. 15, 16, 17.—G. Buchanan Gray, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxv. 1904, p. 387. W. Sinclair, *ibid.* vol. lxviii. 1905, p. 305. Hall, *Contemplations*, Book xix. 'Contemplation ix.' Charles Simeon, *Works*, vol. iii. p. 502. Bishop Heber, *Sermons Preached in England*, pp. 18 and 42. H. Blunt on *Elisha*. Krummacher, *Elisha*. Canon Liddon, 'The Vision Permitted to Elisha's Servant as Illustrative of the True Faith of the Soul,' *Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. i. p. 1. Liddon, 'The Reality of the Invisible,' *Outlines on Old Testament*, p. 77. J. Parker, 'The King Conquered,' *Expository Sermons and Outlines on Old Testament*, p. 134, etc. Momerie, 'The Supernaturalness of Nature,' *Origin of Evil*, p. 247.

THE INVISIBLE REALITIES OF THE ETERNAL WORLD

'And he answered, Fear not: for they that be with us are more than they that be with them.'—2 Kings vi. 16.

The invisible realities at times are very real to some and very unreal to others. This incident is an excellent example of it. Danger menaces two men. Death itself seems in the cup for both. But one is a citizen only of the seen and temporal, while the other's spirit soars up to God and believes in God, and is as certain of the existence of God as that he is alive.

Consider the fruits of this belief in the existence of the eternal verities:—

I. There is a Confidence in Time of Perplexity.—'Fear not,' said the prophet to his dismayed and affrighted companion. There you have courage after a godly sort in the hour of danger. There is, in some

natures, an intrepid, unconquerable element which, when beset by opposition, begets instant resistance and blossoms into conquest. And you have here a man's faith under searching test. That faith comes out well. It does not flinch in the hour of fiery trial because the man by the eye of faith beheld the invisible.

II. Another fruit of belief in the eternal is **The Identification of God's and the Individual's Interest.** Where there is genuine belief in the realities of the eternal world, man's protection in danger, man's companionship with God's good angel-guards, man's acquiescence in the rightness of the life-lot is known and believed in to be of God's giving. In short, whatever is, is for the best.

III. There is also another fruit of belief in the eternal world, viz. **Liberation from the Bondage of Doubt.** The doubting Christian cannot lead a happy life. With some people there is a tendency of temperament to this. In fact, it is questionable if any soul can escape its 'passage-at-arms' with doubt. And where doubt is truly genuine it should enlist deep attention and beget profound respect. If it is honest it will be like that of Thomas, who sincerely doubted Christ's resurrection, and whose doubt was never scoffed at, but tenderly dissipated by Christ. All the same, the less we know of doubt the better; and just as truly as it is an axiom of indisputable value that 'prevention is better than cure,' so the less a mind is troubled by doubts the happier and more useful the life. And what we contend for is that freedom from the bondage of doubt and unbelief is in highest evidence in this prophet. God was a magnificent reality to him. All else was shadow.

Of course it is always some ground for consolation that whatever clouds of doubt may rise to obscure the character of God and darken the sunshine of the love of God, that Divine character is for ever and ever the same, and that heavenly sunshine is steadily falling upon the soul however much it may fancy itself forgotten of God.

REFERENCE.—VI. 16, 17.—W. H. Hutchings, *Sermon-Sketches* (2nd Series), p. 249.

UNSEEN ENVIRONMENT

'Lord, I pray Thee, open his eyes, that he may see.'—2 KINGS VI. 17.

AMONG the men in Dothan who possessed good eyesight, I think Elisha's servant might be reckoned. And yet, when he came to Elisha and cried, 'Alas, my master, how shall we do?' Elisha fell upon his knees and prayed, 'Lord, open his eyes, that he may see!' He had seen everything except the brightest and the best. He had been blind to his unseen environment.

I. And so I gather that in the world around us there is the presence and power of a living God, and till we see that presence, we are blind.

It is very hard to see God in to-day. It needs an opening of the eyes, such as Elisha's servant got, to catch the trend of the everlasting love in the petty transactions of the present hour.

We need to believe in the immanence of God. We cannot live without a spiritual environment. We must protest against the quasi-scientific spirit that refuses to rise above the secondary cause. For me the secondary must imply the first, and in the second the impulse of the first is vibrating.

II. There are some spheres where the holden eyes are blessed. I do not forget that it is the great compassion of God that keeps us half-blind from the cradle to the grave. They darken the bird's cage when they teach it to sing; and unless the covering hand of the Almighty darkened the windows here, we should never sing, and never be strong at all. Do not be blind to the untold blessings of our blindness. But I am not pleading for vision for to-morrow. I am pleading for the recognition of the Divine to-day.

III. And what is the moral value of this unseen environment? It is this. It lifts me above circumstances. It shows me the mightier powers at work around me. It kindles my soul to claim and hold the mastery that I feel in my heart of hearts ought to be mine. The very weakest may be strong in Christ, and the very feeblest be powerful in God, if he will recognize that God is here, and that in every effort for the right, in every struggle to be true, in every sore endeavour to be free, the armies of Syria may block his way, but the horses and chariots of fire are at his bidding.—G. H. MORRISON, *Flood-Tide*, p. 64.

Illustration.—Did you ever hold in your hand one of these puzzle-cards on which there is something clearly and plainly drawn, and some face or figure in the lines that is not evident? Here is the garden, find the gardener, for example. And we study the card, and hold it at all angles, and we turn it round and turn it back again, and for the life of us we cannot see the face, when in an instant, ah! there it is; and *now* we can see nothing else; and we hand it on and we wonder how our neighbour can possibly escape detecting what is so plain to us. 'Lord, open his eyes, that he may see! And the Lord opened the young man's eyes, and he saw.' And the present moment was filled with the Divine. And the ministries of heaven were near at hand, for the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire.—G. H. MORRISON, *Flood-Tide*, p. 67.

ALL SOULS

'And Elisha prayed, and said, Lord, I pray Thee, open his eyes, that he may see. And the Lord opened the eyes of the young man; and he saw: and, behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha.' —2 KINGS VI. 17.

I. THE history of Elisha at Dothan is an inspired record of one of these rare glimpses into the invisible world surrounding us which adds to the dignity, the grandeur, the security of this earth life, by assuring us that we are encompassed by spiritual intelligences empowered to act on humanity, guiding, arranging, inspiring, protecting.

II. Let us learn the lesson from the vision of Elisha. It is a picture of the eternal realities that surround these lives of ours. It is a proof that man is not merely an animal organism, but an immortal spirit belonging to two worlds; that though, for educative purposes, he is smothered for a while in the animal, his true *ego* belongs to the spiritual; that the world of spirits is floating, in all its power and beauty and energy around him, and that greater are they that are with him than they which are against him. The weakest amongst us is not fighting alone. In temptation and trial and soul darkness, when we seem hopelessly overmatched, when the Syrian hosts of our lower nature are besieging us with haunting memories and evil thoughts and faithless suggestions, when the cry goes up, 'Alas! Master, what shall we do?' if some Elisha were at hand to pray 'Lord, open his eyes, that he may see,' we should see the mountain 'full of horses of fire and chariots of fire'. It is better that we should not see. 'Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.' It is better that, with a powerful effort of the will, we should cross by faith the threshold of the door which divides us from the world beyond the senses, and simply believe that the unseen is greater than the seen; that more are they that are on our side than they which are against us.

III. 'Against us!' But are any of the beings of the spirit world against us? 'All Saints' will obviously be on our side, but 'All Souls!' would not some of that number harm us if they could? I reply that I think there are 'seducing spirits,' disincarnate human beings of low character, imperfect, crude, more ignorant than ourselves. I think that for a while after death they haunt the grosser atmosphere of our world; they are not yet awakened, and they blindly hunger for the limitations they have left. But I am convinced that they are under training, under discipline; they are not overlooked, forgotten, neglected by the Father-Spirit of the world. As for there being any peril to ourselves from them, all the mischief, and all the malice, and all the passions, and all the hate of a Hades full of unregenerate humanity cannot harm the life consciously 'hid with Christ in God'. One strong act of faith will lift you into that sphere in which 'they that are with us are more than they which are with them,' for 'behold, the mountain was full of horses of fire and chariots of fire round about Elisha.—B. WILBERFORCE, *Following on to Know the Lord*, p. 143.

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THE CHARACTER OF JEZEBEL

'And when Jehu was come to Jezreel, Jezebel heard of it.'—2 KINGS IX. 30.

SOME there are who, having an imperfect knowledge of the true position of woman among the Hebrews, or, placing too much reliance on modern Oriental analogies, have represented her station as that of a low and degraded character. In doing this, they have committed an error, of which they could never have been guilty had they studied that beautiful description of a Hebrew woman given at the end of the book of Proverbs, where the value of a virtuous and prudent wife is said to be 'far above rubies'. Yet, while there were many truly noble women in Hebrew society, there were also, just as in our own time, women who were perfect contrasts to such. Though socially high, they were morally low. To these belonged Jezebel, the consort of Ahab. She made him what he was, and likewise fashioned her own character and destiny.

I. Jezebel's Life.—Jezebel's life was evil from the beginning. No sooner had Ahab taken her as his wife than she introduced the worship of Baal into the land of Israel. Her next act was the slaughter of the Lord's prophets, that they might not have the opportunity of condemning her idolatrous practices and those of her husband. Then she planned the murder of Naboth, and, when he was dead, put her husband into the possession of the vineyard he coveted. Nor was this all: she led her sons into idolatry and other evils, just as she had led her husband. When Jehu called her 'this cursed woman,' his language, though awful, was correct, for she had brought a curse on her husband, on her family, on the throne and land of Israel, and was the wicked genius of her age. But retribution waited her. When Jehu arrived at Jezreel Jezebel heard of it, and hastily painted her face and tired her hair, and, seating herself at a large window of the palace, she looked out for his approach; and as he entered the gateway she cried, 'Had Zimri

peace, who slew his master?' Why these preparations and this interrogation? Not, as some have said, to tempt and conquer Jehu as she had tempted and conquered Ahab; but to insult Jehu, and set him at defiance. Zimri was an Israelitish captain who had conspired against his royal sire, and killed him. But he had no Divine warrant for his acts, and therefore within seven days he himself perished. Jezebel charged Jehu with a similar rebellious act, which she insinuated would surely be followed with the reverse of peace; but Jehu knew that he was God's instrument, carrying out God's commands.

II. Jezebel's End.—It should be remembered that Jezebel's end was tardy in its approach. Ahab, her husband, had been shot on the field of battle, and he left only the memory of evil behind him; but she was permitted to live on. What for? That she might have space for repentance. How wonderfully patient God is! One hundred and twenty years He waited for the repentance of the antediluvians, and forty days for the repentance of the Ninevites: the former did not repent, and therefore they were drowned; the latter did repent, and therefore they were spared. And had Jezebel repented, bad as she had been and was, she, too, would have been saved (Ezek. xxxiii. 11; 2 Peter iii. 9). A life of probation must necessarily have a termination; and at last, at the age of about fifty, death happened to this infamous woman, the dowager-queen of Israel. As Jehu stood in his chariot under the window of the palace, he cried with a loud voice to the court servants above, 'Throw her down'; and if God's commands would justify Jehu, Jehu's commands would justify the eunuchs. So they threw her down, just as common malefactors were cast headlong from some rocky height; and as she had caused the stoning of Naboth, now stones cause her death. What an indignity—a queen-mother, with her face painted to render her eyes surpassingly brilliant and her cheeks beauteous as the rose; a tiara of sparkling gems round her head, and a robe of untold costliness on her person—thus to be cast from the window of her own royal house by her very menials, and thereby dashed to death upon the hard pavement below. But even this was not all: her corpse was frightfully broken and disfigured by the prancing horses and rolling chariots, and the hungry dogs completed the work. To rest in no sepulchre was the very climax of her dishonour and shame. What a fate! Jezebel had been a sinner above all sinners; hence her last end was truly dreadful. 'The mills of God grind slowly,' but, 'they grind exceeding small'.

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A FULL HOUSE

'And the house of Baal was full from one end to another.'—2 Kings x. 21.

Here is a record of a full house. So full it was that, in the original, it is described as a vessel filled to the brim. But what was its moral significance?

I. A Full Congregation but no True Worship.—If you read the tragical story, you will find that you do it no injustice when you say that two principal motives had filled the house that fateful day: first, the desire to curry favour with the ruling powers, and secondly, the constraint of fashion.

II. Quantity but no Noble Quality.

1. Great lack of conviction characterized this full house. They were not there (most of them at least) because of real loyalty to Baal. It is depth and splendour of conviction which gives quality to an assembly for worship.

2. Very unintelligent was this houseful. They had not thought the claims of Baal out. Their presence in the house of Baal did not represent a process of deliberation. They were the fevered devotees of a popular crusade.

3. Fickle with contemptible fickleness was this Baalite constituency. At quite an alien shrine would they bow presently, did custom or authority look that way. Mere numbers are of little worth. Two or three with Jesus in the midst transcend with incalculable transcendency a house 'full from one end to another' of those whose hearts will not bear the piercing scrutiny of heaven.

III. The Popularity of Error.—The house of Baal was undeniably popular in Samaria. But it was the 'house of Baal,' and that is sufficient condemnation of the popularity. There is a popularity which is true, and there is a false popularity.

Error is always assured of a large popularity. False doctrine often draws a crowd, though that crowd does not long cohere.

IV. A Crowd Drawn by Unworthy Means.—When a house of God is crowded by unworthy means it is a dishonour to God and to man alike.

V. A Crowd Composed of Evildoers.—Often is a crowd assembled in an evil place. And too often an evil crowd may be in a holy place.

VI. A Concourse Unconscious of Approaching Doom.—The fearful lot of the misguided worshippers who filled Baal's house is but a faint representation of that which awaits the evildoers who reject a dying Saviour's love.

VII. Truth Transcendent over Numbers.—God's truth must and will ultimately conquer. Baal may gather the crowd, but this shall not be so for ever. Numbers may seem an insuperable menace to Gospel truth; but that truth shall prevail, for the mighty Spirit of God is behind it, yea and in it.—Dinsdale T. Young, *The Travels of the Heart*, p. 133.

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AGE AND YOUTH

'Now Elisha was fallen sick of his sickness whereof he died. And Joash the king of Israel came down unto him, and wept over his face, and said, O my father, my father, the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof.'—2 KINGS XIII. 14-19.

THIS is the last hour in a prophet's life. The brave, simple-hearted Elisha, now past eighty years, has lain down to die. He had been not prophet merely, but patriot; and the nation's grief was the more bitter that at this juncture he could ill be spared. Repeatedly in the past he had stepped between Israel and the vengeance of her foes; even now, as he lay waiting for the end, his parting thoughts were given to his country. They must have been sad enough. Israel was in a gravely disturbed condition. Oppressed by the powerful Syrian state, she was also cruelly harassed by the marauding bands of Moab. How the dying man must have gone back in fancy to that day, nearly fifty years since, when he had summoned Jehu to the throne, and, with the animating dreams and hopes of a new start, sped him forth upon his vigorous career! But all had been in vain. Jehu's sons were weak and pusillanimous; and while they reigned the Syrians had trodden Israel's honour in the dust.

Then came what seemed a turning of the tide. Joash, the grandson of Jehu, became king, and the change from the degraded imbecility of his father was very welcome. There was promise in the youth's unwasted energies. And the old prophet, as he looked a long farewell that day to the streets and valleys of Samaria, found himself questioning of what stuff this new leader was made and whether he had it in him to retrieve the national fortunes. Had he the brave purpose, the iron faith, the unselfish and untiring keenness of spirit, which would lift the kingdom out of the slough of impotence and starvation where it lay? Had he the vision of God that makes a man strong?

Joash, as far as we know, appears to have turned out in nature somewhat colourless. He was by no means the worst of the kings of Israel; but if there was no great harm in him, neither was there any great good. The main accusation urged against him is that he failed to stop the public idolatry his ancestors had set up. Well, purely negative persons do not greatly help the world. Possibly they may now and then act as a drag when down-hill speed in morals or religion is on the increase; yet since they hinder upward progress still more, the world's gain is less than nothing.

I. Consider first the prophet on his death-bed. It is an exceptional feature in Elisha's end that he was a prophet, and yet died at peace in his bed. Death usually comes to such as he in other ways. Too often the man who spoke fearlessly for God has paid for his courage with his life. Nevertheless, at times we find a bright exception, where a faithful God, keeping watch above His own, has sent light at eventide. Here and there, like Elisha in Samaria, Luther in his cottage at Eisleben, Knox in his quiet house at Edinburgh, a great man of God breathes his last in peace. After life's fever the close arrives calm and tranquil, and the weary sun makes a golden set.

As I look again at this old-world scene, I find yet another point worth our noting. Here is a poor apartment in Samaria—the London of the country—in which lies a dying man, without money, without fame, without striking powers of mind, his sole weapon 'the word of the Lord'. Yet the king stands beside him mournfully, filled with honest sorrow, and knowing in his heart that, with his passing, Israel's best hope would have departed. 'O my father, my father, the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof.' His tears might well fall. The true benefactors of a nation—who are they? Not the men who paint the map red, or invent a new big gun; but those who stir its sleeping conscience, and quicken its desire for the living God, and offer it those abiding and infinite satisfactions that will quench its nobler thirst. And in Elisha this has been the true nobility, the simple grandeur of the man, that for two generations he stood among his people as an incorruptibly brave witness to eternal things, with a life that did not sink beneath his message.

II. The younger man. I should question whether a trait of character can be named which more infallibly indicates strength and excellence of mind than affectionate deference to the aged. I should question whether a sort of action is discoverable which is better calculated to gain the onlooker's confidence and regard than an act of courtesy to the old. There are those whose minds appear to be obsessed by the strange delusion that flippant or disrespectful behaviour to the aged has in it something fascinating and attractive; yet if they only marked their own instinctive feeling at the sight of the same demeanour in others they would speedily clear their minds of that hallucination. To all right-minded people any lack of consideration for the old is an extremely grave offence; and that it is so to more than man is indicated by that noble commandment of ancient Israel: 'Thou shalt rise up before the hoary head, and honour the face of the old man; I am the Lord'.

So far, I say, Joash's conduct augured well; but before the scene was over his besetting weakness of character had appeared. It was a fatal lack of energetic faith—the same radical defect which has proved the bane of many a life of promise. After the fine piece of symbolism I have described, the king is again bidden take a sheaf of arrows, and smite upon the ground. A strange command, we say; but that is merely because the Hebrew mind is different from ours. In the Old Testament we find prophets, often,

performing symbolic acts which are not merely predictive, but, if I may say so, actually productive of the future. So the shooting of the arrows on the ground was an emblematic act, the significance of which must have been understood by Joash perfectly well. His halting after the third time, consequently, was a trifle, but to the watcher's keen eye it betrayed a weakness that would bring disaster some day. —H. R. Mackintosh, *Life on God's Plan*, p. 198.

THE ARROW OF THE LORD'S DELIVERANCE

'And he said, Open the window eastward. And he opened it. Then Elisha said, Shoot. And he shot. And he said, The arrow of the Lord's deliverance, and the arrow of deliverance from Syria.'—2 Kings xiii. 17.

We have a picture of the old generation in contact with the new. In it we see the old testing the new, and the old teaching the new.

I. The scene is the *test*. There are two things which the old prophets knew well were absolutely essential as characteristics and qualifications, if Joash was to fulfil the high destiny which was before him. There mingles in all great men's characters who are capable of achieving high things two elements—the one prosaic, the other poetic. It lies upon the surface of things that a man cannot achieve practical work unless he has the prosaic instinct that does not shrink from the drudgery of it. This Joash has not. Is there thoroughness in this man who draws the bow feebly thrice, and looks round for instruction? But he lacks more; he lacks the glorious power of imagination; he does not see what his work means, he does not realize all that the old prophet has put before him. A man who can only look at his life and see only its dry details from day to day, and see no glory, no sanctity, no divinity in it will never do work with that high spirit which carries him by the very rapture of its intensity through the world.

II. The prophet is not merely one to test, but also one to *teach*. He teaches him, and what is the lesson he teaches? It is this simple one, to realize himself and to realize God. There are only three important things, and the way in which you bring these into contact will be the way in which your life will be marked and measured—one is yourself, another is the world with its duties, the third is God overhead. The world has to be faced. Face it as a man, and as a man conscious of your responsibility. Take up arrows, and shoot against the foe that lies before you; but as man, show that man's strength is only perfected in consciousness of your God. What says the Master Himself? If ye abide in Me, if your hearts are open to the heavenly vision, and My words abide in you, you realize the active duties of life, and a life which is full of obedience and faith is also a life of power. Ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done.

III. What then is the lesson to be drawn? I think it is this, that we often live in sore straits because we will forget God.—Bishop Boyd Carpenter, *British Weekly Pulpit*, vol. iii. 1890, p. 145.

A SACRAMENTAL MOMENT

'And he said, Take the arrows. And he took them. And he said unto the King of Israel, Smite upon the ground. And he smote thrice, and stayed.'—2 Kings xiii. 18.

'Why,' one asks, 'is the prophet wroth? Why should Joash know that three arrows were not enough, that five or six was the number necessary?' Something wants explaining here.

I. If you ever asked that question in your childhood, you were most likely answered, 'It showed Joash had not faith'. The answer only needs to be more precise. For, as I understand it, Elisha was calling Joash to what we should call a sacramental act. He appoints him in this archery an outward sign, and indicates that with it there will go a Divine gift, the grace of victory over enemies.

The young man Arises not to the old man's faith: the flame kindles not in him. He should have snatched the quiver with hands of fire, and sprung arrow after arrow from the string till the quiver lay empty at his side. Instead he makes languid, perfunctory response to the impassioned appeal; shoots thrice (so much respect demanded), and holds his hand. The charm is countercharmed by coldness, the holy spell breaks, the inspiration exhales upon the air, the cup of that wine of strength is spilt on earth, a sacrament has been made null.

II. What does all this mean for us? Perhaps this will do for a meaning.

Moralists often insist on the value of life's daily insignificant things, its common indistinguishable moments. They are not wrong; but let us not forget that there are great moments, outvaluing in their effect on the drift of a man's character the influence of a million lesser ones. I mean the moments when a faith or a decision passes before you, claiming your choice: there is Divine enchantment in the air, an inspiration ready to fall, a mystic force hovers beside you waiting to mix with your own, and some word spoken, or look cast, or act done will set free the force to impel you. These are sacramental moments, moments of the sacrament of Divine impulse. You must give yourself to the sacrament, let it have its way with you, and fear not; or it is null, and your hour has passed you.

III. Do not answer, 'Yes, but if the timid lose a chance, so, too, the rash may blunder'. Do not quote old maxims that say, 'Be wary and mistrustful, the sinews of the soul are these'. That is what I deny. Not the soul's *sinews*. In these days of ours when a wider but often less vital knowledge is cooling down adventure and disenchanting the fairy horizons of boyhood, what men are wanting is not more knowledge, criticism, caution: it is the power of will. We lack not direction more, but impulsion; not the finger which shall point out the paths which are false, but the hand which shall push us forward in the true one. Whence is this to come? A Christian will answer, in fewest words, "I believe in the Holy Ghost". There is a Spirit whose Name is not only of Counsel, but also of Strength; and though His might is like the

wind, and bloweth where it listeth, and you cannot trace its coming or its going, yet I believe that in such moments of an unprepared-for sacrament as I have described these ardours of the heart are the sway of that trackless wind of God upon the heart of a man.'—J. H. Skrine, *The Heart's Counsel*, p. 146.

References. — XIII. 18, 19. — Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxxix. No. 2303. XIII. 19.—*Ibid.* vol. x. No. 569. J. Baines, *Sermons*, p. 255. J. M. Neale, *Sermons Preached in Sackville College Chapel*, vol. iii. p. 116.

THE BONES OF ELISHA; OR THE POWER OF THE PAST

'And Elisha died and they buried him. And the bands of the Moabites invaded the land at the coming in of the year. And it came to pass, as they were burying a man, that, behold, they spied a band of men; and they cast the man into the sepulchre of Elisha: and when the man was let down and touched the bones of Elisha, he revived and stood up on his feet.'—2 Kings xiii. 20, 21.

This miracle, like other miracles and providences of God, is as a lesson written in characters which all may read—written in action. It teaches us the lesson which we are all apt to forget—the power—the quickening, invigorating power—of the past.

I. See how this is the case with *nations*. To a nation a great past is an integral element of its life, so powerful, so precious, that wise patriots and rulers do all they can to preserve it. What does the past do for a nation? It kindles a nation when depressed by misfortune, or degenerated through luxury, into a new life. A great defeat, or a great failure, or a sensible decline in all that gives a nation moral vigour and self-respect, leads it, or leads its leading minds, to consider what their ancestors were—what were the characters, the sacrifices, the actions, by which their own declining greatness was originally won. A degenerate posterity asks itself why, with the same blood flowing in its veins, it should be incapable of the virtues of those who have gone before it. The corpse of national life, the languid pulse of national thought, are thus brought into contact with the past. They touch the bones of Elisha: the country may yet revive and stand again on its feet.

II. Observe the bearing of this principle on the history of *Churches*. To a Church the past is even more than it is to a nation, since its title-deeds have been given it once for all, and it has had everything in the first age of its existence that it can possibly have now. Churches, particularly Churches, like nations, have their days of glory—their days, too, of depression and of shame. To the collective Church of Christ alone is the promise given that the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. If a Church is stricken with the languor of death it must be quickened in the old way—by contact—new and earnest contact—under the guidance of the Spirit, with the sacred past.

III. Observe the application of this principle to the *Christian soul*. Every Christian soul has its past, its sacred memories known only to itself and to God. But, like nations and Churches, souls, too, have their periods of depression—their epochs of growth and decline. The eternal realities have been somehow displaced in its affections by the things of time. That soul is in a fair way to die outright. It is carried out to be buried by the spirit of the world—by the forces of circumstances; and then some danger, some illness, some heart-ache which convulses the depths of being, leads it to seek retreat. The Moabites are in sight, and it is thrust into the tomb of Elisha: it is brought into contact with its own buried past—with the years of old which have been as forgotten as if they had never been—with the thoughts that had once been uppermost—with the friends who have long since passed into another world. All that early time which seemed to have perished so utterly is there buried away in the tomb of memory; and the discovery of an old letter, or a visit to an early home, or a conversation with a friend who has not been heard of for years, may waken it, as by a touch of the bones of Elisha.—H. P. Liddon, *Penny Pulpit*, vol. xv. No. 886, p. 289.

References.—XIII. 20, 21.—H. P. Liddon, *Sermons on Old Testament Subjects*, p. 318. J. M. Neale, *Sermons Preached in Sackville College Chapel*, vol. iii. p. 124. XIII. 21.—W. H. Hutchings, *Sermon-Sketches* (2nd Series), p. 256.

'When the man was let down and touched the bones of Elisha, he revived and stood up on his feet.'—2 Kings xiii. 21.

The Rev. Gordon Calthrop preached from this text in Westminster Abbey three weeks after Livingstone's funeral. The congregation were actually sitting over Livingstone's fresh grave. 'Let us be quickened,' said the preacher, 'into fresh life by contact with the bones of Livingstone, and let thousands of Africans, through the influence of his death, be revived and stand up on their feet.'

THE THISTLE AND THE CEDAR

'The thistle that was in Lebanon sent to the cedar that was in Lebanon, saying, Give thy daughter to my son to wife: and there passed by a wild beast that was in Lebanon, and trode down the thistle.'—2 Kings xiv. 9.

There are two striking fables in the Old Testament: that of Jotham, and this of Jehoash the King of Israel.

I. The Fable Illustrates the Variety of Humanity.—'The thistle that was in Lebanon:' the word may mean a thorn or a brier; whichever it be it represents what is mean, contemptible, low, troublesome. And quite near it uprose 'the cedar that was in Lebanon'—grand, majestic, sublime. Thistles and cedars are alike part of the economy of God. Which are we in spiritual character? No man need be a moral thistle. Every man may be 'a cedar Christian'. By grace each of us may be a righteous soul, and 'the righteous shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon'.

II. What Inadequate Self-knowledge is here Displayed?—A thistle on Lebanon abides a thistle withal. The thistle of the fable forgot this, and it desired to treat with a cedar on quite equal terms. It is ever the small and mean and worthless that lack self-knowledge most conspicuously.

III. Empty and Ambitious Pride is here Rebuked.—'Give thy daughter to my son to wife,' cried the pompous little thistle. Well does Dean Farrar characterize it as 'ludicrous presumption'. Surely there is no room for pride in any man.

How shall we be enabled to think nothing of ourselves? The great evangelical hymnist gives us the sacred clue:—

When I survey the wondrous Cross,
On which the Prince of Glory died:
My richest gain I count but loss,
And *pour contempt on all my pride.*

IV. In this Fable we see a Want of Appreciation of Nobleness.—Many a cedar has been unrecognized by the thistle community amid which it has dwelt. It is possible to live with nobleness and never perceive it. This is one of the tragedies of human history. Supremely was it exemplified when the Son of God was Incarnate here.

V. Here Incongruous Aspirations are Represented.—The vanity which expresses itself in 'vaulting ambition which overleaps itself' was never better delineated than in this old-world fable. Said the thistle to the cedar, 'Give thy daughter to my son to wife'. For ourselves and those we love we do well to dread unwise and unholy ambitions. All ambition is dangerous, much ambition is ruinous. 'I was *afraid* of ambition,' said the great and good Dean Vaughan when asked why he had refused a bishopric.

VI. See in this Old Fable the Retributive Ruin of a Life.—How did the comedy end? In a tragedy—as so many of the comedies of life end. 'And there passed by a wild beast that was in Lebanon and trode down the thistle.' There was no need for the cedar to send a reply to the self-deceived thistle. Retribution came, and came soon.

Quite casual the retribution seemed: the wild beast 'passed by'. But it was not so casual as it seemed. Law lies behind all things—and that law essentially moral. What appears a fateful accident may be a Divine retribution. The wild beasts of the forest belong unto God. And He sends them forth on His errands. When a wrongdoer least expects such a visitation the wild beast passes by on its destructive mission.—Dinsdale T. Young, *The Travels of the Heart*, p. 85.

References.—XV. 13-18.—W. Hay M. H. Aitken, *The Highway of Holiness*, p. 63. XVI. 15.—C. Brown, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxii. 1902, p. 398.

LOWERING THE SEA

'And Ahaz took down the sea from off the brazen oxen that were under it, and put it upon a pavement of stones.'—2 Kings xvi. 17.

'King Ahaz . . . took down the sea.' The reference is to the enormous and superb laver which was situate in the temple, and was intended for the cleansing of the priests.

I. We have not lowered the sea! No. **But we have Frustrated the Divine Plan.**—That plan we may not have spoiled utterly, thanks to restraining grace, but we have frustrated it in detail. True, Ahaz did not frustrate God's plan as a whole. He 'took down the sea from off the brazen oxen that were under it, and put it upon a pavement of stones'. He put it out of its right relations.

Have we not frustrated the Divine plan? Look at the *material world*. Is it to-day as God designed it? *Commerce* is not to-day as divinely instituted. We have dealt similarly with *the home*. A similar remark applies to *the Church*. And is not this conspicuously applicable to *our individuality*?

II. We have Maimed Good and Useful Things.—Ahaz did not destroy the sea. He, however, sadly interfered with its utility. If, as many think, the water flowed from the sea through the mouths of the brazen oxen, then by placing it on a pavement of stones Ahaz rendered it well-nigh ineffective. Man ever and again maims what is good and useful in its operation. Thus the Bible has often been treated. Its supernatural elements have been discounted. The *Sabbath* is subjected to a similar process. Its claims are slighted, if not ridiculed. *Worship* is maimed. Rather than an inspiration to service, it is too often a selfish luxury. *Society* is not exempted from spoliative influences. Worse than all else, many of us have maimed our souls. We have inflicted deadly injury on our characters; we have made havoc of our inmost self.

III. We have Undone the Religious Work of the Past.—What skilled and arduous labour did that brazen sea represent! Consummate artistry it was. The men of the religious past laboured long and severely, with toil of heart and brain and hands. 'And ye are entered into their labours,' the Apostle adds. To undo the religious work of the past, in ourselves or in the community, is to cramp the religious work of the future.

IV. We have Treated Sacred Things Irreverently.—Ahaz laid hands on the brazen sea of the temple as if it had been a thing of naught. Remember that golden saying in 'Cymbeline,' 'Reverence is the angel of the world'.

V. We have Sinned Through Craven Fear.—Those who have studied King Ahaz to our profit tell us that in all probability it was under the shadow of miserable fear he did this deed of wickedness. 'He feared' is the explanation of many a crime and many a sin.

VI. We have Preferred Self to God.—The explanation of King Ahaz's sacrilege which some give us is that he wantonly robbed God's temple of this splendid sea, in order to place it in one of his idol-houses, or in order to make use of it in his palace. King Ahaz represents us all. We love self supremely unless Divine grace has changed our nature. 'Self-will is the last enemy to be subdued,' said Madame Guyon.

VII. We have Caused Others to Sin.—Ahaz led a priest of God astray. 'Urijah the priest' was his trusty henchman. It is bad enough to sin alone, but to associate others in our ill-doing is criminal in degree.

VIII. We have Broken the Commandment of God.—God had enjoined that the brazen sea be fashioned. And more—God had given commandment that it be placed on the brazen oxen. All our failure and all our misery springs from our disobedience to God.—Dinsdale T. Young, *The Crimson Book*, p. 252.

References.—XVII. 6-18.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—2 Kings* from chap. viii., p. 33. XVII. 15.—C. Silvester Horne, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxix. 1906, p. 235. XVII. 23-41. — Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. li. No. 2928. XVII. 25, 33, 34.—*Ibid.* vol. li. No. 2929. XVII. 33.—J. Addison Alexander, *The Gospel of Jesus Christ*, p. 395. H. J. Wilmot-Buxton, *Sunday Sermonettes for a Year*, p. 159. A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—2 Kings* from chap. viii., etc., p. 40. XVII. 41.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxvii. No. 1622. XVIII. 1.—H. P. Liddon, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 544.

HEZEKIAH AND THE BRAZEN SERPENT

Ancient and Modern Idolatry

'And he brake in pieces the brazen serpent that Moses had made; for unto those days the children of Israel did burn incense to it.'—2 Kings xviii. 4.

I. Turning to Hezekiah's mode of dealing with the brazen serpent, we see that he acted on the principle, common to all genuine reformers, that idolatry is a disease which requires heroic treatment. The only effectual way of getting rid of the superstition was to cut the roots of it. Without hesitation, therefore, he broke the image in pieces.

Something would have been wanting to the thoroughness of his action if he had simply destroyed the serpent without giving any reason for doing so. To call things what they really are is the most convincing way of exposing error. 'It is a piece of brass,' said the king, as he broke the serpent in pieces. And when, quite obviously, it had no power to resent the deed, no skill to protect itself from outrage, or to punish the doer of it, then the people could not but allow that the king was right.

II. Images of brass or wood, no doubt, have lost very much of the fascination that they once exercised over rude minds in semi-barbarous ages. But 'the essence of idolatry consists in the mind worshipping its own fancies and notions,' or (to express the same thing in another form) in interposing between the soul and God a false, inadequate, partial image or representation of the Divine nature.

In the Divine Son of God we have given us the highest image of the Invisible God—the human embodiment of His moral perfections. There is no idolatry in worshipping Him, for conscience owns Him, and the reasonable soul claims Him as its rightful Lord.

III. Has idolatry, then, become an impossible sin for a Christian? Are we in no danger of framing for ourselves false and partial images of the truth and tenderness of God?

Alas, no! for human nature remains pretty much the same in all ages. Man never knows how idolatrous he is. The same tendencies which impelled the Israelites of old to worship the brazen serpent and the golden calves—the same which led the leaders of the Jewish nation to reject the word spoken by Christ for the sake of their own tradition—are alive among us, though in a more subtle and dangerous form. The Jews of our Lord's day had their idols, and it was part of Christ's mission on earth to destroy them. Like Hezekiah, He, too, appeared among men as a reformer and an image-breaker.

And still the need exists for clearing away the false in order to disengage the true. Still it is the struggle of earnest men to extricate the Divine figure of the Gospels from the encumbrances of human systems, and to set Him clearly before us in the light of His own revelation of the Father.—J. W. Shepard, *Light and Life*, p. 166.

References.—XVIII. 4.—R. H. Fisher, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxiv. 1903, p. 346. C. Simeon, *Works*, vol. iii. p. 537. Joseph Milner, *Sermons*, vol. iii. p. 454. Charles Marriott, *Sermons*, vol. i. p. 125. T. R. Stevenson, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xi. p. 236. W. Walters, 'The Fiery Serpents and the Serpent of Brass' (with Numbers xxi. 9 and John iii. 14, 15), *Christian World Pulpit*, xx. p. 237. Hall's *Contemplations*, Book xx. 'Contemplation ix.' Stanley's *Jewish Church*, vol. ii. p. 395. XVIII. 4, 5.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xvi. No. 960.

HEZEKIAH'S CONFIDENCE

'He trusted in the Lord God of Israel.'—2 Kings xviii. 5.

First note some of the grounds upon which this confidence in God is based; and, secondly, mark some of its features.

I. Some Grounds upon which Trust in God is Based.

1. The first is the *Goodness of God.* Moral theology places trust in God in connexion with hope, and not directly with faith. Of course, faith must be at the root of all virtues. A belief in a Personal God is necessary; and further, a belief in His Providence, that He has not let the strings of His government out of His hands, and is not the captive of what we call natural law—that He continues to preside over the world which He has made, and the men who are in it. All this belongs to faith; but above and beyond it reaches the grace of hope, for it lays hold of the Divine goodness. Confidence in the Divine goodness is, according to Aquinas and many others, *principium impetrandi*, giving special force to prayer.

2. Another ground of trust in God is *His faithfulness to His promises.* Goodness, when combined with almightiness and fidelity, affords a triple basis upon which to rest.

3. *Experience* may be added to the former. Hezekiah had experienced the Divine help in effecting the difficult religious reforms in which he had been engaged, and he feared not now that the 'Lord God of Israel' would forsake His people in the hour of extreme need.

II. Some Features of this Confidence.

1. To be confidence in God, it must be *entire.* In foul weather as well as fair, in the storm, when

Christ is asleep, as well as on the land when He is awake. Christ tested this confidence in the case of His disciples, and He does so still. This confidence in Divine help must extend both to temporal as well as spiritual things. Such trust, it need hardly be said, must not be a cause of idleness, but a stimulant to effort: 'God helps those who help themselves'. Hezekiah knew that; and so went into the house of the Lord, and spread 'the letter before the Lord' which the Assyrian foe had sent him, and prayed earnestly to the Lord.

2. Trust, too, must be *prompt*. To ask for Divine help when all things have been tried in vain savours rather of despair than of confidence.

III. Lessons.

1. All must have some object in which to confide. Our trust must be, not in self, not in others, but in God. It was to Him Hezekiah at once turned in his terrible need.

2. To kindle this spirit of confidence let us meditate upon the Divine goodness, the fidelity of God to His promises, and call up remembrances of His past mercies.

3. Let this trust extend to all circumstances and difficulties whether of soul or body; and we shall find, like the good king, that 'the salvation of the righteous is of the Lord,' and that 'He is their strength in the time of trouble'.—W. H. Hutchings, *Sermon-Sketches*, p. 246.

References.—XVIII. 5.—A. G. Mortimer, *The Church's Lessons for the Christian Year*, part iv. p. 219. XVIII. 5, 6.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture*—2 *Kings* from chap. viii. p. 47. XVIII. 19.—H. P. Liddon, *Sermons on Old Testament Subjects*, p. 1835; see also *Outlines of Sermons on the Old Testament*, p. 90.

HEZEKIAH

'When King Hezekiah heard it . . . he . . . went into the house of the Lord.'—2 Kings xix. 1.

I. Hezekiah was a type of Christ. In what way? Look, first, at the destruction of the brazen serpent, as told us in this morning's lesson. Try to realize all that it meant. It requires strong, brave men to do the thing, for this serpent had a wonderful history and sacred association. For many generations it had been one of the objects which most stirred the hearts of the Jews. But it had lost its power completely; it had become an object of superstitious worship, and so Hezekiah broke it in pieces. I wonder what the scribes and Pharisees of the day—or those who at that time represented them—thought of this act? Hezekiah was a type of Him Who centuries later scandalized the scribes and Pharisees by breaking the Sabbath. When the trial moment comes, when temptation is strong and help seems far away, the question will be, not whether we have learnt to hold the tenets of Christianity as historical facts, but whether they have taught us the power of prayer, and the evil hold dropped, and the call of duty accepted. Whether, in one word, we have learnt to live our faith, so that Christ lives in our hearts and through our lives.

II. Let us turn to another scene in Hezekiah's life: the revival of the Passover as narrated in the Second Book of Chronicles. It was not confined to Judah. Invitations, we are told, were sent throughout the length and breadth of Israel. Again Hezekiah's greatness is seen. He had grasped the idea of the Passover—that it set forth the unity of the nation. There was nothing political in his aim. There was no thought of the winning back of Israel. His aim was to teach the people that, wherever their lot was cast, they were all one people, and doubtless this, too, scandalized the scribes and Pharisees of the day. And, says the chronicler, many of those that accepted the invitation came without having undergone the purification ordained by the Lord. Now mark Hezekiah on that occasion. He prayed the Lord to pardon every one who had prepared his heart to seek the Lord God of his fathers. One more type of Him Who centuries after welcomed the outcasts. Is there not a lesson here for us? Think of all those well-meaning, religious people who cannot see the deeper unity which underlies differences of creed between us. What a grand thing it would be if in our days we could have an enormous Passover, a great gathering, not for discussions, but for worship, of all Christians who believe in Christ, apart from minor accidental differences. But let us beware of confounding the idea of unity and uniformity. The Divine ideal seems to be not uniformity, but a grand symphony played on a thousand instruments.

III. Let us look at one more scene in Hezekiah's life—his bearing towards the King of Assyria, as told in the lesson of this morning and this evening. Hezekiah, King of Judah, was lying helpless before the power of the King of Assyria, but in him we see no bravado and no fear, only a simple faith and trust in God. He met the insulting messages of Sennacherib in silence; the king's command was, 'Answer him not'. Once more he is a type of Him Who, centuries later, when He was accused of the chief priests and elders answered nothing, and when He received the blasphemous message was silent. Hezekiah's first thought was God. He went to the temple and spread his trouble before the Lord. It is in this instant reference (which is a difficulty to many), this turning to God at once, without fear and without hesitation, that Hezekiah is so valuable an example to ourselves. For we, too, like Hezekiah, are besieged with enemies. Which of us has not some sin of temper, it may be, or selfishness, or pride, or lust—some sin which he is tempted to commit frequently, and we have learned its power, and we long to cast it off and be rid of it for ever, but again and again the temptation comes? We fight against it, but we finally yield to it, and we feel as though this sin were poisoning our whole life. Have we said, 'My help cometh from the Lord'?

References.—XIX. 14.—T. Champness, *New Coins from Old Gold*, p. 179. J. Vaughan, *Fifty Sermons* (9th Series), p. 139. XIX. 14, 15.—W. H. Hutchings, *Sermon-Sketches* (2nd Series) p. 263. XIX. 20-22.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions*

of Holy Scripture—2 *Kings* from chap. viii., p. 54. XX. 1.—F. W. Farrar, *Everyday Christian Life*, p. 205. XX. 5.—S. E. Cottam, *The Royal Thanksgiving Sermons*, 1822-1902. XX. 12, 13.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xii. No. 704. XX. 19.—R. E. Hutton, *The Crown of Christ*, vol. ii. p. 281. XXI. 26.—A. B. Meldrum, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxv. 1904, p. 302.

A TALK TO BOYS AND GIRLS

'Josiah was eight years old when he began to reign, and he reigned thirty and one years in Jerusalem. And his mother's name was Jedidah, the daughter of Adaiah of Boscath. And he did that which was right in the eyes of the Lord, and walked in all the way of David his father, and turned not aside to the right hand or to the left.'—2 KINGS XXII. 1, 2.

Two verses, and yet that is a miniature of the good King Josiah, in which six things are told us about him.

I. He Made an Early Start.—He was eight years old when he began to reign. These duties were laid upon him when he was quite a young boy and the first thing we learn from him is to make an early start.

II. He Had a Very Long Race.—He reigned thirty-one years in Jerusalem. It is not enough to make an early start; we want to run a long race, keeping it up from the beginning to the very end.

III. He Kept a Straight Course; he turned not aside to the right hand or to the left.

IV. 'His Mother's Name was Jedidah.'—Why is it her name is given? It is evident her name is given as an explanation of his early good life.

V. Josiah Followed a Good Leader.—He 'walked in all the way of David, his father'. David had run that race before him, and had run that race well, and in him Josiah followed a good example. How you live will depend very much on what examples you choose to follow.

VI. Josiah Knew There was a Great Spectator present at the race Who had His eye upon him, even God. He did that which was right in the eyes of the Lord. He knew that God was near, and was watching, and that, no doubt, helped him in many an hour of trial, and strengthened him for many a burden of duty.—A. E. GARVIE, *The Christian World Pulpit*, vol. LXXIII. p. 349.

REFERENCES.—XXII. 8.—R. Scott, *Oxford University Sermons*, p. 325. XXII. 8-20.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture*—2 *Kings* from chap. viii. p. 60. XXII. 19, 20.—'Plain Sermons' by contributors to the *Tracts for the Times*, vol. v. p. 227. XXV. 1-12.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture*—2 *Kings* from chap. viii. p. 66. XXV. 27-29.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons for the Church Year*, vol. ii. p. 1. XXV. 30 (R. V.).—J. E. Wakerley, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxvi. 1904, p. 147.

THE FIRST BOOK OF THE CHRONICLES

THE MESSAGE OF THE BOOKS OF CHRONICLES

THE chief interest in the study of the books of Chronicles as a whole turns on the contrast which they present to the books of Kings. The books, or rather the book—for in the Hebrew Canon it is one—of Chronicles, along with the books of Ezra and Nehemiah, forms the second great group of historical writings preserved in the Old Testament. Its character may be best brought out by exhibiting the series of contrasts it presents to the book of Kings.

I. In Chronicles we do not have history viewed from the standpoint of a contemporary, but the history looked back on, and interpreted in the light of God's dealings with His people through three hundred years. 'Samuel' might be called the Book of the King; 'Kings,' the Book of the Kingdom; while 'Chronicles' would have to be called the Book of the House. It is indeed more a history of the temple than of the people. Chronicles differs from Kings very much as Church history differs from ordinary history. The writer of Chronicles was a man of the priestly craft, in all probability a Levite, and his aim is to show how God revealed Himself specially in the religious life of the people.

II. If, with all this in our minds, we now turn to the book itself, we shall see how fully it is borne out by what we find there. The writer starts with Adam. He passes rapidly down the history, treating it in the most general manner, except when he comes to the tribe of Judah. When the writer passes from genealogies to history he shows quite clearly where his interest lies. Saul is disposed of in one chapter. The early history of David is treated in the most cursory manner. But when he comes to the account of the taking of the Ark up to Jerusalem he gives three chapters to this. The story of Solomon's reign is given in full, in order to show how David's preparation for the building of the temple was carried out. Beyond all question, Chronicles is didactic history, that is, history written with a purpose.

III. The book of Chronicles is occupied from beginning to end with magnifying God, and giving Him His right place in Israel. The fear of God is the foundation of all national prosperity. Israel was God's peculiar people. He had bound up her national existence with Himself. Now, at every stage of his book the chronicler impresses this lesson upon Israel. You cannot do without God, is the cry which rings through his book. But this lesson which it was so important for Israel to learn is the great lesson of life. For the nation and for the individual alike, prosperity is bound up with giving God His right place. So Israel found; so we shall find.—G. H. C. MACGREGOR, *Messages of the Old Testament*, p. 155.

THE FIRST BOOK OF CHRONICLES

THE books of Chronicles cover the period of history in 1 and 2 Kings. The distinctive note of the books is that of religion and its bearing on the national life. This book may be divided into two parts.

I. Genealogies.—The period included in these genealogical tables is that from Adam to the restoration under Nehemiah, which are not exhaustive but serve a clearly defined purpose in that they indicate the Divine choice of the channels through which God moved to the accomplishment of His purpose. In tracing these genealogies it is interesting to notice how choice is based upon character; and moreover, how in the Divine progress there is constant deviation from the line of merely natural descent. A long section is devoted to the priestly tribe, and this division ends with the story of the death of the king chosen by men. Saul was a man than whom no other had greater opportunities, but his failure was disastrous.

II. David.—In this division of the book there are four movements, the story of David's crowning events connected with the ark of God, the account of his reign, and matter concerning the building of the temple. Before coming to the last charges of David, in a parenthetical section, we have an idea of the internal order of the kingdom under the government of David. This chapter is a striking revelation of the fact that the greatness of David as a king was not confined to his victories in war. He was no less great in the arts of peaceful administration. There is no doubt that under the reign of David the Hebrew people realized their greatest strength even though they did not reach the height of their material magnificence. The book ends with an account of the solemn charge he gave to Solomon, and of the ceremony in which he gave to the Lord all that he had gathered for the carrying out of the work of the temple. Finally the chronicler declares that David 'died in a good old age, full of days, riches, and honour'.—G. CAMPBELL MORGAN, *The Analysed Bible*, p. 197.

MAN SUCCEEDING MAN

'Reigned in his stead.'—1 CHRONICLES I. 44.

THERE are men immediately behind us who are waiting for us to get on, and to go, and finish our pro-

phecy, our commerce, our function, whatever it may be. The breath of the next man is hot on my neck. Do not lose the spiritual impulse and spiritual edification of such texts as these by calling them commonplace. Do not say that we are uttering trite sayings when we say that man lives that he may die, and dies, says the Christian faith, that he may live. We spoil the estate of God and the inheritance of Zion when we say that all these things are the commonplaces of life.

I. Succession is an argument for Providence. We did not know where the men were to come from, but God knew. God says, I know of seven thousand men who have not kissed the lips of Baal, who have turned their back in scorn upon him, and I will call them up. The reserves of God are twenty thousand and thousands of thousands. It is wonderful how God conducts things; it is marvellous where His men come from to conduct the business, the commerce, the civilization, the nationalization of the world—just so many, no more, not overcrowded.

II. There is no guarantee that the next man will be better than the last, but he is on the way to a better. The line of God's world is a line of progress, upwardness; here and there he may have depressions, but they are depressions on the highlands, they are not depressions from the common level. In God's way the undulations are on the highland country, and they lead to hill after hill, conquest after conquest: haply one fool may be a misfit, but he will not spoil the succession.

III. This law of succession holds good on a wider scale. It is a great law, with great meanings, wide applications, it holds good in the Christian life. These men mentioned in the text may have come to the throne by right of blood, by claim of birth, or genealogy—the very poorest of all claims; but in the Christian life men succeed not by line of inheritance and breeding, but by the line of faith and virtue and nobleness. Who will be baptized for the dead? There are many vacancies now.

IV. 'Reigned in his stead . . . reigned in his stead . . . reigned in his stead.' And so the history flows on as a matter of course. What is the great application of all this? I will tell you. What have I been aiming at in this long introduction? I will tell you. There is a King in whose stead no monarch shall reign. Name him. I will: Jesus Christ. It will never be said in the annals of history, 'And Jesus died, and somebody reigned in His stead'.—JOSEPH PARKER, *City Temple Pulpit*, vol. VI. p. 223.

THE PRAYER OF JABEZ. THE MAN

'And Jabez called on the God of Israel, saying, O that Thou wouldst bless me indeed, and enlarge my coast, and that Thine hand might be with me, and that Thou wouldst keep me from evil, that it may not grieve me! And God granted him that which he requested.'—1 CHRONICLES IV. 10.

HERE we have a very short biography of a very notable character; there is no long preface to it, no long drawn-out description of what sort of man Jabez was, no flowery description of wonderful virtues and attainments, as are many biographies of Christian men which are too much shorn of the infirmities of the creature, and therefore too much dressed with human wisdom to be of very much use, although they seem to be very taking at times.

I. His mother called his name Jabez, or 'Sorrowful,' for special reasons; 'I bare him with sorrow,' that is, the circumstances connected with his birth were of an afflictive kind. The Lord's representation compels me to say that Jabez beginning in sorrow is typical or representative of the true breathings of the soul after the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Don't think I mean that religious people ought to go about with long-drawn faces; nothing of the sort. I would not discourage some soul that manifests its inward grief by the look of the countenance, but the principle of the thing remains the same, we do not believe in affecting an exterior which has not corresponding reality in spirit.

II. We read of him that he was 'a more honourable man than his brethren'. The best thing to do is to define the word 'honourable' by noticing what Jabez's real principle was as expressed in this prayer so acceptable to God. I should say of him that he was a man separated unto the service of God; a man that could not walk with the men of his generation; could find no consolation with them in his spirit in their idolatry and half-hearted practices; he turned his back on that idolatry and pride which was so predominant in the service of God.

THE PRAYER OF JABEZ—THE PRAYER

1 CHRONICLES IV. 10.

PRAYER must be more or less a matter of continual exercise with godly souls, because it is the attainment of the latter part of the verse we are after, God's granting of our request. Saying prayers can never satisfy a living soul, however rightly they are said; telling out the needs of the soul can never satisfy a hungry or thirsty spirit after God, whatever liberty may be granted in the telling out of the need. It is God's answer, God's response, which is needed.

I. The Person Jabez prays unto. To whom does he direct this simple, heartfelt supplication? The God of Israel. It is very important that we be asking our hearts: To whom do we direct our prayers? Have we an intelligent apprehension of the Person we address? or is our religion mere idolatry? A most important question is this: To whom do we direct our prayers?

(*a*) It is a personal Being we address if we are alive from the dead. Certainly an unsearchable Being, whose existence we cannot penetrate, whose glorious attributes strike us dumb, and blind us if we look upon them in their brightness, and yet, one has said 'A known God none the less' although incomprehensible.

(*b*) We worship the Three—One God of Israel as One possessed of eternal attributes and perfections; and when we think of His holiness and His majesty

what a great God He becomes to us! How we desire to put off the shoes of carnality and lightness, and stand in awe of Him!

(*c*) But the God of Israel Whom Jabez worshipped is also represented to us as our Benefactor, our Friend and Counsellor, Who not only loves His people to trust Him, but has asked them to put Him to the test.

II. Let us look at the prayer itself a little.

(*a*) First, it is a heartfelt, fervent utterance, and because it is a heartfelt, fervent utterance it is not a long string of human sentences. It is for the want of heart-feeling our prayers are so long at times. The more of awe and reverence of God there is, the more careful will be the speech.

(*b*) Then it is a very pointed direct appeal. Now, that is the beginning of real worship. It does not end there. If you have been brought thus before the living God to worship Him as if you are the only needy sinner on earth, presently when you have obtained His mercy, having proved Him, you will be anxious about others; you will want them brought into the same favoured position as you have been yourself blessed to occupy.

III. Jabez wanted blessing from God. What do we conceive to be blessing?

(*a*) We cannot get along without some witness of the forgiveness of our sins. Until we get some witness of that in our souls we are afraid to ask God for anything. Because our sin comes up between; continual iniquities prevail against the poor coming sinner.

(*b*) Some of us feel desirous of asking the God of Israel to give us constancy. All our religion has to be tried and tested, and has to go through the fire.

(*c*) We conceive a spiritual blessing to be the chastening of the Lord. We are made to know very much of the deceitfulness of our hearts, the perils and the dangers and the seductive influences of this dying world which lieth in wickedness; and we feel it would be a dreadful thing to be left without Divine correction.

References.—IV. 17.—J. M. Neale, *Occasional Sermons*, p. 116. IV. 22.—Spurgeon, *Evening by Evening*, p. 33.

THE ROYAL KINSHIP OF SERVICE

'They dwelt with the king for his work.'—1 Chronicles iv. 23.

Work is the law of life, whether for king or for peasant.

I. Service links men with kings. In the story of our text we find potters and gardeners and people who trimmed the hedges all associated with the king. They dwelt with him for his work. So Christian service links us with God and Christ. 'We are workers together with God.' If we are associated with Christ in service, then we catch His spirit, and the things which most interest Him become of most importance to us. The Christian's business life must of necessity be mastered and controlled by Christ. The presence of the king must dominate his business as well as every other department of his life.

II. Fellowship with Christ strengthens us for service, rescues us from selfishness, and gives us the broader horizon. Selfishness is the most fruitful cause of discouragement and discomfort. The most disagreeable and unpleasant tasks which duty thrusts upon us, if entered upon with a sincere love for Christ and a desire to help on His kingdom and forward His cause, will be transfigured and ere long become beautiful to us, and be to us a source of joy for their own sake.

III. It is only by dwelling with the King and sharing His service that we may be sure that at the end we shall have light and peace. The men or the women who give themselves up to the mere worldly pleasures which appeal to the senses and minister to their gratification are preparing for an old age which will be utterly empty and miserable, when once the senses have lost their capacity to be stimulated into action. The man who thinks he will have peace because he has laid by great stores of wealth has his answer in the Rich Fool of Christ's Gospel. He who gives himself to self-indulgence is hatching out a brood of scorpions that in the end will sting him with remorse.—L. A. Banks, *Sermons which have Won Souls*, p. 41.

References.—IV. 23.—J. M. Neale, *Occasional Sermons*, p. 73. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxii. No. 1400. *Ibid. Morning by Morning*, p. 155. IV. 38.—J. Thomas, *Myrtle Street Pulpit*, vol. iii. p. 51.

QUALIFICATION AND DUTY

'Fit to go out for war.'—1 Chronicles vii. 11.

I. 'Fit.' We must be fit for whatever the times are fit. Some have lived in controversial times; they have been fit for controversy, strong in argument, defiant in spirit, intrepid and courageous in the last degree. Others have been born in times of suffering, deprivation, persecution, and yet they may, by the mercy and loving-kindness and condescension of God, have been fit; the fight has gone out of them, but the endurance has come into their blood, and endurance is a kind of fighting. Some have had to show their Christian faith in mighty deeds of valour; it has been an action of the arm, muscular, long, felling arms. And others have fought in their own way with quite as much courage, though it was never in the journals, as any soldier in any battle ever displayed. 'Fit to go out for war and battle.' Many have been fit to do that who have not been fit to simply sit down and suffer.

II. Now let us look at the text on the very highest level as expressing a great destiny, as fulfilling obediently, and with a kind of struggling joy, the destiny to which the Spirit of the living God has called us. No man is fitted except by the Spirit of God to do any really beneficent and lasting work in society. All true ministry is a Divine vocation, whatever may be its name or its aspect, whether it is suffering or valour, whether it is writing or merchandise, or preaching or statesmanship; whatever it may be, the power or the qualification of

it is in the fact that it is God's doing and God's holy will. What hast thou thou hast not received? Thy qualification is a Divine qualification; therefore do not boast of it. No man who recognizes God as the giver of gifts can ever be vain. If a man has the gift of God in him, that gift displaces the fiend or imp of vanity, and he who can do most of himself thinks least.

III. Now what is the object or purpose of being fitted? What does it all come to? It all comes to service. What is the good of being furnished, fitted out, equipped, or whatsoever it may be called, if there be no definite and concrete end? We do not want ornamental faith or ornamental piety. Can he fight? Yes. Then bring him forward. Can he heroically suffer? Yes. Then produce him, where his influence can be most deeply and divinely felt. Can he exemplify the Christian character either in service or in suffering? He can. Then introduce him, mark him on the register fit—fit—fit. We have had enough of ornamental piety.—Joseph Parker, *City Temple Pulpit*, vol. v. p. 109.

References.—X. 13.—H. Melvill, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 1884. XI. 7, 8, 9.—J. M. Neale, *Occasional Sermons*, p. 59.

'Also he went down and slew a lion in a pit on a snowy day.'
—1 Chronicles xi. 22.

This was one of the exploits of Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, the son of a valiant man of Kabzeel. The historian is endeavouring to draw for our instruction the character of men who surrounded David at the time when Israel offered him the throne.

I. This exploit of Benaiah may be looked upon as a parable. It contains some suggestions which we may find useful. I would suggest that the day was unpropitious. It was a snowy day—a day when one would be greatly tempted to stay at home in ease and comfort. The snowy day has often come into our religious history. Let us take one or two instances. Since my text is associated with David, we might take our first instance from his life.

(*a*) That was a snowy day when he fled from the face of Saul, and dwelt in the cave of Adullam.

(*b*) It was a snowy day when David's Son was nailed to His Cross.

(*c*) It was a snowy day when John Wycliffe sent forth his Bible in our mother tongue and sent forth his teachers to read it in the churches and market-places.

How marked is all this in the pathway along which the Church has come. And the snowy day, the unpropitious hour, is with us still. Benaiah went forth on a snowy day to slay a lion. In this unpropitious day a lion lurks. It is a true parable of our daily life. The very temptation to suppress one's convictions, to steer a middle and compromising course against one's conscience, is, in itself, a grave peril. But he who would sally forth on such a day must count the cost. In the snowy day there lurks the lion, but it is just such a lion which makes a man. Man is not made by sunny hours. Strong men are made by shadows not by sunshine, by storm and not by calm. It may be the lion of drink, or the lion of lust, or the lion of ungoverned temper. The longer that lion lies lurking within unslain the stronger and the more ferocious he will become.

II. Who will deny that in the society of to-day there lurks many a lion ready to destroy the peace of the people? There is that hydra-headed monster known as 'Vested Interest'. There are many wrongs, crying, grievous wrongs which are permitted to remain; there are reforms, reforms in which may be heard the cry of the poor, which are delayed from year to year, until the heart grows weary with hope deferred, and all because those wrongs and those reforms touch vested interests. It would seem that this monster gathers up into himself all the evils of our day. The drink evil, the gambling evil. It lies at the root of the unemployed problem, the problem of the housing of the poor, the education problem. I am persuaded that what is more required in Church and State to-day than anything else is the disinterested spirit of men like this Benaiah who are prepared to set aside all personal interests and seek to slay the lion which threatens the life of the defenceless people. God is not unmindful of our unselfish work. There is no deed wrought in His name He does not note. He who in the unpropitious day, the unfavourable hour, the inconvenient moment slays the lion, first within himself, which threatens to destroy his own life, and then in the midst of the people which menaces the peace, comfort, happiness of men, shall receive even in this world a thousand fold and in the world to come life everlasting.—J. Gay, *Common Truths from Queer Texts*, p. 25.

References.—XI. 22.—A. G. Brown, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 1068. XI. 23.—G. A. Sowter, *From Heart to Heart*, p. 37. XII. 5.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons Preached in Sackville College Chapel*, vol. iv. p. 279. XII. 16-18.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxx. No. 1770. XII. 32.—D. Burns, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxvii. p. 68. H. A. Thomas, *Sermons by Welshmen*, p. 107. J. Baldwin Brown, *Old Testament Outlines*, p. 85. XIII. 12.—H. Melvill, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 2308. XIII. 14.—J. H. Holford, *Memorial Sermons*, p. 139. XVI. 4.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxii. No. 1308.

THE PSALM FOR THE DAY

'That day David delivered this psalm into the hand of Asaph.'
—1 Chronicles xvi. 7.

I shall use this text illustratively, rather than literally and grammatically. There is a song in the heart of it; we are in quest of that song. The picture is full of colour, the picture is almost alive. Let us regard the incident as typical and ideal.

I. In very truth there is a special psalm for every day in the week. We should expect the psalm as confidently as we expect the dawn. But who looks out for David with his psalms, for Asaph with his harp and his attendant choir? Yet there they are, and they are often wasted upon us, and we say it is very oppressive, melancholy and ghostly silent. If we only knew, the air is alive with music, but we do not hear it, our ears are waxed heavy that they should not hear, and the festival proceeds every day unseen,

unheard, an anonymous and neglected providence. The psalm for the day would suit no other day quite so well. Unless, therefore, we sing the psalm on the very day for which it was intended, it will drop into prose, it will be as a bird with its wings closed, when it might have been as an angel flying in the midst of heaven. The psalms are being distributed, where are the Asaphs that stretch out corresponding hands and receive the great gifts of God? We are prone to turn life into moan and threnody and winter wail; we find a species of melancholy joy in being joyless; affectation makes a trade of its own disappointments and dejections; vanity seeks to create a reputation by showing you how it can weep over its own degradation; resist the devil and he will flee from you! Get hold of the psalm, make room for David; he has a right to sit in every house.

II. Take this David as typical and ideal, and this Asaph in the same light, and regard the text as suggesting that there are memorable psalm-days in life; then you will get a great lesson that will go with you through all the week of time and sing you out of your despair.

1. When the child was born David delivered a psalm to the Asaph of the time. The incoming of the child was the incoming of the psalm; the psalm was waiting, and the moment the cry went up, A man-child is born into the world! the psalm followed.

2. When the child died David delivered a psalm to Asaph. The poets can write in darkness; the poets do not ask for candle-light in which to inscribe their pages with immortal verse. Poets can see in the dark: to God there is no darkness. When the child died David handed this psalm: While the child was yet alive I fasted and wept, for I said, Who can tell whether God will be gracious unto me, that the child may live? but now that he is dead, wherefore should I fast? I will arise and take sacramental bread, and praise the Lord that the centre of gravity has changed, and that my soul is not here but there.

Never miss the psalm for the day. To repeat, expect the psalm as surely as you expect the dawn. Sometimes the psalm will come just as the dawn comes; the dawn comes quietly, silently, growingly, every few minutes the light seems to secure a further conquest upon the darkness and the shadow, and then the brighter morning, and then the zenith flame: such is the growth of the psalm in the consciousness and in the heart of men.—Joseph Parker, *City Temple Pulpit*, vol. i. p. 105.

CONSECRATION OF THE COMMONPLACE

'As every day's work required.'—1 Chronicles xvi. 37.

'So he left there, before the ark of the covenant of the Lord, Asaph and his brethren, to minister before the ark continually, as every day's work required.' That was the law of service in the tabernacle, and that is the law of service in the lives of all who would give themselves to God. The temple service was the day's work; the day's work was the temple service.

I. The tabernacle and its symbolism have passed away. We have heard of another temple, even the temple of the heart; of another altar—the unseen altar of sacrifice. But we do not understand, or we but imperfectly understand, how that the law of that altar is written in the day's work. Too often we think of the law of that altar as something remote and separate. Ever and again we let the thick of the world come between us and it. We look on the day's work as something that stands between us and the way of worship. We do not understand that the law of the altar is written in life just as we have to live it. It is bound up in the daily demand. It is involved in our immediate circumstance. The shadow of the Cross lies on all our toil for bread; and the manifold imperatives of earth are but the laws of heaven translated into a language that all who would do right can understand.

II. We cannot hear too much about the divinity of toil, as long as we know what we are talking about. There is no divinity in toil for toil's sake. There is no spiritual glory and beauty in mere effort. Let us not deify labour. A man may work like a slave, and never catch a glimpse of God in all his toiling. But once let a man see the altar where the ultimate requirement of his work is written and the whole doing of it may be laid, and the seeming gulf between work and worship disappears.

'As every day's work required.' That is the defining line of the service of faith. That is the measure of God's demand. Sometimes we do not understand this. We feel the consecrating power of solemn duties and great sorrows; and of those days that bring us face to face with definite and final moral choices. But every day is not a great day in this sense. More often life's demands are monotonous, and the situations it creates for us day by day are unheroic, fretful, and even belittling. The very toils and troubles and besetments of our lives seem essentially commonplace. Sometimes the littleness of it all makes us sick at heart.

'As every day's work requires.' The day's work! The thing you are tired of; the thing you think you know so well; the thing that holds for you no surprises, no revelations, no thrills of joy, no abiding satisfactions of spirit. The face of God, the peace of Jesus Christ, the light of the Spirit—you may find all these in the day's work if only you will believe it. This is God's way into our lives. This is our way into His life. This is the secret of sainthood—serving the Divine Master as every day's work requires, recognizing the Divine law in all human necessity.—P. Ainsworth, *The Pilgrim Church*, p. 192.

DAILY SERVICE

'As every day's work required.'—1 Chronicles xvi. 37.

That was the law. 'So he left there before the ark of the covenant of the Lord, Asaph and his brethren, to minister before the ark continually, as every day's work required.' Not as yesterday's work required, not as to-morrow's work might require, but as every

day's work required within its own twelve hours or twenty-four.

I. 'As every day's work required.' There is only one time—Now. 'Now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation.' Now is God's great opportunity given to us all. Yesterday is gone, to-morrow is unborn, to-day is now, and the golden portal rolls back to let us into the larger liberty. Things are not to be done at any time. That is where so many people go into confusion and into final bankruptcy, and spend their days at the public expense, and complain that it is very hard to go to the workhouse at the last. There is no need for any man to go to the workhouse; if every man will do as every day's work requires, he need never bend his head under the doorway of a workhouse. To so many people there is no regular time; that is the reason of failure, that is the leak. The great secret of successful life is discipline, promptitude, military obedience—now! altogether! the best I can; as every day requires.

That was the way that Jesus Christ lived. In that apparently coldly ethical doctrine there is a great evangelical gospel; the Son of God is hidden in that disciplinary prose: I must work the works of Him that sent Me: are there not twelve hours in the day? I must work while the light lasts; the night cometh wherein no man can work: I must not postpone Monday's duties to be done in Tuesday's light. That is success, mastery; he who obeys that rule is king, no man can take his crown. That was Christ's rule, and he that obeys in one obeys in all—must do it or his soul would be ill at ease till he had struck the last blow due on the day's responsibility.

II. Let us enlarge the meaning of the word 'day'. The term day is one of the most flexible terms in Holy Scripture, in poetry, and in general experience. 'In six days the Lord made heaven and earth.' I have no doubt of it; but I do not know what 'day' means. We speak of 'our day': does it mean from eight o'clock in the morning until eight o'clock in the evening? is the word 'day' there a term of clock-time, or does it relate to centuries, eras, epochs? We say, 'Our little systems have their day': does that mean a chronometer day? or a larger and variable period? Evidently it means the latter. So the text may be expanded without a change of word. 'As every day's work required'—as the time needed, as the exigency demanded, as the epoch called for, as the century required.

We read of men who fell asleep after serving their generation—'and having served his generation, he fell on sleep'. And he serves the next generation best who serves the present generation well.

What is it that covers and sanctifies all days?—the little day of twenty-four hours or twelve, and the great day of long centuries and piled millenniums? That permanent and all-sovereign quantity or force is Jesus Christ. It is said of Him, He is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever; He describes Himself as He that is and was and is to come—Alpha, new as the dawn; Omega, venerable as the sunset of millenniums, He abides in the Church, He is ever on the throne, He gives the order of the day, He has a message for every morning. If we could lay hold of that great truth we should have a united Church at once.—Joseph Parker, *City Temple Pulpit*, vol. II. p. 165.

Reference.—XVI. 41.—Prof. Charteris, *Christian World Pulpit*, 1890, p. 195.

CEDAR AND CURTAINS

1 Chronicles xvii. 1-4, 10.

'Now it came to pass, as David sat in his house, that David said to Nathan the prophet, "Lo, I dwell in an house of cedars, but the ark of the covenant of the Lord remaineth under curtains".'

David is troubled by the disparity between his own surroundings and those of the Ark.

I. We have here a somewhat unusual spectacle; this discontent arises with the king and not with the prophet; the political ruler, and not the spiritual adviser. The man who has the luxury does not wait for the man of the simple life to come and upbraid him and stir him up. He is upbraided by his own conscience. His palace is a burden and not a joy to him, and he cannot rest until he has brought the spiritual at least into line with the material.

II. The next thing that I would say about David's solicitude is that it was perfectly reasonable. Israel really owed everything to God because David owed everything to Him.

We are in peculiar danger of losing in these materialistic days our sense of indebtedness to God, the consciousness which seemed to be always present with the saints of a former time—that we owe everything to Him; and there are few things more lowering and injurious to the spirit that makes for noble manhood than our yielding to the tendency to forget God and to forget that life itself and all that makes it worth having, all that enriches it, all love, Divine and human, is His gift.

III. And the last thing I have to say about David's solicitude is that it was really politic. David was keen enough to see that if all were right with the Ark, all would be right with the nation; that it was really a stronger defence of Jerusalem than the rock upon which it stood or the walls that surrounded it. There is no need to be unreasonable; the man who looks after the Ark, if we take David as an illustration, will look after the fortifications also; but he will know that fortifications are as crumbling sand, and are nothing without character. And we know that a nation's material good and its booming trade are no reliable foundations for that nation's permanence or greatness.—C. Brown, *God and Man*, p. 247.

GOD IN HUMAN LIFE

'I took thee from the sheep-cote.'—1 Chronicles xvii. 7.

I. 'I have been with thee whithersoever thou hast walked.' We make a good deal of 'whosoever' wherever it occurs in the sacred record—'Whosoever believeth in Me shall be saved'. We say, 'whosoever

—whosoever'; we take in the man at the uttermost extremity, and we flood his ear with the music of 'whosoever'. Let us make a good deal of this 'whithersoever'. But I have sometimes gone on the wrong road. 'I know it, but I was always there to bring thee back.' Many a time I have gone to the wrong place. 'Yes, and I was there before thee with a disappointment'. My life has been one grand mistake. 'No, it would have been if I had not walked with thee; take My estimate of things, and not thine own: I have cut off all thine enemies from before thee.' He will not be shut out of our life. I wondered why the enemies gave in so soon. 'I could tell thee, I weakened their arms, I broke their chief muscles; I did not make Myself heard or seen amid all the contest, but I was there. If a man's ways please the Lord, He maketh his enemies to be at peace with him; no weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper.' 'I have made thee a name like the name of the great men that are in the earth.' 'I wondered how my name was made great,' said David. 'It seemed to rise above all the other names, it was a name to conjure by; kings mentioned my name with fear, and as for those that dwelt afar off beyond the sea, my name was to them a terror, an appalling and thrilling amazement. Many a time in my little hut amongst the sheep-folds I have wondered how it was that my name came roaring along the winds; now here is the explanation—"I have made thee a name".'

Was ever man comforted like this? He adds another word, for now that He is on these terms with David and is going to disappoint him, He will prepare him for the disappointment in a splendid preface: 'The Lord will build thee an house'. Man likes a house, and likes a sure place to dwell in; it may not be great, but it is his; he says, 'This is my door, we will enter in here, and here we shall find rest and immortality'. What more could He do for him? He is going to disappoint him; all this is leading up to a rebuke. Always suspect some danger, man, when you possess delight; it is one of the doggerels on which you were reared. He says, 'I took thee from the sheep-cote, I have been with thee whithersoever thou hast walked, I have cut off all thine enemies, I have made thee a name like the name of the great men that are in the earth: I will build thee an house. Thine hands are bloody, and thou shalt not gather these stones that are shaped into My temple. But you have had your lot, you have seen your destiny, you know the multitude of the comforts that have surrounded you day and night all these years. Nathan was wrong, Nathan spoke to thee too hurriedly, I have sent Nathan back to thee to recall his words, and to say the Lord is not served by building. Thy son shall build Me an house, but the house building shall be none of thy doing; thou didst work according to thy day, I am not rebuking thee, thou didst work by thine own opportunity, and according to thine own lights, and thou art the father of the temple-builder, but not the temple-builder himself.' That is the text.

II. What is the explanation of it all so far as we are concerned? It is to show us God's place in human life. What is written here is written everywhere. It is the same with you and with me as it was with David; there are things we may do and things we may not do. God will always have to work with imperfect tools; even Solomon will not be the perfect man at the end that he was apparently going to be at the beginning. We all have to work according to our tools and opportunities, and the best of us is a bad workman. I wonder we dare do anything in the house of God; to light a lamp is too great a work for me, to have anything to do with the treasure of the house of the Lord is to me in many a mood a blasphemy, yet there are those of us who think we honour the house of God by attending to it. It is not so; it is we who receive the honour, not the house that is honoured.

III. And here is God accompanying men. If ever we said we would go out alone, He said, 'I will see to it, he shall not go out alone, for this is a land of wild beasts, and he may cross the path of the lion, and come near the retreat of the bear; I will go with him, I will prevent him—that is to say, I will go between him and danger; I will go before him, and he shall put his footprint where I set My foot.' God is closer than we think; God is nearer than we have sometimes dreamed or imagined.—JOSEPH PARKER, *City Temple Pulpit*, vol. VI. p. 175.

REFERENCES.—XVII. 26, 27.—H. M. Butler, *Harrow School Sermons* (2nd Series), p. 299. XVIII. 4.—G. T. Coster, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxii. p. 261.

GREAT GIANTS AND SMALL

'Children of the giant . . . a man of great stature . . . these were born unto the giant in Gath.'—1 CHRONICLES XX. 4-8.

You tremble when you read the names of these giants. There is no need to tremble; a deadlier giant is aiming at your heart to-day. The heroics have changed as to apparatus and nomenclature and environment, and all that sort of vanishing vapour; the great fight goes on, the tremendous rush of armies, Philistine and Israelite still meet face to face.

I. What giants have you been fighting? You have got through the first crude lot. I know it; so have we all. But it was a mere mob of blackguards; the hostility itself was vulgar, coarse, contemptible. The mischief is, lest having got through that mob of scoundrelism and villainy detestable and palpable, we think that therefore the fighting is done. The fighting never ends until the body is in the grave or is laid out on its last bed. You have killed the giant of Falsehood, you would not for the world be thought to be a liar; long ago you killed the giant Untruth, the black-faced giant Lies. But it does not therefore follow that you are now a true man, that you have escaped the lap and the shame of another falsehood, deeper, subtler, deadlier. Take care! You have overthrown the giant Dishonesty, there is no thief in your family. Take care! oh, take care! *Thou shalt not steal*—'That commandment

have I kept from my youth up'; and in the King's name I stop thee and bid thee be less fluent.

II. Not until we distinguish between crime and sin can we make any real progress in Gospel studies. Have you fought down and conquered the giant of Ingratitude? Who thinks about the spiritual sins? Who is not horrified by crime and draws its garments round it in attestation of its shocked refinement? There may be more sin in ingratitude than in some murders. The murder may have been done in hot blood, in haste, to be repented of evermore, through ages eternal to be regretted and deplored as a lasting bruise of the soul. Ingratitude is slow, mean, deliberate, calculating, cruel; ingratitude may proceed by system, it means the most horrible of all neglect, it means death that swallows up the soul in some black pool. The giant of ingratitude takes a great deal of fighting.

III. The danger does not lie always along what may be called the line of giants. There are more difficult forces to contend with than the visibly and measurably gigantic. There is not a giant to fight every one of us, but there is a foe that every soul must know and confront and be thrown by or must overthrow.

Are you fully aware that there are many assailants and enemies who are not giants by name, but are giants in influence, in obstinacy of purpose, in a cruel determination to ruin your soul?

We have often been told of the insect in certain countries that eats away all the woodwork of the door and leaves nothing but a coat of paint, so that going to the door and endeavouring to open it, it falls to pieces under the slightest pressure. That is translated into the life of to-day and into the life of every day. The paint is right, the externalism is beyond criticism, all seems to be well; but take care, for the white ant has eaten up all the interior character, and nothing is left but some flakes of paint. You have read the wonderful travels of Livingstone; the great missionary traveller tells of the tsetze fly; it is a stinging winged insect. There is the noble ox, a symbol of things strong and massive; Livingstone says that the tsetze fly will light upon that ox, puncture the shining skin of the unsuspecting and undefended beast, and to-morrow and the next day and the next, and a week hence and that noble quadruped will have sunk upon the ground a mass of putrid flesh. These are the giants we have to fear, when morally defined and understood. We are not called upon to fight with fire and water and great hordes and rabbles of enemies and shocking vulgarities of incarnation, but we are called upon to fight the tsetze fly, the stinging insect that punctures the character, and little by little the poison penetrates the whole tissue and outgo of the character, and he who may have been a prince in the house of God is there a foul carcase on the roadside that no dog would attempt to devour. How are the mighty fallen! how is the fine gold become dim!—Joseph Parker, *City Temple Pulpit*, vol. I. p. 198.

DAVID'S CENSUS

'And David said to Joab and to the rulers of the people, Go, number Israel from Beer-sheba even to Dan; and bring the number of them to me, that I may know it.'—1 Chronicles xxi. 2.

What was it that made David's deed ungodly? The answer is that David's act was a grievous forgetfulness of, and departure from, God's purpose (an act in which the people acquiesced with their king). He appears to have been moved by the hope that he should find the people big enough to cope with the nations around them on their own ground. And the people themselves would appear to have shared David's pride and ambition. Once they were a horde of freshly emancipated slaves. Now, a fixed people, they felt their feet, and would stand of their own strength.

I. In considering the leading lesson here taught, think for a moment (1) how unique that race was. Nothing is so wonderful in the history of the world as the survival of the Jews. They were in the midst of mighty nations which far outnumbered them, but which (as the centuries rolled by) all lost their place and power in the world, while the Jews remained. But (2) more is to be noticed. This peculiar nation, destined to survive with incredible vitality, produced One Who should spread His kingdom from shore to shore, not by the sword, but by the Word of Truth; and that process is going on. That nation has given birth to the most widely penetrating body upon earth, the manifold Church of Christ. The Christian Church came from nowhere unless it came out of the Jewish. It reads the Jewish Bible, and chants the Jewish Psalms. Its cradle was Jerusalem. Its first Apostles and teachers were all Jews. Its Head was a Jew Himself. And though the old Jewish community does not proselytize, its child, the Christian Church, does, with accumulating energy. It is the most conspicuously aggressive teacher of religion on the face of the globe, setting itself to convert every nation upon earth; its unconquered heart beats with desire and intention to go on in the belief that, after His own way and in His own time, the uplifted Christ will draw all men unto Him.

Thus the lesson is clear that David's act was forgetfulness of God's purpose. In seeking to realize his material forces, and count the swords which he could draw, he slighted that unseen vital force which distinguished his people, and descended to the meaner level on which those around took their stand. In the preservation of the Jews and the development of Christianity we see a Divine process which David ignored; the whole history shows the secret of the Lord, and declares that there is a power, often hidden, which fulfils its purpose with irresistible force.

II. But this is not the only lesson to be learned. It points us to some of those mistakes which men are apt to make at all times in the conduct of their society and their lives. Of course I refer to a reliance on numbers as a guarantee of stability and truth. I am not thinking of war alone. In national economy, and most especially in religion, the faith in mere

numbers may prove to be disastrous, and the impotence of numbers demonstrated. The consent and unanimity of a thousand fools does not render the folly of one man harmless. On the contrary, it may arm it with power to do a thousand-fold more harm. We should be very cautious in guiding our course by the weathercock of public opinion. No doubt it shows which way the wind blows, and indicates the presence of numbers; but the question remains—in which direction does it blow, and how long will it last? The mariner does not sail before the wind unless it drives towards the haven where he would be. The radical mistake of David can be repeated by many a modern nation, and is most likely to be mischievous when led by mere party government. The great convictions and changes in history are irrespective of numbers. Again, a man who really gets hold of a truth is not more persuaded of it when it has been accepted by others. He may be pleased at, but he is not dependent on, their verdict. And a man who waits to see how a statement is received by others before he commits himself has no root in himself, being merely the slave of numbers. That slavery, worse than Egyptian, has arisen again and again in the world's course. It shows itself in the discharge of business and in the profession of Faith up to these last days. It is the same deadly hindrance to which David exposed himself and his people. He, for a while, lost sight of the Lord of Truth and Righteousness. And so we are all tempted in the formation of our opinions and actions. We are all tempted to number the people—to ask only, 'What do others think?'

It is of the first importance that a man should be, and do, what he is, and does, divinely; that he should be true to himself, to the voice of his Father which is in heaven, Who never leaves His children to walk alone, if they will only take His hand.

DAVID'S SIN IN THE NUMBERING OF THE PEOPLE

'And David said unto Gad, I am in a great strait: let me fall now into the hand of the Lord; for very great are His mercies: but let me not fall into the hand of man.'—1 CHRONICLES XXI. 13.

WHAT was David's sin in the numbering of the people?

I. The sin of David was self-confidence, pride in his own strength, and forgetfulness of the source of all his strength—even of God.

II. It was the greater sin in him because he had such marvellous, such visible witnesses of God's love and care and guidance.

III. When men dwell securely, in full peace and health, they grow to be careless in religion. We do not half know our mercies till we think them over, and hear what sufferings and calamities befall our brethren in other lands.—R. D. B. RAWNSLEY, *Village Sermons*, Series III. p. 150.

REFERENCE.—XXI. 13.—W. H. Hutchings, *Sermon-Sketches*, p. 204.

THE SWORD OF THE LORD

'And David lifted up his eyes, and saw the angel of the Lord stand between the earth and the heaven, having a drawn sword in his hand stretched out over Jerusalem.'—1 CHRONICLES XXI. 16.

THERE are many points of interest and instruction contained in the account, from which our text is taken, of the numbering of the people by David and of the awful consequences of that act.

I. Why was it so Wrong in David to Number the People?—To count the strength of his people so as to know how many men, women, and children there were in the land seems to us a reasonable and natural course enough. Nay, more than this, we find a similar proceeding twice plainly and positively ordered by God. How was it, then, that God punished David so severely for doing the same thing that He had commanded Moses to do? The truth would seem to be that David's sin consisted not in the act of numbering Israel, but rather in the spirit in which the act was done. So many things, harmless and even commendable in themselves, become offensive to God on account of the human motives with which they get mixed up. Thus in this matter of numbering the people there could surely have been nothing to make God angry had it been set about and performed simply for reasons of political or military expediency. So we must conclude that it was in the heart of David that the cause of Divine wrath existed. We can only discern the outer act; but God saw into the secrets of David's heart, and there beheld, no doubt, much of which He disapproved—e.g. pride, vainglory, over-confidence in human strength and resources.

II. God put before David a Terrible Choice.—David was to choose between three years' famine, three months to be destroyed before his foes while the sword of his enemies overtook him, or else three days the sword of the Lord, even the pestilence in the land, the angel of the Lord destroying throughout all the land of Israel. Now, these three dreadful scourges—famine, war, and pestilence—have appeared like black spots from time to time in the pages of the world's history. Do what we will, they must reappear in our midst from time to time; we cannot prevent them. We know that, so far from their vanishing away altogether, as time goes on their continued prevalence in the world will be among the signs of the last days.

III. A Time of National Disaster or Calamity puts to the Test, as Nothing else can, the Various Characters of Men.—Then, as at no other time, the difference between different people stands out clear and distinct. Each assumes his own separate individuality. Think, for instance, how in the presence of famine, war, or pestilence one man would go on still in his way unmoved, unaltered, persisting yet in his sins, not caring for the distress that prevailed around him so long as it did not touch himself. We can see another panic-stricken, craven, utterly helpless in his terror, his self-control and reasoning powers alike merged in his fear; he looks about with horror

and dismay, his heart fails him with dread. Another, with kindness of heart that is natural to him, cannot bear to contemplate the sufferings of others; he bestirs himself and tries to do all he can in the way of help and succour. There are yet others; there is the practical man who keeps calm and cool; he recognizes the peril, but maintains his self-possession. He too takes a deeper, more searching view of the question. He traces the calamity to its true cause. He looks on it as a judgment, permitted by God, on wrongdoing and disobedience. The others look on it and accept it, some in one spirit and some in another, as a most unwelcome fact, and there they leave the matter. This man lifts up his eyes as David did, and sees, as it were, the angel of the Lord with drawn sword and outstretched arm. This is the true and the religious view to take of calamities and disasters; God allows them for the punishment of sin, and therefore shall they last as long as the world lasts because of the sin that shall remain and increase to the very end.

IV. There is a Further Point in David's Conduct which calls for special notice. He did not lay the blame on other people. As a matter of fact, the pestilence was not the result of his fault alone, though in that fault of his a long series of misdeeds on the part of a perverse and stiff-necked people would appear to have reached their culmination. It is especially recorded that 'the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel'. But David thought only of his own sin; the burden of that was quite heavy enough for him to bear without his turning his attention to the sins of other people. How different it often is! There are those who are quite ready to admit that temporal punishment follows on sin, but they mean in a general way; that is to say, they are thinking more of the sins of other people than of their own. There are those who, while they deplore the prevalence of vice and irreligion among us, and declare that thereby we merit the wrath of God, forget the secret sins, the evil thoughts that are lurking in their own inmost hearts, and adding just a little more to the vast aggregate of sin and wickedness at large in our midst. Is it so with us? Are we duly sensible of the inevitable personal responsibility that rests on each of us? Which is it that we hate most, sin in the abstract or our own sin? Can we say with David, 'Even I it is that have sinned and done evil indeed'? or with the Apostles who, when our Lord foretold that one of them should betray Him, did not wonder which of the others it should be, but in humility and deep self-abasement asked, 'Lord, is it I?' In David's penitence we see the essentials of real, genuine repentance.

FAR-REACHING CONSEQUENCES OF SIN

'As for these sheep, what have they done?'—I CHRONICLES XXI. 17.

THE one thing that strikes us in reading the history of David always seems to be the quality of his character. He is an instance of the twofold possibilities of human nature. At one time we see him soaring to the highest conception of truth and goodness and love and purity, and at another time we see him sinking in the veriest mire of deceit and injustice and wrongdoing and impurity. And yet we are told that this man was a man after God's own heart. And here is the explanation. 'God knoweth whereof we are made, He remembereth that we are but dust.' Well for us that it is so! If God were extreme to mark what was done amiss, who among us should stand before Him? But let no man think that God countenances evil. The seal of heaven is upon David's life, not because he was a victim to some of the worst passions of our nature, but because his aspirations were towards the perfect likeness and perfect holiness of God.

I. Personal Accountability for Sin.—David said, 'I have sinned'. That was David's impulsive acknowledgment. It was the sin of pride—the sin of numbering his people that he might boast himself in the strength of his armies instead of reposing in the protection and the might of God. And David knew and felt what he had done directly it was done. 'I have sinned greatly.' Notice the personality of his guilt and the candour of his confession. He mentions nothing to exculpate his sin. And the same thing is noticeable in his other great cry. 'I acknowledge my transgression, and my sin is ever before me.' A very little knowledge of human nature will show us that this is not at all a common attitude. It is hard to believe that the sin we commit is our own. We try all we can to shift the responsibility. We urge all kinds of pleas by way of self-exoneration. But whatever we may think or plead, sin is personal and guilt is personal. We like to group ourselves with others and feel that we are sinners as a class. Yet all is individual, all is incommunicable.

II. The Consequences of Sin.—Now let us pass to the second aspect of the subject, viz. the unfortunate consequences of sin. It is evident that David felt the guilt of sin to be his own, from which he alone needed purging. But the consequences of his sin did not stop at David. To human judgment it must seem fair that in this respect every man should bear his own burden. Could Israel help the sin of their king? Yet thousands of men were stricken down in consequence with the misery of a pestilential death. David's great soul would gladly have borne the full penalty if that had been possible. But his sin had wider consequences—consequences distributed over the whole of his nation. It has been so from the beginning. It is part of the inexorable law of God that it should be so. By one man sin entered into the world and death by sin. God says, 'I will visit the sins of the fathers upon the children'—the innocent children as we call them—'unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me'. I want you to distinguish between the consequences of sin and the punishment of sin. There cannot be punishment where there is no guilt. Suffering there may be, but no punishment. You and I will never have to bear the punishment of another's sin, but we cannot escape

the consequences of another's folly, and others cannot help suffering on account of our sins and follies. It is this that adds to the heinousness of sin; it is this that makes our accountability to God so awful. The soul that sins may sink into the bottomless pit of perdition, but the influence of its sin will ripple on the eddying waters of life to the farther verge of eternity. The sinner may be truly penitent, and may be forgiven, but the consequences of his sin are beyond recall. 'I have sinned, but what have these sheep done?'

References.—XXI. 17.—R. Hiley, *A Year's Sermons*, vol. ii. p. 43. XXI. 28.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxx. No. 1808.

CATHEDRALS—THEIR USE AND ABUSE

'The house that is to be built for the Lord must be exceeding magnificent.'—1 Chronicles xxii. 5.

This may be regarded as an utterance not so much prompted by any direct inspiration, as of the instinct of the religious nature that is in man. The most 'magnificent' buildings in the world are those that are or have been connected with religion—pagodas, mosques, temples, minsters.

I. The first Christians, those of whom we read in the Acts of the Apostles and in the Epistles of St. Paul—with their surrounding difficulties of poverty or persecution, could not do much of a material kind to express their sense of Divine law. 'Not many noble, not many great, not many rich were called then.' A time came for greater things, and for a display of the majesty of external ritual to the eyes of the world; and the religious instincts of the heart, having first found satisfaction of their yearnings within, craved also an opportunity of expressing that satisfaction in outward form. The instinct—for, from its universality and uniformity it would seem to have been an instinct rather than a mere formal or conscious effort of the moment—founded itself upon, or else was accompanied by, many ideas; but one was paramount, and that was the idea of a noble and (so far as human resources could make it) a commensurate worship of Almighty God: that nothing should be wanting to help the worshippers to feel that the service rendered to God is and ought to be the highest of all earthly services.

II. It is a natural, and when kept within bounds, a legitimate desire of the human heart, and when it has been once touched by religious influences to yearn after an elevated, beautiful type of worship. The tendency of a utilitarian age is to lose to a great extent the feeling—indeed almost the conception of worship—as for instance David conceived it. It is true we have not altogether 'forsaken the assembling of ourselves together,' but the motive by which we are influenced is elaborate and gorgeous ritual, or a highly finished musical service, rather than any desire to realize in the truest sense and highest measure the blessedness of communion with God. Anyone who has seen those vast congregations gathered into the nave of Westminster Abbey or beneath the dome of St. Paul's Cathedral, must allow that in our cathedrals we have an opportunity, if only we will use it, of exercising that 'gift of prophecy' to which St. Paul attributes so potent an influence both on those who believe not and on those who believe. At the same time I entirely feel that we may add to the pomp and external solemnity of religion without thereby proportionately increasing its power. These grand cathedrals teach, moreover—or if they do not directly teach, they indirectly remind us of—some great moral, I may even call them some great national lesson. We of the nineteenth century are not in all respects better than our fathers, nor wiser. In some respects, it is obvious, we have more light, greater power, wider opportunities, larger capacity; but in many other respects we are but copyists, and copyists at a humble distance, of those who have gone before us. We could hardly build nowadays one of these cathedrals; nor if we could find the money, could not perhaps find the architect to design Westminster Abbey, or Lincoln Minster, or Salisbury spire. We have not got the faith, perhaps we have not got the piety, certainly we have not got the spirit of self-sacrifice.—J. Fraser, *University and other Sermons*, p. 83.

References.—XXII. 5.—H. P. Liddon, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 1164. XXII. 7.—H. J. Wilmot-Buxton, *Sunday Lessons for Daily Life*, p. 87.

THE HOUSE OF THE LORD

'It was in my mind to build an house unto the name of the Lord my God: But the Word of the Lord came to me, saying, . . . Thou shalt not build an house unto My Name.'—1 Chronicles xxii. 7, 8.

One of the great disappointments of David's life was his desire to build a house unto the Lord, and God forbade the same. Why was it? Because he was a shedder of blood, we are told. Was it because he had made war? I think not. There was a shedding of blood in David's life which was worse than war. The man after God's own heart had gone astray in the matter of heart and the passions of life, which led the brave warrior to become a cowardly murderer. This was the sin on David's soul, and when he wanted to change the sword for the trowel God forbade him. He can still write poetry, he can still have high aspirations, he can still build a noble palace for his kingly dignity, but when the man who has lost purity, and given up simplicity of life for the more complex life of the king-warrior, wants to build a temple to the Lord God in heaven, no, he is not fit. The man after God's own heart, the poet, the king, the warrior against God's enemies, he is not fit to build the temple for God. He can only want to, and must stop short. It is very sad; it is very pitiful.

But we find it so in everyday life. What has gone before counts for so much. A man comes to you and wants some appointment. You know him to be now a good fellow, straight of purpose, honest, true, but you know what his past is.

I. It is so in spiritual matters. God sets us a high aim, and we have to prepare for a life that is a continual rising, step above step, to the very heaven of God; and as we rise one step above another there is ever a power beckoning us on higher still; something

nobler, something better for you to do. But when the calls come, they come just according to our power to meet them, and our power to meet these calls depends upon the way in which we have responded to other calls. It depends upon the way in which we have lived in the past how we shall be able to live for God in the future. By our past we may fit ourselves for high work; by our past we may not only have missed opportunities, but the power to be and do what in after life our soul longs to be able to do. We know it by experience. We know we may not do what we should like to do now, not merely because there has not been given us the power to do it, but because we did not use the powers we had in the past, and so made ourselves fit for the highest work in the present. You know of it in your prayers; you know it in dealing with other souls. A power within you bids you aid that man or that woman, and you force yourself to say and do what you feel it is your Christian duty to do, and yet you have a feeling it will fail, it is useless, it will not serve the purpose you have in view. And you know it is you yourself who are at fault, that your words won't ring true, that the very man will find you out. You say, 'I do not touch the heart and soul of those I come in contact with,' and you know it is because your heart and soul are not quite, not quite, what, by the grace of God, they might have been.

II. David had lost power, and when he wanted to do that thing which was the consummation of his whole life on earth he was forbidden. All he might do was to gather up the gold, and the iron, and the silver, and the timber, and say to another, 'Do what I cannot do. I can touch a harp as you never touched it, I can bring peace into the land which in your days will only become starvation, but I cannot gather up my life in this supreme offering to my God, for He forbids me. My righteous indignation against God's enemies has passed into passion; my love—pure and holy once was my love for Jonathan—has become impure; my hands that had only touched the hilt of the sword that shed the blood of those who sinned against God have become red with the blood of the innocent whose wife I coveted. I have not conquered self, and now I cannot give to God that which is the fulfilment of my whole heart's desire.'

What is the lesson? Conquer self, and if you conquer self the calls will come from God and you can respond. Conquer anger, conquer your passions, conquer your lusts, and you may build temples to God made of your own souls and the souls of others you have brought to Christ.

LIMITATION AND CO-OPERATION

'And thou mayest add thereto.'—1 CHRONICLES XXII. 14.

HAVING done his utmost to facilitate the building of the temple, David now commends the great work to the faithfulness and enthusiasm of his son. The text is brief, yet it implies great principles worthy of close consideration by all workers for God and mankind. It has a pathetic side, also an aspect of consolation and encouragement; and it is in the consideration of both that we get a true estimate of the duty of life.

I. The Pathetic Side of our Text.—The limitation of the individual. David could not project and accomplish the whole scheme by virtue of his own power and resource. He at once discovered that he must take Solomon into partnership; Solomon forthwith found it necessary to enlist the sympathies of the princes, whilst the princes, in turn, were constrained to appeal to the people. It is surprising how soon we exhaust our personal power and resource, and must look beyond ourselves if cherished purposes are to be brought to pass. Limitations of one sort or another condition us all. We can play only a part, a small part, and play that part only for a little while.

We are subject to *constitutional* circumscriptions from which is no escape. We work happily and effectively only within the lines prescribed by our special natural endowment. We see this in the greatest men. The mathematician who wished to know what *Paradise Lost* proved disclosed his own limitation.

We may easily get into a niche for which we were not made, attempt work for which we have no aptitude, undertake tasks in which Nature herself forbids that we should excel. God has declared our narrow, predestined sphere in the lines of our body and brain; and it is most pathetic to see a man struggling to get out of his skin and attempting to be what God did not intend him to be, to do work that was never given to him to do.

We suffer *circumstantial* circumscriptions. David possessed gifts and cherished aspirations which the trend and pressure of events did not permit him to exercise and satisfy. The sword was thrust into his hand, when he coveted the harp; he was entangled in politics, whilst he burned to sing; and empire-building became his duty, whilst temple-building was his passion. Our body does not furnish utterance for the fullness of the spirit; our present life is not nearly so wide, various, and rich as the soul.

Mutability and mortality complete our restrictions. 'So David prepared abundantly before his death.' Life's little day thrusts into small room our large and manifold speculations. A celebrated artist painted conspicuously in his studio a death's head, not out of a morbid temper, but that the fugitiveness of opportunity should be kept in constant remembrance. Whether or not we thus grimly remind ourselves of the fact, infirmity, age, and death quickly mar cherished dreams. 'We are strangers and pilgrims, as all our fathers were.'

II. The Aspect of Consolation and Encouragement Presented by our Text.—'And thou mayest add thereto.' The insignificance of the individual worker is lost sight of in the social law which consolidates and conserves the humblest endeavour. In two particulars the text is instructive and inspiring.

It reminds us of the *continuity* of human service. David did what was possible to him, and then trans-

mitted his undertaking to his son. A wonderful social law gives coherence, continuity, and permanence to human action. Leo Grindon writes: 'Nothing so plainly distinguishes between man and brutes as the absolute *nothingness of effect* in the work of the latter. Unless the coral isles be deemed an exception, of all the past labours of all the animals that ever existed there is not a trace extant.' These creatures are sagacious, they are intense, they have toiled unweariedly from the beginning of time; but their work is as ephemeral as themselves.

Continuity and conservation prevail in the *intellectual world.* The glorious things of our literature, science, and art, are legacies of our gifted ancestors which have come to us through a long series of generations who have each added thereto. Other men have laboured, and we have entered into their labours.

In *national life* the continuity of service conspicuously obtains. 'One generation shall praise Thy name to another, and shall declare Thy mighty acts!' Our vast empire, with its glory and blessing, is the sum-total of the contributions of a few splendid spirits, but chiefly of millions of obscure patriots who added infinitesimally to its knowledge, righteousness, and happiness.

In the *religious* sphere the conservation of power and effort is simply absolute. No Church is the creation of a great genius, or the creation of an aristocracy of ability and saintliness; but each Church is the sum-total of millions of minute contributions made by modest men and women altogether unhistoric. It is said that from every leaf of a tree a fine thread strikes, running along the branch, down the stem, into the root; and when the leaf falls, this slender fibre remains, giving increasing bulk and strength to the tree year by year. So Christians drop unrecorded into the grave, like leaves into the dust; but each member, departing, adds a vital fibre to the organism, and the accumulation of these minute increments gives increasing strength and splendour to the Church of God which, like a tree of life, hastens to overshadow the nations.—W. L. Watkinson, *The Fatal Barter*, pp. 258-273.

Reference.—XXIII. 13.—I. Trevor, *Types and the Antitypes*, p. 102.

PROPHETIC MUSIC

'Who prophesied with a harp.'—1 Chronicles xxv. 3.

The singing of Jeduthun and his sons, accompanied as it was by the rich tones of the harp, is described as prophesying. They 'prophesied with a harp'. They made a revelation of Divine truth by music, vocal and instrumental.

I. This is a Notable Form of Prophecy.—Prophecy may assume many forms; the uttered word, the written word, the symbolic action. But how impressive this particular form, communicating spiritual truth by song and harp! *It is Spiritual.* The Psalter is a magnificent illustration of such prophesying. In Isaiah's vision you discover the same method of setting forth theologic truth. The seraphic choir sang in sublime antiphony. This form of prophecy is *historic.* At our Saviour's birth the angel-choir 'prophesied'. The *Gloria in excelsis* was prophetic music. Beyond all telling glorious was that earliest Christmas carol which baptized with melody the plains of Bethlehem.

II. This is an Appropriate Form of Prophecy.—Music, vocal or instrumental, or both, is a most suitable vehicle for Divine truth. Music is essentially *religious.* There are those who differentiate between sacred and secular music, but surely such distinction is factitious. All music is sacred. We may attach to it irreligious elements, but in essence it is Divine. *Music transcends the Material.* It is closely allied to the spiritual. It tints the eternal. It is itself a plea for the unseen. *Music stirs imagination.* Imagination is an ally of religious truth. It fosters faith. Music in appealing to the imagination justifies itself as a prophetic medium. *Music suggests immortality.* Music is one of the revealed attributes and pursuits of heaven. It points to other and grander spheres than the time-sphere.

III. This is a Form of Prophecy which Serves Noble Spiritual Ends.—Music is a glorious means of expressing gratitude for God's good gifts. *Praise* is the homage of God's character. Praise revels in what God is and not alone what He bestows. Music is never more nobly engaged than when it is used to praise the Lord.

IV. This is a Form of Prophecy which Demands Great Qualifications.—Training is needed. It should be spiritual as well as mental. They who lead the song of God's house need to be trained to be true prophets of God. Not easily is this spiritual qualification attained. Nothing worthy is easily won. But the Spirit Divine can make you such prophetic musicians as shall evoke God's good pleasure.—Dinsdale T. Young, *Messages for Home and Life*, p. 203.

References.—XXV. 7.—F. Stanley Root, *Christian World Pulpit*, 1891, p. 168.

THE WILLING MIND

'And thou, Solomon my son, know thou the God of thy father, and serve Him with . . . a willing mind.'—1 Chronicles xxviii. 9.

God does not enter man's heart till man himself opens the door. The turning-point with a man is when he surrenders freely his will to God. God's greatest power towards a man is seen in subduing his will. It is the strongest fortress that He takes. The service which He requires from His people is a willing service.

I. A Willing Mind Triumphs over Difficulties.—There are those who cast about for or make difficulties, the unwilling. They admit the force of your reasoning, but create barriers, or at least exaggerate them. Like children that deface their book that they may escape learning their lessons. Another class have uncommonly clear eyes for seeing difficulties—clearer

than for seeing duties. Difficulties are to them like the large letters on great posters, and duties like the small letters which people pass without observing. Such people have weak inclinations. They would rather be good and do good, but they are, on the whole, open for influences in one direction or another, just as they come. 'A double-minded man is unstable in all his ways.' 'Willing,' in the text, is opposed not only to unwilling, but to mere inclining. The mere wisher dreams, the willer prepares for work. For example, in the matter of temptation. How many who complain of temptations have really a strongly willing mind to resist them? So with attendance at the house of God. So with working for Christ. Very feasible reasons can be given sometimes for the omission of such duties. Counter-arguments may seem weak in comparison, but the 'willing mind' would cut its way through all.

II. A Willing Mind Makes Duty Pleasant.—Duty and pleasure are often opposed to each other. They set out with different objects, and own different authorities. The very essence of duty is the sacrifice of our own will. 'Even Christ pleased not Himself.' 'I came not to do Mine own will.' Christ's will from the first was lost in His Father's; His very meat and drink was to do His will. Man, on the other hand, is naturally in arms against duty—i.e. against God. Duty comes awkward to him—like learning to work tools. For a time old habit makes the proper handling very irksome and tiresome, but after we have learned the art there is pleasure in it. Then what is right and what is pleasing are the same thing. So, in room of trying to shirk duty, set about bringing your mind to it.

III. A Willing Mind Ennobles Service.—It is not hard work which constitutes slavery. The difference between the slave and the freeman is the 'willing mind'. It was the indolent servant who thought his lord an 'austere' master. To the willing mind all service is alike noble—anointing the head or washing the feet. What would be irksome and be felt humbling to others is a joy to the mother of a child.

IV. A Willing Mind Makes our Offerings Acceptable.—'To the noble mind rich gifts wax poor when givers prove unkind.' God will be contented with nothing but the heart. Serve Him with a perfect heart and with a 'willing mind'.

References.—XXVIII. 9.—G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 127. XXVIII. 10.—A. G. Brown, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 1061. XXIX. 1.—C. Perren, *Outline Sermons*, p. 228. G. W. Rutherford, *The Key of Knowledge*, p. 216. G. G. Bradley, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xx. p. 289. XXIX. 5.—C. Perren, *Revival Sermons*, p. 220. F. E. Paget, *Helps and Hindrances to the Christian Life*, vol. ii. p. 254.

CONSECRATION

(For St. Matthew's Day)

'Who then is willing to consecrate his service this day unto the Lord?'—1 Chronicles xxix. 5.

This old-time question comes to us with special force and fitness on the day on which we commemorate the life of St. Matthew. At the call of the Master—'Follow Me'—he rose and left all and followed Christ; he consecrated his service, his life, himself unto the Lord. As a result of that call the current of his life branched out in two great directions—the direction of devotion and the direction of service. It was nothing but intense devotion to the personality of Christ as revealed to him that could have enabled St. Matthew to have lived the life he did.

Some Characteristics of Service.—

(*a*) *A matter of obligation.*—Let us be quite sure that all service is a matter of obligation. No one has ever yet been compelled to serve God, and there are plenty of people to-day who quite forsake the idea of ever serving God. But the Church never ceases to raise her voice—the voice of the holy Head of the Church—calling them in and reminding them of their obligation.

(*b*) *A matter of responsibility.*—Being a matter of obligation, it is a matter of responsibility. It is a matter of responsibility first, as to whether we think of it as a matter of obligation at all, and as to how we discharge that obligation if we at all recognize it as such.

(*c*) *A matter of fitness.*—There is the law of fitness. This is a wonderful world, and we are wonderful people. It is mysterious how we fit into a certain niche and do a certain sort of work. It seems to us such a very little service, yet amongst all the great services rendered to this world, there we are in God's eyes fitting that very niche that He has called upon us to fit. Do not you think that all labour is ennobled by the belief that we ourselves are given a work to do, which no one else could do. If we do it badly, the people with whom we mix, and those coming after us, must suffer.

(*d*) *A matter of care.*—Then there is the law of care in service. After all, what was there in the service of St. Matthew? Not, surely, How little can I do for Christ? but, How much? Only those who thus consecrate their work are doing their proper service to God and their generation.

(*e*) *A matter of diligence.*—Again, there is the law of diligence. You know some people who are diligent—never weary in well-doing, hiding their weariness, spending themselves in the service of others, by one idea—to do that which their hand finds to do, and to do it with their might.

(*f*) *A matter of loyalty.*—All service is consecrated to a person—the person of Christ Himself. Therefore, there must be loyalty in the performance of it. What caused the great sin of the betrayal? People say it was covetousness, and many other things. But what underlay it all? Absolute disloyalty. We have all to learn in serving the sacred person of Christ that the first essential is that we should be loyal. So let it be with us. May we learn the lesson of loyalty to the person of a living Saviour.

THE TEMPLE AND THE CHURCH

And who then is willing to consecrate his service this day unto the Lord? . . . Then the people rejoiced, for that they offered willingly.'—1 CHRONICLES XXIX. 5, 9.

WE have the distinct authority of the New Testament for regarding the temple of Solomon as a type and figure of the Christian Church. 'Ye are the temple of God.' 'Ye also, as living stones, are built up a spiritual house.'

I. The Beauty of the Type.—This appears in its fullness when we come to study the symbolism of the temple. In almost every single detail there is a striking harmony between the material fabric itself and the Church of Jesus Christ. The pattern was of Divine origin. Nothing was left to human skill or contrivance; the pattern of all that David had was by the Spirit. In other words, the design emanated from the mind of the great Architect Himself, and was communicated to the human instrumentality for carrying into effect. Is not this exactly what is taking place in the erection of the spiritual temple? God has decreed the place and purpose of each living stone, though He makes use of human help to bring the stones into their right position. The foundation of the temple on the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite! What memories were associated with the very name! Here we have first the thought of judgment against sin, and secondly mercy prevailing through sacrifice. The two thoughts were linked together in the mind of every Jew as he passed into the worship of the temple. But is not this again the leading feature of the Church to-day? Her foundations are laid on the atoning sacrifice of Calvary. Judgment and mercy blend together as one when we survey the wondrous Cross. 'Out of the spoil won in battles did they dedicate to repair the house of the Lord'—a faint representation this of the materials of which the Church is built, for is not our Lord taking the spoils of spiritual conflict and suffering and transforming them into heirs of salvation? Even our degraded powers are rendered serviceable to the cause of Christ.

II. God's Temple a Ruin.—As we look around to-day the sight that meets our eyes everywhere is sad and deplorable in the extreme. God's temple is a ruin! Man has fallen from his high estate! The evidence is continually before us. With the Bible in our hands we have no hesitation in tracing the world's misery to the advent of sin. Our opponents ridicule the theological interpretation of earthly suffering and wretchedness. We are told that by a gradual process of evolution man is bound to advance ever upward in the scale of being until there is the complete elimination of all kinds of social disorder. Do facts justify the anticipation? We grant at once the progress due to discovery and research, but when we take the greatest of all tests, as directly concerned with the well-being of the race, how few signs we find of real progress. Is the world's happiness increased by the spread of knowledge? The fact is, every increase in scientific discovery leading to the displacement of labour is only making the struggle for existence harder still for those who are to come after us. The battle of life in its competitive aspect was never so fierce as it is to-day. Our streets are filled with unemployed. The science of which we boast seems likely to become a very juggernaut, crushing its victims with ever-increasing violence. It is harder to live now than it was even twenty or thirty years ago. The Christian explanation is the only feasible one. God's temple is a ruin, like some of those old desolated mansions which we see scattered throughout the land. All the signs of former greatness are there, but decay has gradually done its work. Until man finds his true life in God the ruin is bound to go on unchecked.

III. To be Built by Human Effort.—Once again for the erection of His temple God is making use of human effort. The Gospel is still the power of God unto salvation. By saved men, men are saved. The call as of old comes to willing helpers, 'Who then is willing to consecrate his service this day unto the Lord?' Voluntary service is in demand for this great work—not conscripts, but volunteers are invited to come to the help of the Lord against the mighty. The word 'consecrate' means literally to fill the hand, but before the hand can be filled to the Lord it must first be emptied. The Church to-day requires to undergo an emptying process. We are too selfish, too worldly, too unspiritual. Our religious controversies are only proofs of our lack of the true anointing. We can only fill our hands for God when they are emptied of all that defiles.

IV. Service to be Rendered 'Unto the Lord'.—It is not merely done at the invitation of a minister; it must not be undertaken to please a fellow-man. Rise to the high dignity of your calling. The Lord entreats and solicits aid for His cause in the extension of His kingdom in the world. The time of service is 'this day'. Opportunity is passing from us. He who invites will one day reward. The result of consecration in service was joy. 'Then the people rejoiced for that they offered willingly.' We wonder at the absence of true Christian joy. How can there be joy when God's people see the ruin of His temple, and make so little effort to build it up? The luxury of doing good is known only to those who engage in it. We starve our souls when we hold back from compliance with the Divine requirement. Many a Christian heart to-day is parched and withered simply because religion has become a mere question of the salvation of self. We shall reach the fullness of joy held out to us in the Gospel when we think more of the salvation of others.

WILLING OFFERINGS

'Then the people rejoiced, for that they offered willingly, because with a perfect heart they offered willingly to the Lord: and David the king also rejoiced with great joy.'—1 CHRONICLES XXIX. 9.

WHY is it that we are asked to sustain and to adorn a fabric and services like our own? On what principle is it that we ought to continue here with-

out stint and without doubt the work of twelve centuries? In this search our best guide will be the conviction that our worship like our life—our worship which is our highest life—corresponds with our whole nature. It is the complete service of men linked to earth and linked to heaven, born with a passion for God, for truth, for honesty, and born to confess it.

I. We are too much inclined to forget that public worship is not simply an instrument of individual edification. We come together here day by day, and week by week, not simply to ask something but also to give something, for praise as well as for prayer. Worship, then, is a showing forth of God's glory, an open acknowledgment of our sense of His bounty, an interpretation in some measure of our view of His works. In this way we become able to understand that there is room, that there is need for the utmost effects of architecture and music in our ideal worship.

II. But let us not be mistaken. Such worship, such forms of praise are not an end. They are a sign. We do not rest in the most majestic material forms or in the most solemn strains which are dedicated to God's honour. These in themselves are not religion. But they have a religious function. They bear testimony to the possibility of the complete transfiguration of life. They follow us with a hallowing influence into our social work, and into our homes. It is easy to overlook or underrate such an influence. But no one, I think, can have watched even chance visitors to a building or a service like our own without seeing that they do teach lessons which are needed and suggest great thoughts which cannot be without fruit.

III. To this end our offerings, whatever they may be, personal service or special gifts, or free contributions ought to bear four marks—truthfulness, proportion, sacrifice, love.

(*a*) *Truthfulness* is of the very essence of serving and of giving. Our measure must not be the impression which we produce. In teaching, or singing, or worshipping, or waiting we must strive to do our best.

(*b*) *Proportion.*—No devotion to our special charge must lead us to forget or to disparage other parts of Christian service.

(*c*) *Sacrifice.*—There is an aspect in which service is not pleasurable. It costs us something to make an effort when perhaps we are weary, to forego that which otherwise we might have enjoyed, to watch heedfully lest that which is habitual should become mechanical. But the kingly answer may cheer us. 'Shall I offer unto the Lord my God of that which costs me nothing?'

(*d*) *Love.*—Sacrifice is transformed by love; and love is the soul of service. If our work, if our offerings are to be blessed, they must be rendered not because men expect them of us, but because we know that we have received much and that we have been forgiven much, because we feel the inspiration of a Divine motive, because we are conscious of participation in a larger being.—B. F. Westcott, *Peterborough Sermons*, p. 373.

Reference.—XXIX. 10-13.—C. Wordsworth, *Occasional Sermons* (3rd Series), p. 17.

THE ARGUMENT FOR PRAISE

'Now therefore, our God, we thank Thee, and praise Thy glorious name.'—1 Chronicles xxix. 13.

David pre-eminently was the writer on praise, and surely no one had greater need to praise God than he.

It may be thought that David was a disappointed man. At the end of his life he had longed with a holy yearning to build the house of the Lord. But God said to David: 'No; you have been a man of blood and war. My house must be built by a man of peace.' But was David disappointed? Instead of being disappointed, as would have been somewhat natural, we observe that David praised God: he praised Him for permitting him to put together the various jewels, with silver and iron and stone, for the building of the temple. He was perfectly satisfied to leave the actual building in the hand of his son Solomon, whose name signified Peaceable, and who was ordained by God to build the temple which was the wonder of the world.

The subject before us is not merely the building of the earthly temple, but in its beautiful typical significance the erection, the perfecting, the beautifying of the spiritual house; and we have to ask ourselves, amongst other questions: (1) whether we are part of the spiritual temple; (2) whether we are really being brought into union with God, into union with the One foundation once laid, even Jesus Christ; (3) whether we are doing what David did in making preparation for the further rearing up and beautifying of this spiritual temple. For it is true—is it not?—that when once the soul of man gets right with God, that soul becomes keenly anxious for others; and one of the evidences that we are part of the spiritual temple of God is shown in the intense longing with which we yearn to see more and more of our fellow-men rejoicing in David's God, rejoicing in what Christ has accomplished for them. Let us consider our text in the following way:—

1. There is the argument for praise—'Now therefore'. This brings us, of course, clearly back to the beginning of the prayer. David begins: 'Blessed be Thou, Lord God of Israel, our Father, for ever and ever. Thine, O Lord, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty: for all that is in the heaven and in the earth is Thine; Thine is the Kingdom, O Lord, and Thou art exalted as Head above all.' Now notice the first argument for praise which we see in these words: David recognized the personality of God. Take away the personality of God, and what have you left? See how David thinks on this occasion: 'Blessed be Thou, our Father, for ever and ever'; and so we see a second argument for praise—namely, the perfections of God. You notice He is

spoken of as our Father. Here, then, is an argument for our praise, that in Christ we sinful men and women, notwithstanding the awful sin of our lives—and none of us knows the extent of our sin—are permitted not only to have our forgiveness assured, but we are brought into perfect relationship with our Triune God. Then notice the other perfections: 'Thine, O Lord, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty'. The more we study our God as He is revealed to us in the Scriptures, the more will our hearts well up in praise unto Him. David points out another argument for praise, the perpetuity of God: 'For ever and ever'. Our God never can change. He is for ever and ever eternally the same. Is not that an argument for praise? There is another great argument, and this is brought out very clearly by David: 'Thou art exalted as Head above all'. Hence the pre-eminence of God is an argument for praise. Our God is pre-eminently the Highest of the high, the King of kings, Lord of lords. Notice once more: David writes that the providence of God is an argument for praise. He points out that if he had collected this wonderful, almost fabulous, amount of wealth for the building of the Temple, it was, after all, only because God had provided it. God had led the people to give, God had inclined their heart to give willingly. Then notice, David brings out another argument for praise in the poverty of man. He says, 'Who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able to offer?' We are paupers. Whatever we have we have of Him, through Him. Were it not for His grace which David magnified in this prayer, and which is another argument for praise, we should not be where we are to-day.

2. Let us notice the analysis of praise: 'Now, therefore, our God, we thank Thee'. Thankfulness comes from thoughtfulness, and we say, 'Praise Thy glorious Name'. The word 'praise' means 'value,' 'price'. Praise is the price or value we put upon God—hence the old English word 'appraiser,' a man who puts a price on goods. When we think of our God, oh, what cannot He do!

(*a*) We will praise Him first for His pardon—a present perfect one: 'Thy sin and iniquities will I remember no more'.

(*b*) Then praise Him for His righteousness, the imputed righteousness of Jesus.

(*c*) Then we thank Him for His acceptance. He has accepted us.

(*d*) We praise Him for His inheritance. What does He not give us? As a loving Father He lavishes His gifts upon His children, temporal, spiritual, physical. The more we try to praise our God, the more we see what is the fullness of blessing that He deserves from His people.

(*e*) We praise Him because He calls us into His service. Earthly people think it a high honour to serve an earthly king, to be an ambassador for a king. Look at us (2 Cor. v. 20: 'Ambassadors for Christ'), going forth with a message of reconciliation as ambassadors, proclaiming to the world, 'Be ye reconciled to God'.

(*f*) We will praise Him for His exceeding grace. Some day we shall understand that that loving Father of ours Who sent a Saviour to die for us is just simply anxious to give all to us on one solitary line of argument—that is, the argument of grace. It is because we are nothing and doing nothing that He will give everything.

References.—XXIX. 14.—J. Baldwin Brown, *The Sunday Afternoon*, p. 362. XXIX. 15.—J. Keble, *Sermons for Christmas to Epiphany*, p. 202. XXIX. 18.—Archbishop Benson, *Boy Life; Sundays in Wellington College*, p. 148.

A PERFECT HEART

'A perfect heart.'—1 Chronicles xxix. 19.

There are two things which ought to be as near as can be synonymous terms—the heart of God and the heart of man. How can this be?

I. Turn to the Old Testament, and consider the heyday of Israel's prosperity and devotion. The sun of David, the man of war, is setting with all the mellowed radiance of peace. The king, the rulers, and the people offered willingly to the Lord, with a perfect heart, and offered a sum as large, probably, as was ever spent upon any one sacred edifice at any one time (1 Chron. xxix. 1-10). Both parties who thus worked for God did so with sincerity. The king and his people had each all they desired, in the peace which had come at last, and in the enlarged territory and the universal prosperity of Israel. Each was sincere; there was no 'behind thought' as the French would say. The people were sincere (1 Chron. xxix. 9); the king was sincere (17); and further, the king prays that the Lord will continue this uprightness of heart to his people and their children, and to his own son (18, 19).

II. The dispensation went down before the bringing in of some better thing to take its place. The old law is to give way not only to a new law, but one which shall be obeyed by a new creation. The hearts of men underwent no organic change, but only a change in their aspirations. Hitherto the best of them had desired to acquire a certain blamelessness by conformity to statutes; but when they had performed these, they were still unprofitable servants. They had desired to be perfect in themselves and for themselves. They were to be perfect only in Another and for Another (St. Matt. v. 48). They were to qualify for the friendship of the Son of Man by obedience not to their own will, but to Another's. 'Ye are My friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you.' The 'perfect heart,' under the New Covenant, will belong only to him who can say 'Abba, Father,' in any language, indeed, provided that out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks; and who can say it not on the strength of what he himself has done, but because of something which Another has done, and which he has received.

III. Observe the contrast between the Old and the New.

(*a*) David's verdict upon himself and his doings (1 Chron. xxix. 2, 3). St. Paul's verdict: 'Ye have received the Spirit of adoption' (Rom. viii. 15). The one has given to God what was God's before. The other has received as a free gift the 'adoption,' which no deed, no sacrifice, no property of his could claim in return.

(*b*) How fleeting the satisfaction of obedience, and sincerity, and 'perfection' under the Old Dispensation: 'We are strangers before Thee, and sojourners' (1 Chron. xxix. 15). The gold and other offerings outlast the 'perfect heart' that offered them; the givers go their way, the gifts remain. But under the New Covenant the sons are joint-heirs for eternity with Him 'Who only hath immortality,' and from whose love neither 'things present nor things to come' shall separate them.

(*c*) Once more, 'the perfect heart' finds a standard for its perfection even in 'this present time'. Its sincerity will appear not only in its dependence upon its Author, in being led by His Spirit rather than going its own way, but in its 'works'. By our 'fruits' men shall know us. 'He that doeth . . . shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.'

THE SECOND BOOK OF THE CHRONICLES

2 CHRONICLES

REFERENCES.—I. 10.—H. Van Dyke, *Sermons to Young Men*, pp. 149, 169. II. 3.—J. Parker, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xlvi. 1894, p. 213. II. 5.—*Ibid.* vol. lxiv. 1903, p. 129. II. 11.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xlviii. No. 2760. II. 16.—C. Leach, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxxix. p. 328. III. 1.—K. Moody-Stuart, *Light from the Holy Hills*, p. 16. III. 17.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons for Some Feast Days in the Christian Year*, p. 246.

THE MOULDING OF THE VESSELS

'In the plain of Jordan did the king cast them, in the clay ground between Succoth and Zeredathah.'—2 CHRONICLES IV. 17.

I. IN that temple of Solomon's we have a double type.

1. Those great and costly stones—those marble blocks which were squared and polished leagues away from Jerusalem, and not brought thither till actually needed: so that not one echo of the saw, not one stroke of the mallet, was heard over all the dedicated ground. Their adaptation was perfected at a distance, and then they were set in their glorious home.

2. The brass and silver and gold work, the capitals for the pillars, the rails for the cedar walls, the solid coverings for the doors. And these, too, were cast at a distance, in the clay ground by the Jordan.

The lesson? This—That by affliction, and only by that, were the Saints made meet for their place, and you must be made meet for yours, in the Kingdom of Heaven. How was this brass, how was this gold procured? How, but by the slow agony of the furnace?

II. Out of the smelting furnace the metal runs bright, pure, strong, fit for any use; but only *fit* for it. It has not yet received the shape in which it is to do service for the Master. Prepared it is to be made useful to Him, but it is not really useful as yet. And then comes in the text: 'In the plain of Jordan did the king cast them, in the clay ground'. The moulds, then, that formed those glorious ornaments, that cast those shapes of beauty for the house which was to be 'exceeding magnificent,' which was to be 'wonderful great,' were made by the vilest and cheapest, and, in itself most impure of all materials, namely, clay.

And how is it that all of you are to be formed for being vessels unto honour, sanctified, meet for the Master's use, prepared unto every good work? Is it not by what the world calls the meanest, and poorest, and most despicable employments here?

III. Notice; they were not cast by chance; they did not come out by accident; it was not like Aaron's, 'Then I cast them into the fire, and there *came out* the calf'. No; it was the king that did it; the King that continually does it; and not less the King, because not with His own hands, and not in His own immediate presence. We are not to suppose that Solomon went down into the clay ground, and there gave orders for the casting these temple vessels. No; he remained in his glory and peace at Jerusalem. And yet it is said, 'In the plain of Jordan did the king cast them'. And so it is with you. The King no more, as in former ages, walks the clay ground of this earth. But still, not the less, from that glorious Throne, He superintends, He appoints, He orders, for each of you the mould that is to stamp you for His service. Be it what it may, it comes from the wisdom that cannot be mistaken, it is approved by the love that cannot be quenched.—J. M. NEALE, *Occasional Sermons*, p. 116.

REFERENCE.—IV. 21.—H. W. Webb-Peploe, *Calls to Holiness*, p. 215.

PRESENTATION

'It came even to pass, as the trumpeters and singers were as one, to make one sound to be heard in praising and thanking the Lord; and when they lifted up their voice with the trumpets and cymbals and instruments of musick, and praised the Lord, saying, For He is good; for His mercy endureth for ever; that then the house was filled with a cloud, even the house of the Lord; So that the priests could not stand to minister by reason of the cloud: for the glory of the Lord had filled the house of God.'—2 CHRONICLES V. 13, 14.

IT was a dedication day. It was a day of the advent of the Holy Ghost.

I. Notice THE TIME OF THE ADVENT.

1. Without doubt it was a time of *Prayer*.

Never let it be forgotten that it was when Christ was baptized and *praying* that the heavens were opened, and the Holy Ghost came down upon Him. Prayer is the essential condition of the advent of the Spirit to the soul.

2. It was a time of *Praise*.

3. It was a time of *Peace*. Unity is an essential condition of the advent of the Spirit. It was when the Church of later days 'was with one accord in one place,' when dissensions and discords were put away, it was then that the holy flame lighted upon the waiting Church, and illumined them for suffering and for service.

It was a time of *Presentation* when the Spirit came. The temple was dedicated. We may pray and we may praise, but if we do not present our bodies a living sacrifice, God cannot send upon us the Holy Ghost, for the flame only falls upon the altar, and if the sacrifice is not there it cannot be consumed.

II. Observe THE MANNER OF THE SPIRIT'S ADVENT.

How did He come? He came—

1. *Suddenly.*

2. *Mysteriously.* The symbol of His presence was a cloud.

3. *Glorious*, too. Veiled though it might be under the likeness of a cloud, it was a presence, it was an appearance of the glory of the Lord.

4. *Gracious* also. The cloud that over-shadowed the mercy-seat was not a thunder-cloud.

III. The Marks of the Advent of the Spirit in the Soul.

We have them in the passage:—

1. *Self-effacement.* 'The priests could not stand to minister by reason of the cloud.' Self was forgotten, and Christ was all in all.

2. *Sanctity.* In earlier days we read that the tabernacle 'was sanctified by His glory'.

3. *Sacrifice.* Offerings were multiplied in the service of God. We read that 'the king and all the people offered sacrifices before the Lord' (2 Chron. vii. 4). And most true is it that the life of sacrifice follows upon the reception of the Spirit.—E. W. Moore, *Life Transfigured*, p. 219.

References.—V. 13.—Bishop Boyd-Carpenter, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xliii. 1893, p. 289. V. 13, 14.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. vii. No. 375. VI. 4.—H. J. Wilmot-Buxton, *Thankfulness Sermons*, 1822-1902.

THE BLESSING OF UNREALIZED AIMS

'But the Lord said unto David my father, Whereas it was in thine heart to build an house for My name, thou didst well that it was in thine heart.'—2 Chronicles vi. 8.

According to the old story, our own Queen Mary is reported to have said to her courtiers that after her death they would find the word *Calais* graven upon her heart—so long had she brooded upon the loss of that French sea-coast town. Had you examined King David's heart you would have found graven upon it the picture of a temple. That temple had been David's dream. In vision he had for years seen it crowning the crest of Zion. Night and day he thought upon it, planned for it, worked for it. It was his great, his supreme, his all-absorbing ambition to build a house for God. Every other aim was subordinate to this. No doubt David was anxious to make Israel strong, to subdue her enemies, to extend her dominions. But over and above everything else he was anxious to build a house for God. It is Plutarch who says of the Roman Cato that he was so possessed by the conviction that there could be neither peace nor safety for Rome so long as Carthage remained in strength, that he never made a speech in the Roman senate without concluding with this sentence, 'Delenda est Carthago'—Carthage must be destroyed. And in much the same way David never let a day pass without saying to his soul, 'God's house must be built. It is not fit that I should dwell in a house of cedar while the ark of God dwelleth within curtains.' Every day of his long reign David said some such word as that to his soul. The temple was *in his heart.*

But this temple which was in David's heart never got built upon the solid ground. David's eyes were never gladdened by a sight of that 'house magnifical,' of which by day and by night he had dreamed. He collected vast stores of material, he made lavish preparations, but he never saw one stone laid upon another. His vision never became a fact. He was so occupied with statecraft, he was so incessantly engaged in warfare, that the time never came when he could arise and build. And so he went down to his grave with his great purpose unrealized, with the hope he had cherished in his heart unfulfilled.

I. And this is just an illustration of the *great tragedy and bitterness of human life.* The bitterness of human life is not its brevity, but its *incompleteness.* The brevity of life is only bitter as it contributes to its incompleteness. Its *incompleteness* is the real tragedy. And incompleteness is the very badge and sign of the average human life. Occasionally we may come across a Simeon who feels that life has given him all he desired and hoped, and who can therefore say, 'Lord, now lettest thou Thy servant depart in peace, according to Thy word, for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation'. But the vast majority of men do *not* want to depart, for the simple reason that they have *not* seen the fulfilment of all that was in their heart. There are hopes which they have not realized, plans they have not perfected, tasks which they have not finished. Achievement never answers to intention. We dream of temples which never get built. The grave is more than the burying-place of lifeless bodies, it is the burying-place also of many a great ambition and many a noble hope.

II. His failure to build the temple of his dreams was the great disappointment and bitterness of David's life. And yet the significant fact is that *David was a richer and nobler man for cherishing this dream that never got realized.* If it be true, as I have been saying, that the bitterness of life consists in its incompleteness; that our greatest disappointments come from cherishing hopes that never get realized, then it would seem that the way to save ourselves this bitterness would be to cherish no great or beautiful hopes. But in so arguing we should go far astray. In a twofold way I can see that the cherishing of this aim was productive of blessing.

1. It was a blessing *to David's own soul.* Nobody can live with a great purpose without being ennobled by it. Little aims make little men. But great aims make great men. There is a refining, enriching influence in the mere possession of a lofty purpose.

2. It was a *blessing to those who came after him.* It is quite true that David never built the temple. But was it mere waste to have cherished the ambition? Was it all for nothing that he had made such vast preparation and collected such store of material? No, it was not for nothing. Solomon could never have built his temple had not David his father cherished the hope of building one. The materials David collected Solomon used. The dream of the father became the deed of the son. No, it was not all for nothing that David cherished his hope. 'Thou didst well that it was in thy heart.'

God takes will for deed, and reckons honest *pur-*

pose for achievement. 'Thou didst well,' He said to David, with his plan to build a house, 'that it was in thy heart'. And if I am asked what this means and involves, I answer that I think that God took David's will for his deed, and that in the great books there is a finished temple down to the Shepherd King's account.—J. D. Jones, *The Gospel of Grace*, p. 221.

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THE ADVANTAGE OF AN INDIRECT AIM

'A certain man drew a bow at a venture, and smote the King of Israel.'—2 Chronicles xviii. 33.

I. The story connected with this passage is a very suggestive one. Ahab, King of Israel, was regarded by the righteous as the enemy of God, and by all classes as the enemy of man. Elaborate plans were laid to put down his influence. These all failed. Every effort to arrest his baleful hand proved abortive. A whole army tried it. They directed all their arrows toward the one man; but they all missed him. At last a strange thing happened. An obscure soldier in that army was trifling with his time—shooting an arrow to amuse himself. The trifle became a tragedy. The shot meant for the air struck the enemy of righteousness; he fell, and died.

II. The event came from a hand that was not seeking it, from an act that was not designing it. It is no uncommon experience. How often you and I get without effort a thing for whose acquisition we have striven long and vainly! It seems at the last to come to our very door. You remember a name when you have ceased to search for it, when you have begun to think of something else. You exert an influence when you have given up trying to do so, when you have left your friend severely alone.

III. I do not think anxiety to achieve an end is favourable to its achievement. I am quite sure that all anxiety about a merely personal aim diverts the arrow from the goal. When God promised Abraham a great kingdom, He added, 'In thee shall all families of the earth be blessed'. He was to get the former by shooting at the latter. I have never known a man to win physical success by making physical success the direct object of his aim. The mark of the worldly prize is hit by aiming at something different. David sang to the woods ere he was overheard by kings. The broken box of ointment filled with its fragrance the house of humanity; yet it was meant but for one head. The arrow that strikes the mark of eternal fame is the arrow that aims at the welfare of the hour.—G. Matheson, *Messages of Hope*, p. 273.

'A certain man drew a bow at a venture, and smote the King of Israel between the joints of the harness.'—2 Chronicles xviii. 33.

The best things in life are secured without seeking. The noblest prizes are won without striving. There are certain things that we never get by aiming at them. Pursue these things and they elude your grasp, but go on doing your humble duty and they present themselves to you unsought. That is what the Bishop of Ripon calls 'the law of indirectness,' and it is a law of the spiritual life.

A whole army was out for the specific purpose of killing one bad man, the King of Israel. Every arrow was directed against one man and they all missed him. At last a soldier drew a bow at a venture, and that random shot smote the king so that he died. The object of the army was attained by an obscure and unknown soldier.

I. The law of indirectness holds good in the secular realm. There is, it may be admitted, a poor look-out for the man like Mr. Micawber, who is waiting for something to turn up. Strenuous effort is necessary for success. One of Sir Walter Raleigh's friends, when asked to explain the weight and width of his learning, replied that he could toil terribly. At the same time certain high distinctions come to those who do not seek them. The poet and the artist must cultivate the whole soul and mind if great achievements are to be won. We become masters by not seeking directly to be masters, but by trying to be good servants. The unscrupulous man does sometimes flourish in this world like a green bay-tree, but for the patient and honest worker, though success may be slow in coming, it seldom fails to come at last.

II. The Spiritual Realm. 1. We may apply the principle of the text to the great prize of happiness—what Robert Louis Stevenson calls the great task of happiness. For many people happiness is the end of all their striving and, because they aim at it, they miss it. If you want to be happy do not seek to be happy, seek rather to do your duty. John Stuart

Mill said those only are happy who have their minds fixed on some other object than their own happiness. All experience teaches the lesson that the men who make pleasure their aim never get it. The professed pleasure-seeker is, as a rule, a most abject person. There is only one pessimistic book in the Bible, the book of Ecclesiastes. It contains the confessions of a pleasure-seeker. The result in his case was self-loathing and despair. Remember the words of Carlyle in *Sartor:* 'Love not pleasure, love God. This is the everlasting Yea wherein all contradiction is solved, wherein whoso walks and works it is well with him.'

2. Honour. Many long to win the prize of honour, but honour does not come to the man who seeks it; he may gain honours, a very different thing. The world never honours the self-seeker. The men whom it honours are a David Livingstone, a Shaftesbury, a General Booth. Heaven has no honour for the self-seeker, to aim at glory is to miss it. The man who uses his religion to gain a reputation receives all the reward he will ever get down here.

3. Life. Human experience teaches further that life itself, in the fullest sense, is won not by those who seek to save it but by those who are ready to fling it away. Self-culture was the motto of the Greeks, self-sacrifice is the motto of the Christian. Both are seeking life, but it is only the Christian who can win it. Selfishness is the death of the soul, sacrifice its meat and its life. Our Lord Himself is enthroned to-day in the affections of millions because He gave His life for the life of the world.—J. D. Jones.

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OUR FRIENDSHIPS

'Shouldest thou help the ungodly, and love them that hate the Lord?'—2 Chronicles xix. 2.

This is a most important and searching question, asked of a good man, a shining example—among the rulers of his time—of purity, truth, and goodness of character. An earnest reformer, faithful to Jehovah from the beginning to the end of his reign, was Jehoshaphat.

It is the more distressing, therefore, to discover his defects. There are few things in life more distressing than the faults of good men. Faults which are the more conspicuous and glaring because they are entirely contrary to the general trend of the life.

Jehoshaphat was the anointed of the Lord. He owed all the strength and peace and prosperity of his kingdom to Jehovah, and Ahab had set himself against Jehovah and against His prophets. Surely the position which Jehoshaphat should have assumed was to insist firmly that before he could become an ally of Ahab, that man must repent of his wickedness and reverse the whole policy of his government.

I. It may seem a harsh ruling to give, that godly persons and those who have avowedly confessed themselves believers in Jesus, and followers of Him should never enter into intimate relations of friendship with careless, indifferent, unbelieving, and ungodly people; it may seem like bigotry to insist upon it, it may seem uncharitable, it may seem that if only persons are amiable, kindly, and moral, the question of religious conviction and belief should not come up. But if we are earnest followers of Christ, and not merely nominal Christians, it is bound to come up. For to an earnest and whole-hearted disciple religion is the first thing. It is not merely a matter of custom and opinion, it touches the deepest springs of life, it enters into every department of life.

There are circumstances in life where there is no choice, where men are compelled to be in close touch with those who care for none of these things. Where, like Charles Lamb in the South Sea Office, the lament may be, 'Nobody reads the New Testament here'. Young men and young women with noblest enthusiasm may find themselves set down in lodgings or in a house of business where all around them are irreligious. Life is awfully lonely, there is a deep hunger for friendship, but unless a friendship of the right sort can be found, you had far better keep to yourself.

II. We may learn some searching lessons from the consequences of the alliance which Jehoshaphat formed with Ahab and Ahab's son.

1. In the battle into which Jehoshaphat went, he barely escaped with his life. He was mistaken for Ahab, and he—the better man will often be confounded with the worse, where he has made a friendship with him—only escaped as by a miracle.

2. Further, the friendship of these two men issued in the marriage of the son of Jehoshaphat with the daughter of Ahab and Jezebel, and the cursing of both kingdoms with their pernicious influence, and the undoing of all the work of reform which Jehoshaphat had done.

We must have contact with unbelieving and irreligious men, but it need not, it must not, be the contact of close friendship and companionship. Our relation to our dear Lord, whose sacrifice they slight, Whom they refuse to follow, forbids it. If there is to be an alliance, it can never be at the sacrifice of principle; it must be by the embracing of principle. They must come over to our side, or rather to His 'whose we are, and Whom we serve'; whose claims they do not yield to, but to Whom we dare not be disloyal.—C. Brown, *Light and Life*, p. 181.

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BIBLE VALLEYS

'The valley of Berachah.'—2 Chronicles xx. 26.

The word valley is a poem in itself; it is associated with a great deal that is beautiful, comforting, and that gives the soul a sense of security and plentifulness. The Bible is full of valleys, as it is full of wells. You know this beautiful land of the mountain and the stream and the great flood and the green sward and the unexpected garden and the great and terrible wilderness—oh, that world of sand, that foe that mocks the spring, and smites the summer as a woman might be smitten on the cheekbone.

I. What is this valley of Berachah? In some senses I do not care much for it; I know it means the valley of blessing, and that the people, in whom I have not the slightest confidence at all, sang themselves hoarse in the valley of Berachah, because they were fed like oxen that were to be slaughtered. I suspect some things, I have no respect for anthems simply in themselves considered; I must know their history, their meaning, their ultimate purpose. There is a better time for singing than the time of all this commercial aggrandizement and secular comfort. One little song of patience is worth the whole of this blaring noise; a sigh may be vaster in its meaning than an anthem; yet there was a victory; the victory was in some sort divinely guided and secured. There are fruits of war which may be legitimately gathered by those who have won them by strategy or skill or sharp sword; all that may be true, but I do not care for a national anthem that may not be through and through nationally honest.

II. There is another valley mentioned in Numbers xxxii. 9—'the valley of Eshcol'. What valley is that? 'Tis the valley of grapes and summer fruits, all of which we may pluck, because it is the intent of Divine love that we should possess ourselves of such luxuriant vineyards. Do we not suddenly come upon the grapes intellectual, social, educational, spiritual? Is not hunger itself often surprised by unexpected plentifulness? Yet sometimes men cannot believe even in this uncrushed wine of the grape; they will hasten home and say, Do not, we beseech thee, venture in that direction; grapes enough there may be, even to abundance, but we had better remain where we are; can a man live upon grapes? we cannot deny the purple fruit, yea, some of the people have brought large bunches of the grapes to show us what a fruitful land is beyond; but on the whole is it not better to remain where we are? Thus enthusiasm is killed, and all daring, high exploit, and noble endeavour. Ambition may be perverted, but ambition may be one of the forms or aspects of inspiration. We want the true spies that say to us, We have seen a land worth going to; it grows life, it is warm with summer, it is boundless with an illimitable hospitality. Young souls, do not be frightened by the man sitting next you, for he is no man, he is hardly a figure in wax.

III. In Hosea there is a glorious valley—'the valley of Achor' (ii. 15). What is the meaning of Achor in this connexion? what is its broad significance, without going into the immediate geographical detail? what is the broad spiritual interpretation of Achor? It may be given in two little words, each word a syllable, one of the words a letter: 'a door of hope'. Behold, I have set before thee a door of hope; I have given thee a new beginning, new chances, new opportunities, new mornings; this is not the end, this is the beginning; there is the great wall, go grope in blindness, but with finger-tips that can see; thou wilt in that great blank wall find a door; it is there, I made it, I made it for thee; I know the blankness of the wall, but on my word go thou forth and grope for the door, the Achor that will give thee visions beyond big as horizons, big as firmaments, big as outlined heavens: go forth in the spirit of hope. We are saved by hope. The voice of the Christian religion is a voice of hope. Realize that, and live as if you believed it.

IV. In the book of Isaiah we have a beautiful valley; in chap. xxii. 1 we read about 'the valley of vision'. That is a large valley, that valley is worth living in. To live with people who have always seen new lights, new possibilities, and new and brighter interpretations than have ever been realized before; that is companionship, that is resurrection. Who cares for these dullards who never see new lights, new companions, and the outlines of new springs and summers in the morning sky?

V. Can Ezekiel be alive and not take his position in this great question of valleys? Ezekiel saw a valley, it was a valley of dry bones. It was an awful valley, a valley of dead men's bones, a valley of death, filled not with the sheeted dead, but with those that had, so to say, been blown to pieces by some great wind of contempt; and the Lord said, 'Son of man, can these bones live?' And the son of man said, 'O Lord God, Thou knowest'. The wisest answer to every Divine inquiry: refer the question back; let Him who propounds the problem solve it.—Joseph Parker, *City Temple Pulpit*, vol. iii. p. 118.

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PREPARATION AND POWER

'Jotham became mighty, because he prepared his ways before the Lord his God.'—2 CHRONICLES XXVII. 6.

THE circumstances of Jotham's day make it all the more remarkable that this should be the record of his life. He ascended the throne as regent at the time of Uzziah's removal, when the sovereign and the State alike were suffering from the perils of prosperity. National life had deteriorated, for national ideals were lowered, and but little place was given in the life of the people to the true worship of God. The new king, however, having somehow caught a vision of the only certain strength of any man or nation, took the singular course which the man must ever take who seeks to be true to the light which has shone upon him from God. Despite the current worldliness he steadfastly set himself to realize the highest type of life and leadership, and sought power for this in the sanctuary by there preparing his ways. It is always interesting to discover the secret springs which, gathering force as they go, ultimately form some great river—and here is one of them. Jotham's attitude towards the serious facts of life is the secret of the strength which he acquired and by means of which he exercised such beneficent influence over his people. It is an anticipation—one of the clearest which the Old Testament affords us—of the Saviour's precept to His followers to seek 'first the kingdom of God,' and is likewise one of the most arresting illustrations of its force. For to prepare his ways before the Lord will always assure the pure and permanent quality of any man's life.

I. Power is not so much an acquisition as an accumulation. God does not bestow strength, at any rate in the moral and spiritual realms, in the same way as he bestows sunlight and rain. A man becomes mighty only according as he adopts a right attitude toward the claims of God, and according also as he exerts the whole strength of his life toward their obedience.

II. There is perhaps no greater peril than that of unconsciously drifting into a haphazard attitude toward life, the temper of the man who takes neither thought for the morrow nor for the day, but is content to take things as they turn up. Such an one failing to recognize the seriousness of life, even in its most trivial details, enfeebles and unfits himself for the strenuous service to which God has appointed His people. The unprepared man is the unfruitful man, and indeed is often the defeated man when confronted with the ordinary temptations to which each of us is subject. The conflict comes upon him unawares, and finds him unarmed, surprised and easily overcome. Occasional immunity from severe test, or, on the other hand, a mere casual success, saps the strength of many an one by deceiving him as to the necessity of honest preparation of all his ways—personal, social, commercial and religious—in view of the constant adverse influence of the enemy. But it is victory indeed when, as with Jotham, such chance success is valued at its right worth, and is not suffered to deceive nor blind a man as to the absolute necessity of living before the Lord his God continually.

III. To rightly understand the necessity of this preparation of our ways brings a new conception of the nature and value of the daily prayer-appointment. It is not merely the presentation of petition, the proffering of request, the seeking for personal benefit, but a subjective exercise also of inquiry and discrimination. It is, or should be, the occasion for testing motive, for judging relative worth, for scrutiny of ideal. Just as the mariner adjusts his compasses before a voyage, just as the musician tunes his instrument before playing upon it, just as the soldier primes his arms before a contest, so the Christian must prepare his ways before each day's life.

IV. The outcome of such faithful preparation as unto which Jotham gave himself is certain to be with us as it was with him. Such a life is bound to wax stronger and stronger, and cannot but be in vivid contrast to the anæmic lives of the mere drifters, who are content to be borne on the waves of passing impulse and fleeting emotion in what they hope is a heavenward direction. It brings an increased sense of dependence which is not a contradiction but a complement of true strength. It develops a faculty of discrimination by which a man discerns the things which are worth while, and has power both to choose them and to refuse the others. It invests life with true dignity; for a man cannot daily go forth from the secret place, having there prepared his ways before the Lord, without having the springing step and buoyant heart of one who knows himself to be God's son and servant. This is the might which is possible to all who will thus daily learn to face life by first facing Him. And since we have 'boldness to enter into the Holiest by the Blood of Jesus,' while there must be no presumption there need be no fear. The strength of the redeemed is in the Redeemer, and is theirs as they set themselves with honest intent of heart to do those things that please Him.—J. STUART HOLDEN, *The Pre-Eminent Lord*, p. 111.

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SACRIFICE AND SONG

'And when the burntoffering began, the song of the Lord began also.'—2 CHRONICLES XXIX. 27.

HEZEKIAH was an excellent monarch although he had a very vicious father. We have a proverb which says

'like father, like son,' but that is far from being always true. Eli, a good and pious man, had sons who were a byword for profanity; and Ahaz, who was a rebel against God, had God-fearing Hezekiah for his child. In the first month of the first year of his reign Hezekiah opened the doors of the temple. He recognized that social prosperity runs its roots down into religion. Then there followed these memorable scenes, of which our chapter gives a vivid summary, and in which the recreant and fickle multitude were brought into new fellowship with God. First there were the offerings for sin, for the people were defiled and needed cleansing. It was a scene of blood around the altars, dimly foreshadowing the Blood of Jesus. Then, following these offerings for sin, burntofferings were laid upon the altar, and when the burntoffering began, the song of the Lord began also.

Now in that ancient and dramatic scene have we not a parable of living truths? I think that always when the burntoffering begins, the song of the Lord begins also. Wherever there is devotion, there is gladness. Where there is consecration, there is music. Let a man be ignorant of self-surrender, and under the fairest sky he will be miserable. But let him devote himself, with heart and soul, to his duty, to his calling, to his God, and voices that were silent yesterday will break forth into singing as he moves.

I. We see that, for instance, in the case of work—in the case of the daily task that we are called to. There is always a lack of gladness in our work when we set about it in a grumbling way. It is one of the commonest complaints to-day that men are not in earnest with their work. Their one ambition is to get it done, and done as cheaply and easily as possible. That is a very bad thing for the work; but I think it is a worse thing for the man, for to go to our work in a half-hearted way is a certain recipe to miss the music. It is not by doing less that joy will come: nor necessarily will it come by doing more. It is by throwing ourselves on our task with all our might, whether our task be little or be great. That is the spirit which makes labour glad, and wakens the song that sleeps on the breast of drudgery, and brings that light into the eyes of toil, which is brighter than the sunniest morn of May.

II. I think, too, that this is very true in regard to the great matter of our cross-bearing. It is not till the burntoffering begins that we ever hear a single strain of music. Every human life has got its shadow, and every human life has got its cross. It is well to distinguish the shadow from the cross, lest by confusing them we go astray. For the shadow is something into which we enter, and out of which we shall pass in God's good time. But the cross is something that we must take up, or stumble over into the mouth of hell. Now one of the deepest questions in life is, 'In what way do you regard your crosses?' Do you hate them? Do you rebel against them? Would you give anything to fling them from you? Along that road there is no voice of song. Along that road there is the hardening heart. Along that road there is a growing bitterness, the foretaste of the bitterness of death. But take up your cross as Jesus bids you do—take it up as a mother takes her child. Lay it against your heart and cherish it—say 'this, too, like the summer roses, is from God'. And so shall your poor life become a harmony—and what is harmony but perfect music—and when the burntoffering begins, the song of the Lord will begin also.

III. But once again, is not our text illuminative in regard to our social relationships? To be selfish there is not to miss the worry. To be selfish is to miss the song.

IV. Does not our text hold true of what is especially the *Christian* life? To be half-hearted towards Jesus Christ is the most tragical of all conditions. Other masters might be content with that. Christ will have none of it—He scorns it. It must be first or nowhere, all or nothing—King or nobody, with Jesus Christ. And the strange thing is, when we take Him at His word, and give ourselves up to Him in glad devotion, then when the burntoffering begins, the song of the Lord begins also.—G. H. Morrison, *The Return of the Angels*, p. 298.

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EZRA

EZRA—A RETURNING REMNANT

The book of Ezra contains an account of a most important epoch in the history of the people of God. After seventy years of captivity, through the decree of a Gentile king, a return was made possible. This book gives us the story of that return, and of the rebuilding of the temple. There are two main divisions.

I. **Zerubbabel.**—The story which centres around Zerubbabel is that of the return of a remnant of the people to Jerusalem, and their reorganization. The list of those returning is principally remarkable from the small number of the Levites it contains. Another point of interest is that of Nethinim. They seem to have been prominent in these times, for they are only once mentioned elsewhere. It is almost impossible to determine their origin. Directly the leaders in this return were settled in their cities, the altar of God was established at Jerusalem, and they immediately commenced the work of rebuilding the temple. This work stirred up the opposition of the Samaritans, and at last they were successful in obtaining letters from the reigning monarch which interdicted the work. Zerubbabel and Jeshua commenced the work again, but opposition was raised. To this they gave no heed, and Tattenai sent a letter to Darius concerning the edict of Cyrus. There can be no doubt that Tattenai felt that the finding of such a decree was unlikely, if not impossible. It was at Achmetha, in the royal palace, that it was discovered. In consequence of this the edict of Darius not only gave them permission to carry forward their work, but compelled Tattenai to help them with great gifts. At last the temple was finished and solemnly dedicated to God.

II. **Ezra.**—Between chapters VI. and VII. there was an interval of at least sixty years, uneventful in the history of the people settled in Jerusalem. They had largely failed in the purpose of Zerubbabel. Again the wonderful overruling of God is seen in the working of the minds of two men in Babylon. Ezra was stirred with desire to help his people. Artaxerxes was moved with fear lest there should be 'wrath against the realm of the king and his sons'. Ezra gathered together members of the priestly and royal houses, and a further contingent of the people at Ahava to prepare for the journey. Finding that there were no Levites in the company he sent to Iddo, and certain of their number joined him. After a long journey they arrived safely in Jerusalem. Ezra found a condition of affairs in Jerusalem which was a sad revelation of the deterioration of the people. The sincerity of Ezra's vicarious repentance produced immediate result. The people who had gathered about him came to a consciousness of the enormity of their sin as they saw how he was affected thereby. At last one of their number spoke to him, acknowledging the sin, and suggesting a remedy. He at once became a man of action, first calling them to a sacred covenant, that they would put away the evil thing from amongst them, and then leading them in the carrying out of their covenant.—G. Campbell Morgan, *The Analysed Bible*, p. 227.

THE ALTAR AND THE TEMPLE

'Then stood up Jeshua the son of Jozadak . . . and builded the altar of the God of Israel. . . . But the foundation of the temple of the Lord was not yet laid.'—Ezra III. 2, 6.

In the opening chapters of this book of Ezra we are among the Jews who have come back from Babylon. God has restored the exiles to their country; and their feet stand in Jerusalem again. But the ravages of war and the silent attacks of time have played strange havoc with the beloved city. It was then that they set to work to restore Jerusalem. God breathed an enthusiasm upon the people. And it was then that they built the altar of the Lord, for the foundation of the temple of the Lord was not laid. Such then is the setting of our text, and it carries three suggestions with it.

I. First, it is good to begin building with an altar. It is wisest and noblest and most rational to begin with the recognition of the Lord. To realize that above our finite will there is the infinite will of the Almighty; to feel that around the purpose we form is the eternal purpose of a Sovereign God; to know that He girds us when we perceive it not, that He loves us even when we have despised Him, that He hath prepared our goings from of old, that He will never leave us or forsake us—is not that the secret of an arm that can endure, and of a heart that will not weary in the drought?

II. The second lesson of our text is this. Build your altar till you can start your temple. Now if our life means anything for us, it must be rich in dreams which we cannot realize. A life is very valueless and poor if it can grasp and hold all for which it craves. It is the heart which hungers that is the blessed heart. You cannot do great services for Christ, you cannot make the greatest sacrifices; are you therefore doing nothing at all? Do what you can. Begin your altar now. Do not waste one hour waiting for the temple. Christ never said, 'She hath done mighty things'; Christ's praise was, 'She hath done what she could'.

III. Thirdly, have the temple clearly before you all the time. It takes the vision of the perfect temple if we are to build well the humblest altar. It takes the assurance that striving shall not be in vain, and the

certainty that ideals shall yet be realized, if we are to toil cheerfully and bravely at the task that is given to us to-day. It is at that point (with an emphasis which is Divine) that the Gospel of Jesus Christ proclaims its message. For the golden age of Christ is on ahead of us, and the best, for the followers of the Lord, is still to be.—G. H. Morrison, *The Unlighted Luetre*, p. 38.

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NEHEMIAH

THE CHURCH AND SOCIAL EVILS

'It came to pass, when I heard these words, that I sat down and wept, and mourned certain days, and fasted, and prayed before the God of heaven.'—NEHEMIAH I. 4.

I. NOTE the plain Christian duty of sympathetic contemplation of surrounding sorrows.

Nehemiah might have made a great many very good excuses for treating lightly the tidings that his brother had brought him. He let the tidings fill his heart, and burn there.

The first condition of sympathy is knowledge; and the second is attending to what we do know. And so I want to press upon Christian people the plain duty of knowing what you do know, and of giving an ample place in your thoughts to the stark, staring facts around us.

II. Such a realization of the dark facts is indispensable to all true work for alleviating them.

There is no way of helping men but by bearing what they bear. Jesus Christ would never have been the Lamb of God that bore away the sins of the world, unless He Himself had 'taken our infirmities and borne our sicknesses'. No work of healing will be done, except by those whose hearts have bled with the feeling of the miseries which they have set themselves to cure.

III. Such realization of surrounding sorrows should drive to communion with God.

Nehemiah wept and mourned, and that was well. But between his weeping and mourning and his practical work there had to be still another link of connexion. 'He wept and mourned,' and because he was sad he turned to God—'I fasted and prayed certain days'. There he got at once comfort for his sorrows and sympathies, and deepening of his sympathies, and thence he drew inspiration that made him a hero and a martyr. So, all true service for the world must begin with close communion with God.

IV. Such sympathy should be the parent of a noble, self-sacrificing life. Look at the man in our story. He had the ball at his feet. He had the entrée of a court and the ear of a king. Brilliant prospects were opening before him, but his brethren's sufferings drew him, and with a noble resolution of self-sacrifice he shut himself out from them and went into the wilderness. If Christians are to do the work that they can do, and that Christ has put them into this world that they may do, there must be self-sacrifice with it.—A. MACLAREN, *The Wearied Christ*, p. 258.

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PURPOSE IN LIFE

'What my God had put it in my heart to do.'—NEHEMIAH II. 12.

NEHEMIAH was called to a great work, but he kept his own counsel and waited for the time to declare the purpose that lay in his heart like a growing seed in good soil.

I. The Secret of Strength.—As you start out upon life's cross-roads be sure that your heart's purpose is prompted by the Lord.

How can we tell whether the secret purpose hidden away in our heart's deepest desire is implanted by God?

1. Look at the purpose in your heart, the one thing which, if you could, you would supremely desire to do. Can you pray about it? If He put the purpose in your heart you will not find it hard or unnatural to seek His blessing upon it.

2. If our heart's purpose were accomplished, would it be for the good of others as well as ourselves? That is a sensible test. Any success that injures our fellows is not in accord with the mind of Christ.

3. Would the accomplishment of our purpose be for God's glory? Nehemiah was satisfied that his aim was a seed of the Divine planting.

II. Some Results of Knowing that our Heart's Purpose was Implanted by God.—It will create steadfastness as we realize that our undertaking is part of the Divine will. Nehemiah's faith gave him the grace to endure. The difficulties of his task might well have excused a strong man in turning back. The barriers to our achievement may be many and high, but we shall overcome, we shall endure as seeing the invisible.

III. A Part in a Divine Drama.—We may be among the majority of featureless persons who make no impression. If we are not called to do great things, we can do little things in the spirit of greatness. Our lives cannot be failures if we are working out the Divine purpose. Perhaps this alone will deliver us from the increasing irritation over life's littleness. We are common clay, but God is the potter, and He chose us for the purpose He has in view. We may be as gold cups with elaborate ornament, or as plain clay mugs; but if we are used by the Pierced Hand to carry water to thirsty lips we shall have an equal honour.—J. C. CARLILE, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. LXXII. 1907, p. 3.

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ENFEEBLED BURDEN-BEARERS

'The strength of the bearers of burdens is decayed.'—NEHEMIAH IV. 10.

How often this happens! We frequently have to receive the disquieting intimation which was made to Nehemiah. Not seldom we have to make this announcement to ourselves, 'The strength of the bearers of burdens is decayed'.

We have not travelled far from the workers upon the walls of Jerusalem. Geographically we are remote from them, but sympathetically we are near by. There are many points of affinity between us and them. Observe some of the links which bind us together. They were 'the bearers of burdens,' and so are we. Is not this a pathetic and accurate and vivid portraiture of humanity? You may write men down under a hundred descriptive epithets, but none could be more veracious than this. We are all 'the bearers of burdens'.

I. In Various Spheres 'the Strength of the Bearers of Burdens is Decayed'.—All kinds of strength are apt to fail under the burdens of life. In *home* life this is conspicuously so. What burdens domestic life involves! The father, the husband, the breadwinner, may well be described as the bearer of a burden. Great is the strain upon him. Never was it so severe as it is now. The wife, the mother, the housekeeper, may be similarly described. And her burdens are no less heavy because they are unheroic and monotonous. The Church ought to have words of 'sweet release' for the tired burden-bearers of home life.

How many enfeebled load-carriers there are in *commercial life*.

In the *intellectual sphere* the strength of the bearers of burdens often decays. The scholars, the students, the thinkers, how great are their burdens!

The strength of the bearers of burdens decays in the *religious world*.

In *Christian service*, too, the strength of the bearers of burdens decays. We who are by grace seeking to rebuild Jerusalem are called to carry great burdens. This is specially so in the age in which we live. The Church is full of exhausted workers.

II. From Many Causes 'the Strength of the Bearers of Burdens is Decayed'.—It often happens that the cause is *physical*. It was in the instance before us. Nehemiah's brave labourers had overtaxed their strength. They were emphatically overworked.

Sometimes the cause of the enfeeblement of burden-bearers is *mental*. The weary weight of modern thought has pressed you down. You have looked upon the sun and it has blinded you for a season. 'Brain fag' is a very familiar feature of modern life. Intellect is often robbed of its strength by the pressure of its burdens.

The cause is frequently *circumstantial*. A business trouble. A family sorrow. A crushing bereavement. How these things explain the decaying strength of the bearers of burdens!

Spiritual causes often operate to this sad end. My brother, why is your strength decayed? Is it some passing wave of depression? It may be what the Puritans called a 'desertion'. The Lord has withdrawn Himself for a while.

III. Great Precautions must be taken when 'the Strength of the Bearers of Burdens is Decayed'.—What shall we do in these enfeebled hours? Where shall we find our remedy?

Whatever other precautionary measure is adopted there must be *Prayer*. This is the supreme specific. God requires of His people that they ask for the strength He loves to impart.

When our strength decays there must be *Adequate Rest*. It is easy to retort that this is a counsel of perfection. But it is not. All tiredness is a call to rest, and somehow the summons must be obeyed. I know how difficult it is for many of us to secure the needed rest, but at all costs we must surmount the difficulty. We may bear heavier burdens than we ever bore if we will take temporary rest when our strength is decayed. Say not thy work is done. Take a space of rest. And out of it you shall emerge to build Jerusalem's walls and carry the heavy burdens with joyous vigour.

When the strength is decayed we must practice *Watchfulness*. That is what Nehemiah did. And his procedure is our example. Great and subtle dangers attend us in weary seasons. The devil is always next door to us, but he is at our elbow in tired moments. Watch, then, against discouragement. We are apt to discourage ourselves and others in such moods. Many foes come out against us when we are exhausted.

There must be great *Trustfulness* in such crises. Let not your faith fail. Cling in weakness to what you have proved in strength. Rest in the Lord and wait patiently for Him. Be like John Wesley, who was never so calmly and hopefully trustful as when nature's strength decayed. Be like a great and saintly minister of whom a friend said, 'In the stress of his busy life it was his childlike faith and trust in the Heavenly Father that kept him from the wear and tear and worry of work'. Say to thy wearied soul, 'Hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise Him'.—DINSDALE T. YOUNG, *The Gospel of the Left Hand* p. 27.

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SWORD AND TROWEL

'Everyone with one of his hands wrought in the work, and with the other hand held a weapon.'—Nehemiah iv. 17.

Among the graphic scenes of this book none reads better, or counts for more in imagination, than the present sketch relating how they built the city walls. And in great part the interest revolves round Nehemiah himself. A singularly attractive figure, he stands out like a giant among children; and evidently it is to his tireless faith and perseverance, in the main, that we must ascribe success which crowned work of enormous difficulty.

This scene on the old walls of Jerusalem is a representation of the true life, as a building and a fight.

I. When they build a mansion in Rome or Jerusalem to-day, they have to dig, often through scores of feet of rubbish, the debris of old empires, ere they find what will bear the superincumbent weight; and just so if we are dead in earnest, and resolved that for us life shall rise firmly based on truth, as truth is in Jesus, then moral and spiritual excavation of a far-reaching kind may have to be the first stage of the business. These walls rising under the hand of these brave Jews were not merely designed for their own safety; their nobler aim was to enclose and be consecrated by the temple of the Holy One of Israel. Night and day they toiled at the battlements, putting tears and blood into the living task, but at the heart of all stood the sanctuary, more dear and more enduring still. So let us see to it that whatever we may build has a place for God at its centre, and that that place is filled.

II. Warfare goes along with work, rendering 'sword and trowel' the fittest motto for the experience that has been appointed us. Even when the capital is held by the true King, tumult and strife murmur on the frontier. It is the unwarlike life that ends in a heap of ruins.—H R. Mackintosh, *Life on God's Plan*, p. 156.

THE INADEQUACY OF SPIRITUAL SOLITUDE

'The work is great and large, and we are separated upon the wall, one far from another. In what place therefore ye hear the sound of the trumpet, resort ye thither unto us.' Nehemiah iv. 19, 20.

I. The great obstacle to the building of the old Jerusalem was the distance in space between the workmen: 'We are separated upon the wall, one far from another'. The great obstacle to the building of the *new* Jerusalem is also the distance in space between the workmen. This latter statement seems a paradox. We can understand how a physical wall requires a vast company to build it. But we have always taught ourselves to believe that salvation is a personal matter, and that *its* wall must be constructed in solitude. We look upon companionship as existing for outside things—for the dance, for the orchestra, for the army, for the field of politics. But when a man begins to erect his own soul, we expect him to be alone with God.

II. Not thus shall I be able to build the walls of the new Jerusalem. The work of my salvation is not a solitary process. It is a solemn hour; but it is the solemnity, not of silence, but of crowdedness. I must summon into my sympathy all the sons of men. I cannot build up the virtues of my heart if I am thinking only of God. Would I be humble; mine must be a humility before *man*. Anyone could be humble before God. It does not need a redeemed soul to shrink in nothingness beneath the stars of night. But to sink my interests before a *brother*, to refrain from self-display in the presence of an interior —*that* is humility! Would I be meek; it must be before *man*. I dare not answer God; all flesh is silent in *His* presence. But to be gentle with an equal, to be soft with a dependant, to be lenient with a fallen soul—*that* is meekness!

III. Would I be charitable; it must be before *man*. God needs not my silver nor my gold; they would add no drop to His ocean. But, to clothe a brother's rags, to soothe a sister's pain, to give the children bread, to help the orphan's cry, to bind the broken heart and comfort the wounded conscience—*that* is to succour God, that is charity! The walls of the new Jerusalem must be built in the presence of man.—G. Matheson, *Messages of Hope*, p. 129.

References.—IV. 19.—S. McFarlane, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xlvii. 1895, p. 230. A. Rowland, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. liii. 1898, p. 168. V. 7.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxxvi. No. 2123.

A GREAT WORK

'I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down.'—Nehemiah vi. 3.

There are three thoughts in these words: a work—greatness—and elevation. They are exactly the three thoughts which every earnest man has about religion. They are exactly the three things which a man needs. An object—a feeling that his object is worthy—and a sense of height, which lifts him up, and does him good. 'I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down.'

It is so essential that you should feel the greatness and the dignity of the 'work' to which you are called that I wish to place the matter before you a little more in detail.

I. Faith a Great Work.—I hold it to be a very 'great' and a very high 'work' to believe. Else, why do so few, so very few, really believe? That inner life of faith, and the cultivation of it, is a thing, I believe, higher than an archangel's work. No archangel is called to believe. Very remote is it from the processes of our common world. Yet if you will be always coming down to the things of sense and sight —if you will measure the invisible by what you find around—if you will reduce faith to a sort of materialism—if you will mix it up with the material, and

qualify it by the ordinary principles of human reasoning—you cannot believe! Faith will not grow down there. The only hope for it is to keep up in that region, which is the region of ideas and affections—that upper region, where only such things live.

II. Sanctification a Great Work.—It is 'a great work' which a man is pursuing, when he is engaged in his own sanctification. Depend upon it, it is no light matter to send upwards what have such an almost irresistible tendency to be always going downwards. It is no trifle to take the iron out of a man's heart, and to get it into such a soft, melted state, that it may be moulded into a perfectly different shape from what it is—to take the image of God. Depend upon it, it is no light thing to root out that deep selfishness, and that miserable pride, and that clogging temper, which have so mingled themselves with you, that they have become your own moral being, and to show nothing in their place but daily proofs of a gentle, forgiving mind, a tenderness and self-forgetfulness.

III. Usefulness to Others a Great Work.—There is another 'work' in which every Christian is occupied—high, and blessed, and holy—the 'work' of being useful to others, and extending the kingdom of God. I very much suspect the Christianity of that man who has not some distinct engagement, in which he is, every day, endeavouring to do something to serve God. We are so constituted that we must 'work'. It was the sentence on the whole family of man—'labour'. The Gospel has turned it into blessing; but still the sentence is upon every living man—'labour'. And no mind can be healthy, no man's soul will go on well, which cannot say, concerning some undertaking—'I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down'.

REFERENCES.—VI. 3.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons for Some Feast Days in the Christian Year*, p. 95. R. White, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xl. 1891, p. 251. R. E. Hutton, *The Crown of Christ*, vol. i. p. 265. VI. 11.—W. L. Watkinson, *Noonday Addresses*, p. 98. VI. 14.—F. Hastings, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lv. 1899, p. 198. VI. 15.—G. Campbell Morgan, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lix. 1901, p. 217. VIII. 1.—C. Perren, *Revival Sermons in Outline*, p. 116. VIII. 1-12.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—2 Kings, Chronicles, Ezra, and Nehemiah*, p. 371. VIII. 4, 5.—W. Page Roberts, *Our Prayer Book, Conformity and Conscience*, p. 41.

THE WORD OF GOD

'So they read in the book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading.'
—NEHEMIAH VIII. 8.

THIS chapter is a wonderfully beautiful story of the way in which the people gathered together to hear the Word of God, and what the effect of that hearing was upon their life from that time forward. The people desired the Word of God to be read to them, and the people who were waiting were met by the priest, who was willing. When priest and people are thus united, there will always follow blessing.

I. Notice the reception of the Word of God. When Ezra read we are told the people stood. What an example this is. The people stood up according to the Jewish custom to hear the Word, and indeed in certain parts of the Christian Church to-day, as in former days, the people always stand up when the lessons are being read. That is the reason why we stand up during the Gospel in the Communion Service. It is the last remnant of an old custom, showing our reverence for that part of the Word of God which has to do directly with the Lord Jesus. We cannot be too reverent with the Word of God.

And then notice their reverence in their worship. When they stood up Ezra blessed God and the people answered, Amen. They were in the presence of God. And then with carefulness they listened, and Ezra not only read, but he gave the sense of it.

II. From the reading and the reception, let us notice now the result. The first thing that resulted from this reading of the Word of God was a sense of sin. They began to weep and to cry. Why? Because they were conscious that their life had not been according to that Word that God had laid down, the law about those feasts which they had neglected and disregarded.

And then there comes a second result—a sense of peace. For we are told distinctly that Ezra and Nehemiah, and they that taught the people, said: 'Do not be sorry, for the joy of the Lord is your strength'. That is to say, You have heard the law and you have not obeyed it; if you obey the law now, the result will be peace. 'Great peace have they that love Thy law.' And so it is when the Word of God comes for the first time into contact with our life. We are convicted of sin and condemned in the sight of God. That is the first result of coming into contact with God's Word.

But the very Word that brings us to a sense of our sins brings us the means whereby our sins can be forgiven, and the joy of the Lord comes to that man who accepts and follows that Word. The Word of God at once condemns us because of our sin, and then it shows us how there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, who have accepted Him as their Saviour and Friend. So they forbade the people to be sorrowful: they urged them to joy: 'The joy of the Lord is your strength'. And then they not only told them to be joyful, but they were told to share the blessedness: 'Go your way, eat the fat and drink the sweet, and send portions unto them for whom nothing is prepared. . . . Neither be ye sorry.' And so they stilled and quieted the people. And that will always be the result when a man comes into contact with God's Word, and receives God's Word into his heart. That man will always long to share the blessing with some one else. He will pass it on; he will send the Gospel to those who have not yet received it, or realized the power and blessedness of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

The Bible must always be the centre of our Church life. The Word of God must be preached, not the word of man; and the Word of God must also be pondered. Ezra did his part, and the people did

theirs. You may have the most faithful ministry, but without a response on the part of the congregation that ministry will count for practically and comparatively very little. The Word of God must be pondered day by day. If you will take God's Word and ponder it for yourself, you will find the power and the blessing and the peace of it in your life.

The Word of God must also be practised. These people put their Word of God into practice. They at once observed God's law about the Feast of Tabernacles. They at once shared their blessings with those who had none; they showed the joy of the Lord in their life as well as on their lips. That is what we want and long for in connexion with all congregations—the Word of God as the centre of Church life. But in order that this may be so, the Word of God must be the core of individual life. Our life will be a life of repentance, of joy, of peace, of love, of whole-hearted devotion, and obedience, and unselfish sympathy, and regard, just in proportion as the Word of God is the core and centre of our being. If you want to know how this should be so, the Word of God must be desired. These people desired the Word of God. St. Peter says we are to desire the sincere milk of the Word, that we may grow thereby.

There must be not only desire, but attention to the Word of God. The people heeded, and with the attention came reception. They received the Word of God into their very life. And then there was reproduction. They translated that Word into practice, and the Word became the power of God in their life. And if you and I will see that this is so in our individual life, God, even our own God, will bless us.

References.—VIII. 8.—A. N. Obbard, *Plain Sermons*, p. 26. VIII. 9, 10.—J. Hamilton, *Faith in God*, p. 303.

STRENGTH IN JOY

'The joy of the Lord is your strength.'—Nehemiah viii. 10.

The wall of Jerusalem had been built by those who had returned from captivity, and the people being assembled the law of the Lord was read to them. And when they heard the law they wept. But they were told that their tears soiled the garments of joy with which God in His good providence had clothed them. And besides, and of greater importance still, sorrow would weaken their hands in the great work which still remained to be done. Joy was what God had vouchsafed to them, and what they needed for their work. They needed strength; and the joy of the Lord, not weeping, was the well from which it must spring.

See how the joy of the Lord gives—

I. Strength for the Discharge of Duty

II. Strength to Resist Temptation.

III. Strength to Bear Troubles.

IV. Strength of Perseverance and Hope.

If, then, the joy of the Lord is a man's strength, it must be his bounden duty to cultivate it, and, with God's help, enlarge it. The man is sinful as well as unwise who holds stubbornly by sorrow and depression. Let faith in God lead us 'with joy to draw water out of the wells of salvation'.

References.—VIII. 10.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xvii. No. 1027. E. A. Draper, *The Gift of Strength*, p. 56. W. J. Hocking, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxxix. 1891, p. 6. A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—2 Kings, Chronicles, Ezra, and Nehemiah*, p. 379; see also *Creed and Conduct*, p. 83; *Sermons Preached in Manchester*, p. 149. Blair's 'Religious Joy as Giving Strength and Support to Virtue,' *Sermons*. Jay's 'The Christian in his Spiritual Joys,' *Works*, vol. vi. p. 249. C. Simeon, *Works*, vol. iv. p. 293. Dr. Samuel Cox, 'Christmas Homily,' in *Congregationalist*, 1872, p. 710, and the same in his *Biblical Expositions*, p. 124. Maclaren's, 'The Joy of the Lord,' *Sermons Preached in Manchester* (1st Series), p. 136. Mackennal in *Life of Christian Consecration*, p. 146. IX. 17.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xx. No. 1272.

THE VARIEDNESS OF THE DIVINE BENEVOLENCE

'Thy manifold mercies.'—Nehemiah ix. 19.

I. 'Thy manifold mercies' does not mean the same as 'thy many mercies'. Mercies may be numerous and yet not manifold. I may distribute bread amid a whole multitude in a wilderness. In this case my mercies have been numberless; but they have not been manifold. They have been all of one kind—donation. Manifold mercy is mercy which takes different forms. It is like manifold architecture; it can build in opposite ways.

II. I think there are four forms of mercy known to man—that which gives, that which refuses, that which deprives, and that which prepares. To a thirsty boy in good health you give a copious draught of cold water; to a fevered boy you deny it; from a delirious grasp you tear it; finally, through healing remedies, you prepare for its administration by and by. Now, amid God's infinite forms of mercy, in relation to the cup of life He has these four. There are times when He gives liberally, when He says, 'drink abundantly'. There are times, again, when the mere denial is not sufficient—when the hand needs to be dispossessed. The delirious patient has already grasped the cup, and only a wrench will tear it from his hold. The mercy of our Father gives that wrench. It seems to the patient a harsh thing, a strange thing; but the deprivation is really a blessing.

III. And there are times in which, instead of the cup we desire, our Father sends us things which we do not desire—bitter *medical* draughts which are very different from the looked-for water. Yet they are meant to prepare us for the water. They are sent to cool the fever and make us ready for the copious draught to-morrow. They seem to mock us by offering a crown of thorns instead of a crown of gold; but in reality they are a sanitary preparation for the coming with safety of that unstinted supply which at present could only come with danger. This, too, is the mercy of our Father.—G. Matheson, *Messages of Hope*, p. 133.

References.—IX. 20.—G. Matheson, *Voices of the Spirit*, p. 33. IX. 30.—*Ibid.* p. 36.

OUTWARD BUSINESS

'The outward business of the house of God.'—NEHEMIAH XI. 16.

WHAT is the House of God? 'A church.' Not necessarily. 'A chapel, a sanctuary, a tabernacle, a temple.' Not necessarily. You may have a cathedral without a house of God, and you may find in some little thatched cottage or chapel on the hill-side all the cathedrals out of heaven. Hence it is that we must not look at magnitudes, sizes, revenues, apparatus, but at the ideal, the symbolic, the spiritual, the sacramental; then the great may become little and the little may become great.

I. What was Jacob's environment at that time? Churches, chapels, institutions? Not one. Yet he was in a walled place, walled in with light, and ministered to by ascending and descending angels. We must get the house of God and many other things back from little definitions and narrow and petty localizations, and regard the universe as God's house. What was Jacob's environment? Nature; the green earth, or the stony wilderness, or the blue heaven, or the rippling brook, or the flashing stream, each one, every one, all helping to make up a symbolic building.

II. Let us be very careful how we divide things into outward and inward. The time will come when we shall get rid of even Scriptural uses of outward, alien, strange, foreign. All these words are doomed to go. 'I saw no temple therein,' said John. Why did he not see a temple in heaven? Because heaven was all temple. He who lives in light does not even see the sun; he who lives in God has no moon, for he has no night. But men are crafty and expert almost at making little definitions, parties, separations, and the like.

III. There are persons who have carried their defining powers, if powers they be, into what are called ecclesiastical matters, so that now we have 'The Temporalities' and 'The Spiritualities'. What man devised so insane a distinction? There is a sense, but a very poor, narrow sense not worth considering, in which the work of the Church may be divided into the temporal and the spiritual, but, properly regarded, in the spirit of Christ and in the spirit of the Cross, the gift of the poor man's penny may be as true an act of worship as the singing of the anthem. There is nothing secular, or if there is anything that we call secular it is only for momentary convenience. He that made all things is God; He built the wall of the Church, and He will take care of the roof; it is His place.—JOSEPH PARKER, *City Temple Pulpit*, vol. IV. p. 117.

REFERENCES.—XII. 42, 43.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. XVII. No. 1027. XII. 46.—W. Garrett Horder, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xlii. p. 226.

THE CURSE TURNED INTO A BLESSING

'Howbeit our God turned the curse into a blessing.'—NEHEMIAH XIII. 2.

REFERS to the time when Balak sent for Balaam to curse Israel.

I. God Turns His Own Curses into Blessings.

1. Toil: leads to self-denial and self-sacrifice.

2. Difficulty: calls forth energy and develops strength.

3. Danger: awakens courage and fortitude.

4. Pain: reminds us of the evil of sin.

5. Sorrow: acts as a refiner's fire.

II. God Turns Man's Curses into Blessings.—The crucifixion of Christ was the means of man's redemption.

The blood of the martyrs was the seed of the Church.—F. J. AUSTIN, *Seeds and Saplings*, p. 80.

REFERENCES.—XIII. 2.—B. J. Snell, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. li. 1897, p. 153. XIII. 11.—J. H. Jowett, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxxix. 1891, p. 92. Ambrose Shepherd, *The Gospel and Social Questions*, p. 73. XIII. 15-22.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—2 Kings, Chronicles, Ezra*, and *Nehemiah*, p. 391.

SOLOMON'S FOLLY AND SIN

'Did not Solomon King of Israel sin by these things,' etc.—NEHEMIAH XIII. 26.

I. WE may learn from the text that neither greatness nor goodness can render a man infallible. Let no man think himself too strong to fall. The best need to watch and pray.

II. Danger in evil associations. Solomon sinned by reason of his alliance with idolatrous wives.

(*a*) Many a good character has been injured by godless associates.

(*b*) Evil habits are often acquired through sinful associations.

(*c*) Young people, especially, should avoid dangerous companions.

III. We should be warned by the sins and follies of others. Let no one trust in his own heart. Self-confidence is vain confidence. Divine grace is needed to keep us from falling. God's help must be sought daily.—G. CHARLESWORTH, *Sermonic Suggestions*, p. 144.

REFERENCES.—XIII. 26.—J. Parker, *Studies in Texts*, vol. i. p. 107. H. D. M. Spence, *Voices and Silences*, p. 141. XIII. 31.—G. F. De Teissier, *Plain Preaching to Poor People* (9th Series), p. 83.

ESTHER

THE BOOK OF ESTHER

An unfolding of Divine Providence.

I. Unseen power behind human affairs.

II. Ultimate just awards both to evil and to good.

III. Prosperity of the wicked ending in adversity.

IV. Adversity of the righteous ending in prosperity.

V. Poetic exactness of retribution, e.g. Haman and the gallows.

VI. Minutest matters woven by God's shuttle into the fabric of His design (chap. VI. 1).

VII. Yet there is no fatalism taught here, but prayer, resolve, and independent action.

VIII. The name of God is not found in the book, perhaps to hint that the hand which regulates all these things is a hidden hand.—ARTHUR T. PIERSON, *Seed Thoughts*, p. 10.

ESTHER—GOD AMID THE SHADOWS

THE events recorded in the book of Esther occurred between the completion of the temple and the mission of Ezra. In all likelihood the narrative, as we have it, was taken directly from the Persian records. The principal value of the book is not its revelation of God's care for individuals, it is rather that of His preservation of the people as a whole, in an hour when they were threatened with wholesale slaughter. The book is pre-eminently dramatic, and is best analysed around the scenes.

I. The King's Court, Ahasuerus.—The first scene is that of a great feast in the palace of the king. In the midst of it the king commanded his queen, Vashti, to his presence. The one redeeming feature in the revelation of the conditions at the court of Ahasuerus was that of Vashti's refusal to obey the command of the king. Mordecai's action in the case of Esther is open to question. His advice that she should not betray her nationality was questionable, as her position at the court of the king was one of peril for a daughter of the covenant. Haman is now introduced, His malice was stirred against Mordecai, and also, therefore, against all his people, and he made use of his influence with the king to obtain authority practically to exterminate the whole of them.

II. The Country, Mordecai, and the Mourning Jews.—The intention of Haman became known to Mordecai, who at once took up his position outside the king's gate, and there raised a loud and bitter cry. The royal proclamation filled the people through the provinces with sorrow, and they mourned with fasting and weeping and wailing.

III. The King's Court, the Unnamed God.—The news of this mourning reached Esther in the royal palace, and she sent to make inquiries. The custom and law of the court forbade her approach to her lord save at his command. The urgency of the case appealed to her, however, and with splendid heroism she ventured. Her request was at first of the simplest. She invited the king and Haman to a banquet. Acting upon the advice of wife and friends, Haman committed the folly of making the time of the banquet merry by first erecting a gallows for Mordecai. To while away the hours of a sleepless night, the records were read to the king, and a deed of Mordecai therein recorded led to the hasty and strange happenings which filled the heart of Haman with anger and terror. Mordecai was lifted from obscurity to the most conspicuous position in the kingdom. By the way of the banquet Haman passed to the gallows.

IV. The Country, Purim, the Rejoicing Jews.—The peril of the Hebrew people was not yet averted however. The royal proclamation had gone forth that on the thirteenth day of the twelfth month they should be exterminated. By the constitution no royal proclamation could be reversed. The king granted Mordecai to write and sign letters to his people permitting them to arm and defend themselves. The fateful day arrived, but it was one in which the changed conditions in the case of Haman and Mordecai were repeated throughout the whole of the provinces. In memory of the deliverance the feast of Purim was established.—G. CAMPBELL MORGAN, *The Analysed Bible*, p. 249.

REFERENCES.—I. 1-9.—A. Raleigh, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 614. I. 1-10.—*Ibid. The Book of Esther*, p. 1. I. 1-12.—A. D. Davidson, *Lectures on Esther*, p. 9.

EMPIRE DAY

'Red, and blue, and white.'—ESTHER I. 6.

OUR text is from the first chapter of Esther, part of the sixth verse, 'Red, and blue, and white,' or, in more familiar order, red, white, and blue, those three great colours on the flag which has floated both in England and foreign parts over the whole of the British Empire.

What a strange power colours have in the nation's history! We are familiar with the college colours, the dark blue of Oxford and the light blue of Cambridge; with school colours, the light blue of Eton and the dark blue of Harrow. We are familiar with the thought of the great power that the colours of uniforms have in the nation. We think of the red coats, the colour that Cromwell gave to the British Army, when he first of all clothed it in a special dress. We think of the blue jackets, the colour that you may see in Nelson's coat in the Royal Institute in Whitehall, the first colour that a British sailor ever wore as an official uniform.

Let us take these colours separately.

I. Red.—Red is the Bible colour for war. Red tells of battle; and we never can repeat too often the root-idea which is wrapped up in the present-day attitude of Christianity towards that red—war. It is the attitude of a society which preaches that war is always a crime, is always wrong, but that there come days in the history of a nation when we have to choose between a greater crime and a lesser crime. We have to choose between that great crime, war—and those of us who have seen anything of it know what it means—but we know that great as that crime is, there is a greater crime, and that is, by a life of lazy indulgence to let our country be invaded and exposed to the horrors of a second siege of Jerusalem. It would be a greater crime to let the nation be exposed to the starvation, terribly increasing, that we are seeing about us to-day than to go to war and commit the lesser crime, crime though it be, of fighting. Let us look at the symbolical teaching of Trafalgar Square in London, an almost sacred spot for us English people. Go to that square. There, facing, fronting London, as it were, is the naval column of Nelson. What is behind? There is the representation first of the British Army; there are the monuments of Gordon, and Havelock, and Napier. Nelson stands in front of them. He keeps the British Navy that must defend the British Army. I look a little further behind and see the National Gallery that tells of Art and peace. What is it that makes the peaceful arts, the business life of the nation, possible? And I answer, If I see the symbolical teaching of Trafalgar Square, I see Nelson in front of all; I see the country in such a state of security as the British Navy alone makes it possible to be in.

II. White.—There is another colour. It is white; and I learn that if the red, war, is indeed to float over England victoriously and successfully, then England's cause must be a white cause. We must fight, not for greed, not for aggrandisement, not merely to increase our foreign possessions, but for a cause that has a clean slate behind it, for a cause that we can write down as the colour of the second colour in the great Union Jack—a white cause.

III. Blue.—Then there is that great colour, blue, our own naval colour. There is an expression which we English people are familiar with in connexion with the colour blue. It is this, 'Be true blue'. Be true blue to your king. There have been times, there have been kings, when, and under whom, it has been difficult for the nation to stand loyally by, to be true blue to; but this is not the case now. On our great throne we have a King whose whole object is to keep the country at the high level at which his ancestors handed it down to him. Be true blue to your country. Be patriots.

IV. There is a Deeper Sense in which red, white, and blue will, I think, teach us all to-day.

(*a*) *The red*, does it not tell of that great rebellion that is so visibly stalking our streets everywhere in the form of sin? What is sin but rebellion; and what have we to do but to enlist under the red banner of Him who was the soldiers' God, and fight sin in whatever form it touches us, either personally or in our country?

(*b*) *Lead the white life.*

(*c*) *Be true to your Christ King.*—There is an old toast of the English nation, 'Church and King'. First Church, and all the Church stands for, and then King. First another King, one Jesus. Be loyal to the Christ; fight for Him. Fight the good fight with all thy might, as He fought for you. 'Fight for the right, by day and by night; fight for the red, white, and blue.'

SPIRITUAL DIVERSITY

'The vessels being diverse one from another.'—ESTHER I. 7.

THE text is, 'The vessels being diverse one from another'. There is a principle in this statement; let us find that principle, and fear not to apply it. No two men are alike. Yet we speak of men as if they were one. They are one, but not in likeness. The root lies deeper than the appearance; the root is unity, the evolution is variety; but the variety does not destroy the unity. The great thing to be done is to realize unity in diversity, and diversity in unity.

I. There are no two sins alike. No two men sin in just the same way. Wherein is the satisfaction or the subtle delight? It is in this, that I can thank God that I do not sin as my neighbour sins. There is some originality about my iniquity, there is no originality about the other man's iniquity. He who is strong at one point seeks to magnify his strength by comparing it with the weaknesses of other men. We want the inner criticism. No two sins are just alike; they are various in measure if not always various in quality, and are to be judged by the temperament of the men. When all is known much may be forgiven.

II. Men believe in different ways. We are not all equally gifted in faith. 'Him that is weak in the faith receive ye.' You have been made strong that you may help the weakness of other men. Do not boast of your greatness and your orthodoxy, your Pharisaic pride and pomp; but wherein the Spirit of Christ has laid hold on you and made you very strong in faith and mighty in prayer, remember that you are trustees of these abilities and privileges, that you may use them for the sake of the poor, the outcast, and the weak.

III. It is easy to add, but most necessary, that men work in different ways. The vessels of gold are diverse one from the other even in this matter of work. But if you do not work in my way what becomes of you? When will people let other people alone? when will they recognize individuality of conscience? when will they give men credit for doing the very best according to their ability. When will we remember that the vessels of God are diverse the one from the other, that each man must be himself and work in his own way according to his own ability; remembering

all the time not to make himself offensive to people who work along other lines and policies?

What a brotherhood there would be amongst us if we all recognized this principle! No two experiences are alike. We are at liberty to talk one to another, but we are not at liberty to judge one another in this matter of spiritual experience.—Joseph Parker, *City Temple Pulpit*, vol. III. p. 223.

References.—I. 7.—A. P. Stanley, *Sermons on Special Occasions*, p. 98. I. 13-22.—A. D. Davidson, *Lectures on Esther*, p. 29. II. 1-4.—*Ibid.* p. 49. II. 1-20.—A. Raleigh, *The Book of Esther*, p. 48. II. 5-20.—A. D. Davidson, *Lectures on Esther*, p. 67. II. 21-23; III. 1-5.—*Ibid.* p. 89. III. 6-11.—*Ibid.* p. 108.

THE SOLITARINESS OF PRINCIPLE

'A certain people . . . and their laws are diverse from all people.'—Esther III. 8.

In this story of the Persian Empire it is related how Haman, the king's chief favourite, felt insulted because Mordecai the Jew neglected to give him sufficient honour. His wounded dignity demanded revenge, but could not be satisfied with merely inflicting punishment on the man who had offended him. Because Mordecai was a Jew he would have the indignity wiped out by the extermination of the whole tribe. So Haman, by a little judicious flattery of the king, by misrepresenting the character of the Jewish exiles who lived within the bounds of the great Persian Empire, got a decree against them. 'There is a certain people dispersed among the provinces of thy kingdom, and their laws are diverse from those of every people.' It was a false charge as Haman put it, implying a Jewish conspiracy against the Empire. But in another sense it was true. The Jews were a separate people even in the midst of the Persian Empire, with rites and ceremonies, and religious beliefs, and practices of their own. The same sort of charge was made against the Christian Faith in the Roman Empire, with the same falseness and evil purpose, and with the same inherent truth. Christians were persecuted and harried because of their singularity, because they were in Rome and yet did not do as the Romans did.

I. Progress is ever got by dissent. There must be points of departure, lines of cleavage, difference; or else there is stagnation and ultimate death. It is from singularity that the race has hope for the future. Great movements of thought have ever sprung from dissent. Our Christian religion lays greater stress than ever on the solitariness of principle, making it even an individual thing instead of a racial difference, as with the Jews. The Church is set in the world as a model for the world, a great object-lesson to induce it upward to a higher level of thought and action. And what is the Church but a certain people whose laws are diverse from those of all other peoples. But the Christian faith, with its doctrine of the special illumination of the Holy Spirit to the receptive soul, goes even further, and puts the emphasis on the individual, making the soul responsible to God alone. It enforces the imperative of principle, calling a man out, if need be, to stand alone, making him, it may be, diverse from all people for conscience sake. A great soul is alone. From the very nature of the case greatness in anything isolates. A great man is always, to begin with, in a minority. Commonplace men on the whole prefer the commonplace.

II. But this singularity must be the fruit of principle to be worth anything; it must be for conscience sake. The diverseness from all other people must be in obedience to laws, which make their irresistible appeal to conscience. If it is due to desire for notoriety, or through eccentricity, it is beneath contempt. But the cure for such is simple. This weak craving for notice will be curbed by the thought that all singularity carries with it a corresponding responsibility. It tunes the life to a high pitch; and failure is all the more pitiful. It demands stern adherence to principle. It fixes a more inflexible standard. The only excuse for laws diverse from all people is that they should be higher laws and be obeyed with whole-hearted loyalty, and the very moral necessity laid upon a man's conscience to be singular. The unflinching advocacy of an unpopular cause for conscience sake gives to the character strength and solidity.—Hugh Black, *University Sermons*, p. 77.

References.—III. 8.—A. P. Stanley, *Sermons on Special Occasions*, p. 98. III. 12-15.—A. D. Davidson, *Lectures on Esther*, p. 128. III. A. Raleigh, *The Book of Esther*, p. 69. IV. 1-9.—A. D. Davidson, *Lectures on Esther*, p. 128.

NOT AFRAID OF SACKCLOTH

'None might enter into the king's gate clothed with sackcloth.—Esther IV. 2.

'Seeing then that we have such hope, we use great plainness of speech.'—2 Corinthians III. 12.

In the book of Esther IV. 2, we read, 'None might enter into the king's gate clothed with sackcloth'. St. Paul in his Second Epistle to the Corinthians III. 12 says, 'Seeing then that we have such hope, we use great plainness of speech'. In the first text we read of a refusal to face the facts of life, the hard and painful facts—'None might enter into the king's gate clothed in sackcloth'. In the second we read of an unflinching sincerity of vision, and of a sincerity which does not flinch because it is armed by a great hope—'Seeing then that we have such hope, we use great plainness of speech'.

There are three ways in which we may deal with the harder things of life. First of all, we may take the way of the Eastern King and resolve not to see them, to bar the door against them, to act as if they did not exist. There is a second way. We may face them without the Christian hope. There is a third way. We may face them with the Christian hope, and that is the true and only wisdom. Let us dwell for a moment on those three ways or methods.

I. We may close the eyes and ears, and say that we will not look upon the things that affright and affront us. 'None might enter the king's gate clothed in sackcloth.' We know what that leads to, that life lived in an unreal world, in a world of

imagination. We know what it has done in history through all the ages. We may close the doors and curtain the windows and hide, as it were, our faces from misery, but it is in vain. The flaring lights flicker, the storm outside begins to mutter and to break, and the inexorable call comes, and we have to open our eyes and look out on the woe and the wrong and the torture of this world, on all the wretchedness that is rising against us to sweep us from our place. In other words, even the king cannot keep his gate against the dark ministers of pain that insist upon an entrance, and will force it at last.

II. We may look willingly or unwillingly at the facts of life without any hope in Christ. I will not speak of those, and there are many, who look upon the agony of the world simply to find in it the opportunity of new sensation. I wish to speak rather of the hopeless, earnest, despairing outlook on the miseries of life. There are those like the poet whose hearts become as

> A nerve o'er which do creep
> The else unfelt oppressions of the world.

They meditate upon sin and grief and death, upon the vast sum of human woe, upon their little and slow means for diminishing it, till the heart spends itself in fierce and hopeless throbs. The thought beats upon the brain like as on an anvil. Yet all becomes at last so commonplace and so sad and so far beyond remedy. The waves of mournful thought cannot be stemmed, but they flow in vain. The end is at best a quiet misery.

III. We come to the one wise way of facing the problems and the agonies of life without flinching and without fear. We may face them so as possessors of the Christian hope, and in no other way—'Seeing then we have such hope, we use great plainness of speech'.

St. Paul has been speaking of the comparative dimness of the Mosaic ministry. That ministry had passages of glory, but the glory was transitory and faded away. It was shone down by the everlasting splendour of the new ministry of Christ. In Christ the veil was taken away, and taken away for ever. There was a veil on the face of Moses: there is no veil on the face of Jesus. It is as if the eyes that sought each other with such desire burned the screen that parted them. So, said the Apostle, since we live in light, we speak in light. We declare every truth of the Gospel, we make every claim for our ministry. The future glory will make all our words good. We are not afraid to look on the hostile elements of life and call them by their true names. We need no disguise, no euphemism, no softening. We use great boldness of speech, and are not afraid. Christianity, be it remembered, is the only religion that has fairly measured itself with sin and grief and death. It has undertaken at last to subdue them completely. It recognizes the sternness of the battle; it confesses that the foes are terrible foes. It has no hope save in the might of Christ Who is conquering and to conquer, but in Him it reposes an unshaken and absolute and inviolable trust.

'None might enter the king's gate clothed in sackcloth,' but Christ our King offers His welcome and His heart to those who are clothed in sackcloth, who are weary and heavy-laden. The heart is heavy—

> To think that each new week will yield
> New struggles in new battlefield.

But if He is with us in the fight, everything will be changed. Said St. Paul once, 'I will abide and winter with you'. He has promised to be with us to the end of the world, and He will winter with us through the dark, cold years until the winter ends, until we pass from the turmoil of this world to the peace of that.—W. Robertson Nicoll, *The Lamp of Sacrifice*, p. 37.

THE TRANSFIGURED SACKCLOTH

'For none might enter into the king's gate clothed with sackcloth.'—Esther iv. 2.

Christianity is sometimes scouted as 'the religion of sorrow,' and many amongst us are ready to avow that the Persian forbidding the sackcloth is more to their taste than the Egyptian or the Christian dragging the corpse through the banquet: but we confidently contend that the recognition by Christ of the morbid phases of human life is altogether wise and gracious.

I. We consider, first, the recognition by revelation of sin. Sackcloth is the outward and visible sign of sin, guilt and misery. How men shut their eyes to this most terrible reality—coolly ignoring, skilfully veiling, emphatically denying it! What is popularly called sin these philosophers call error, accident, inexperience, indecision, misdirection, imperfection, disharmony; but they will not allow the presence in the human heart of a malign force, which asserts itself against God, and against the order of His universe. The sackcloth must not mar our shallow happiness, nevertheless sin thrusts itself upon our attention. The greatest thinkers in all ages have been constrained to recognize its presence and power. The creeds of all nations declare the fact that men everywhere feel the bitter working and intolerable burden of conscience. Sin was the burden of the life of Christ because it is the burden of our life. Christ has done more than insist on the reality. The odiousness, the ominousness of sin. He has laid bare its principle and essence—not in the spirit of a barren cynicism does Christ lay bare the ghastly wound of our nature but as a noble physician who can purge the mortal virus which destroys us.

II. We consider the recognition by revelation of sorrow. Sackcloth is the raiment of sorrow, and as such it was interdicted by the Persian monarch. We still follow the same insane course, minimizing, despising, masking, denying, suffering. Nevertheless suffering is a stern fact that will not long permit us to sleep. A man may carry many hallucinations with him to the grave, but a belief in the unreality of pain is hardly likely to be one of them. Reason as we may, suppress the disagreeable truths of life

as we may, suffering will find us out, and pierce us to the heart. Christ gives us the noblest example of suffering. He himself was pre-eminently a man of sorrows; He exhausted all forms of suffering, touching life at every point, at every point He bled, and in Him we learn how to sustain our burden and to triumph throughout all tragedy.

III. We consider the recognition by revelation of death. We have again adroit ways of shutting the gate upon their sackcloth which is the sign of death. Walt Whitman tells us 'That nothing can happen more beautiful than death'. And he has expressed the humanist view of mortality in a hymn which his admirers regard as the high-water mark of modern poetry. But will this rhapsody bear thinking about? Is death 'delicate,' 'lovely and soothing,' 'delicious,' coming to us with 'serenades'. Do we go forth to meet death 'with dances and chants of fullest welcome?' It is vain to hide the direct fact of all under metaphors and rhetorical artifice. Without evasion or euphony Christ recognizes the sombre mystery. He shows us that death as we know it is an unnatural thing, that it is the fruit of disobedience, and by giving us purity and peace He gives us eternal life.—W. L. Watkinson, *The Transfigured Sackcloth*, p. 3.

References.—IV. 10-17.—A. D. Davidson, *Lectures on Esther*, p. 149. IV. 13-14.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxx. No. 1777.

THE STORY OF QUEEN ESTHER

Esther iv. 13-17.

Some people are puzzled to discover how the book of Esther comes to be in the Old Testament. It contains no religious teaching. The name of God is not once mentioned in it from the first verse to the last. How comes it in the Bible. No teaching of religion, no prophesying of Jesus, no foreshadowing of the evangelical truths of redemption—true not in pious phrase, but what the book does paint for you is a majestic picture of a human heart struggling against its own weakness, rising to a grandeur that had in it the glory of Christ's own self-sacrifice.

I. You remember the story. A dissolute Persian monarch in a drunken frolic requires of his queen to do a deed that ran against all that was womanly within her, and she refused. Mercilessly he deposes her from the throne, and he sets to to select another queen. The fair maidens of the land are collected, and from among them he chooses the beautiful young Jewess Esther, and makes her his queen.

II. Esther was a Jewess. She owed her birth and her breeding to that despised exiled people. She had won her proud position on the emperor's throne through the planning and toiling and sacrifice of her Jewish guardian. And now her people's destiny hangs on the balance. A deadly conspiracy against them has brought it about that on a given day rapidly approaching there is to be a universal merciless massacre of these defenceless Jews. And through the mouth of her old revered guardian the demand comes to her—the one human being that might have influence with the cruel king to cancel the decree and save the lives of men, women, and children—at the risk and peril of her own life in asking it, to go and intercede for them. Esther began arguing within herself—was she bound to hazard her life for these Jews? Why should she come down from the throne and take her stand among them, exposed to cruel massacre and death? The fact of the matter was, the queen was standing in a false position. She could not see the truth, she could not see the right, where she stood.

III. Mordecai recognized the root of the queen's cowardice, and swiftly and sternly he sent back a reply that shattered those barriers of her selfishness, and lifted her out of her little self-centred world and set her on the pinnacle whence the whole line and way of duty shone out unmistakably. 'Go back,' said he, 'and tell the queen to be ashamed of her despicable selfishness. Go tell the queen that she does not live in a will-less random world where she may pick and choose the best things for herself. If she will not save God's people, then God will find another deliverer and she herself shall be dashed aside.' What a new world we are in now! What a new light floods everything! The queen felt it. All that was noble, all that was good in her waked and seized the upper hand and crushed down her baseness and her meanness and her selfishness. She saw how it was. Wrapped round with that sense of human sympathy, nerved and braved by the thought of all these human lives hanging on her heroism, the weak woman conquered and she could go and do the deed of valour. Esther by that deed of heroism delivered God's people from destruction. In her measure she did the same thing that Christ did perfectly later. Like Him she laid her own life down on the altar. That it was not sacrificed does not diminish the value of the offering. By her deed in her own day and generation she saved God's people from imminent destruction, by that deed preserved in history, she lifted up and made strong the hope and faith of generations after.—W. G. Elmslie, *The British Weekly Pulpit*, vol. II. p. 345.

SELF-SACRIFICE

'Who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?'—Esther iv. 14.

In our daily lessons yesterday we began the reading of the book of Esther, which is so full of instruction upon the law of self-sacrifice. Self-sacrifice is the first law of the kingdom of God. Self-sacrifice is the one condition of life, of progress, and of fruitful service. It is by drinking the Saviour's cup of suffering, and sharing His baptism of blood, that men qualify for high honours above. The nearer the Cross now, the nearer the Throne hereafter. That Esther, the young bride and queen, should shrink from risking her life was most natural, and many a young Christian shrinks from following Christ because of the cross involved. But self-sacrifice for Christ is the only way

to usefulness and joy. But Mordecai would not accept Esther's excuse. He knew that emergencies call for sacrifices, and that often the bold policy is the only safe one. So he sent back a remarkable reply, containing a warning, an encouragement, and an appeal.

I. The Warning was Candid and Brusque.—'Think not that thou shalt escape in the king's house more than all the Jews.' Esther might well have thought that the queen-consort would escape the general slaughter. Her nationality was not publicly known. Surely if she held her peace, whoever else might suffer she would escape. But Mordecai knew better. 'If thou altogether hold thy peace at this time . . thou and thy father's house shall be destroyed.' Yes, nothing would be gained by letting things slide. The policy of silence would not answer. The bold line was the only safe one. It always is so. Be bold for Christ now, and your testimony will be a blessing to many; but if you hold your peace, Satan will some day drive you into a corner, where you must either publicly deny your Lord or be forced into a confession which will have very little value.

II. With the Warning came Encouragement.—'Enlargement and deliverance shall arise to the Jews from another place,' if thou hold thy peace. Mordecai knew that God was fully equal to this emergency. God had never failed His people. He knew that deliverance should arise from some quarter. His only fear was lest Esther should lose this golden opportunity of becoming the saviour of her race. We ought all to share Mordecai's faith. However dark the outlook may sometimes seem, however great the social and political difficulties of our day, there is no doubt as to the final issue. The growing despair of nations is only the surer evidence of the approaching advent of Christ. What part shall we take in preparing the way for the Prince of Peace?

III. So the Message closed with an Appeal.—'Who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?' Esther, the captive Jewess, had been raised to the throne of Persia. You, the slave of sin and death, God has redeemed by precious blood. Is it not for such a time as this, that just when the witness of men who know God is most needed your voice may be raised for Christ? That when youth and vigour and enthusiasm are wanted to free England from increasing irreligion and sin, and to carry the banner of the Cross amongst the millions of heathen in distant lands your life, bought at such a price, should be wholly yielded up to God? It is in time of war that soldiers come to the front. It is in days of darkness and corruption that God's people must prove themselves the light of men, the salt of the earth.

IV. The Decision was Made.—The three days' fast for herself and her maidens and all the Jews was arranged. And at the close the young queen and bride took her life in her hand and went in to see the king. She risked her all, and God made her the saviour of the whole nation.

PUBLIC SPIRIT

'If thou altogether holdest thy peace at this time, then shall there enlargement and deliverance arise to the Jews from another place; but thou and thy father's house shall be destroyed: and who knoweth whither thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?'—ESTHER IV. 14.

I. GOD'S cause is independent of our assistance. Mordecai believed that God watched over Israel night and day; many a time had He delivered her, when everything appeared desperate and the help of man had utterly failed; and the record of God's faithfulness in the past gave the assurance that in some way of His own He would prevent the extinction of His people. This was a noble attitude of mind; and it is one which we should seek to cultivate in reference to the cause of Christ. If religion is real at all, then it is the greatest and most permanent of all realities. If Christ's own words are true, then it is no limited or hesitating loyalty we owe Him. One man, with truth and the promise of God at his back, is stronger than an opposing world.

II. We are not independent of God's cause. One reason there was which might have tempted Esther to do nothing; she was not known to be a Jewess. But Mordecai interposed between her and all such refuges of his by assuring her that, if the Jews were massacred, she and her father's house would perish with the rest. We cannot hold back from Christ's cause with impunity. It can do without us, but we cannot do without it. If Jesus Christ is the central figure in history, and if the movement which He set agoing is the central current of history, then to be dissociated from His aims is to be a cipher, or perhaps even a minor quantity, in the aim of good.

III. Christ's cause offers the noblest employment for our gifts. Powerful as were the opening portions of Mordecai's appeal, it seems to me it must have been the closing sentence which decided Esther. It is a transfiguring moment when the thought first penetrates a man that perhaps this is not the purpose for which he has received his gifts at all—when the image of humanity rises up before him, in its helplessness and misery, appealing to him, as the weak appeal to the strong; when his country rises before him as an august and lovable mother and demands the services of her child; when the image of Christ rises before him, and, pointing to His cause struggling with the forces of evil yet leading towards a glorious and not uncertain goal, asks him to lend it his strength—when a man ceases to be the most important object in the world to himself, and sees, outside, an object which makes him forget himself and irresistibly draws him on. This call saved Esther. The same call comes now to you. We must begin with ourselves. Are we to have aught to give the world?—J. WALKER, *The Four Men*, p. 128.

REFERENCES.—IV. 14.—J. E. McFadyen, *The City with Foundations*, p. 53. G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 285. Bishop Woodford, *Occasional Sermons*, vol. ii. p. 55. IV.—A. Raleigh, *The Book of Esther*, p. 88. V. 1-8.—A. D. Davidson, *Lectures on Esther*, p. 171. V. 9-14.—*Ibid.* p. 192.

THE PENALTY OF HATE

'Yet all this availeth me nothing, so long as I see Mordecai the Jew sitting at the king's gate.'—ESTHER v. 13.

THE story of Haman was one of immense and rapid success. He had climbed high till he was the greatest man in the Persian Empire next to the king. But his pride had been wounded by the neglect of a certain Jew named Mordecai to bow before him and do him reverence. He could easily crush the insolent Jew with one word, but the insult had so mortified his pride that he could not be content with merely punishing the culprit. He could only appease his fretful irritation and revengeful pride by superintending the erection of a high gallows. Mordecai was the black spot in his sunshine. Do we know enough of our own hearts to be able to make any modern interpretation and any personal application of the story? Is there no wounded pride that can be as bitter as Haman's though not on so large a scale?

I. Thus notice for our own learning that malice makes a man lose perspective. It magnifies the one petty thing, and blinds the eye to everything else. It is like the lust of curiosity, which makes the whole wide world open to inspection as of no account compared to the one hidden thing as in the Bluebeard type of story familiar from nursery days, in which every room of the spacious house is open, but there is one locked door, and nothing but that counts.

II. Further, notice how it leads to self-deception, even in the things where a wily worldly man like Haman would be supposed to be wideawake. If he had not scorned and hated Mordecai so much he would have found out something more about him, and would have found out that the queen's favour was his ruin and not his protection. Seneca's word has had many an illustration in history and experience. 'Anger is like rain: it breaks itself on what it falls.'

III. What can save us from it, guard us from giving way to it, rescue us from its deadly grip if it already has hold of us? No mere negative precaution can prevail much. At the centre of that circle whose circumference is the whole universe of God there stands a Cross. At the Cross we bow in penitence of self and pity of others. We cannot keep our malice there.—H. BLACK, *Edinburgh Sermons*, p. 101.

REFERENCES.—V. 13.—J. C. M. Bellew, *Sermons*, vol. iii. p. 150. Nicholson, *Communion with Heaven*, p. 242. V.—A. Raleigh, *The Book of Esther*, p. 106.

AN EVER-WATCHFUL PROVIDENCE

'On that night could not the king sleep.'—ESTHER VI. 1.

'UNEASY lies the head that wears a crown,' and it is small wonder that the master of one hundred and twenty-seven provinces, stretching from Ethiopia to India, should have often been distracted by the cares of his mighty empire and so have his sleep driven from him.

I. But we may read these words in another way, and then the simple statement will convey a pregnant and marvellous truth. Read it in the light of its far-reaching results and it utters the great truth of Divine Providence. On that sleepless night hung the very existence of that people 'of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came'. That sleepless night was the cause of their preservation from decimation. Mordecai and Esther derived their moral strength and heroic patriotism from faith in and devotion to God. In a very real sense the atmosphere of the book breathes of God.

II. Some write over events like these the word 'chance' or 'accident,' and think that term covers the whole. What is chance? It is a word we use to hide our ignorance. There can be no such thing as chance from the standpoint of our religion. Our Master has taught us, in words we cannot forget, 'that even the very hairs of our head are numbered'. So minute is the Divine care and interest in His children. The teaching of science points to the elimination of chance as a factor in life. We Christians believe in a Divine and sleepless Providence watching over our world, our lives, and so we cry with triumphant joy, 'All things work together for good to them that love God'. If the choice lies between inexorable, unconscious force and a supreme, personal, directing God, I, for my part, elect to believe in God, supreme, all-wise, all-watchful, all-loving.

III. Now, consider how this Divine Providence is seen working. It is seen working by ordinary, everyday means in which there is no trace of the miraculous, and this meets the great objection brought in the name of science against our teaching of Providence. It shows us Providence working by the means and methods of the everyday occurrences of life. We are apt to look for the working of Divine Providence in the catastrophes of history, not in its progress: this book shows the working of the ordinary affairs of life. This is what we mean, therefore, by Divine Providence—the affairs of men and nations overruled and ordered for a definite, wise, and benevolent purpose.—H. FOSTER PEGG, *Church Family Newspaper*, vol. xv., 1908, p. 414.

REFERENCES.—VI. 1.—H. Melvill, *Sermons*, vol. i. p. 116. VI. 1-14.—A. D. Davidson, *Lectures on Esther*, p. 213. VI.—A. Raleigh, *The Book of Esther*, p. 134. VII. 1-10.—A. D. Davidson, *Lectures on Esther*, p. 236. VII. 2, 3.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons on the Blessed Sacrament*, p. 92. VII.—A. Raleigh, *The Book of Esther*, p. 155. VIII. 1-7.—*Ibid.* p. 180. VIII. 1-14.—A. D. Davidson, *Lectures on Esther*, p. 257. VIII. 6.—A. P. Stanley, *Sermons on Special Occasions*, p. 98. VIII. 7; IX.—A. Raleigh, *The Book of Esther*, p. 205. VIII. 15-17; IX. 1-19.—A. D. Davidson, *Lectures on Esther*, p. 278. IX. 1.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xx. No. 1201. IX. 20-32; XI. 3.—A. D. Davidson, *Lectures on Esther*, p. 299. IX.-XI.—A. Raleigh, *The Book of Esther*, p. 231. X. 3.—C. Parsons Reichel, *Sermons*, p. 46.

JOB

JOB

THE Pencill of the Holy Ghost hath laboured more in describing the Afflictions of Job than the Felicities of Solomon.—BACON.

I CALL that one of the grandest things ever written with pen. One feels indeed as if it were not Hebrew; such a noble universality, different from noble patriotism or sectarianism, reigns in it. A noble Book; all men's Book! It is our first, oldest statement of the never-ending problem—man's destiny and God's ways with him here in this earth. And all in such free flowing outlines; grand in its sincerity, in its simplicity; in its epic melody, and repose of reconcilement. . . . Sublime sorrow, sublime reconciliation; oldest choral melody as of the heart of mankind;—so soft and great; as the summer midnight, as the world with its seas and stars! There is nothing written, I think, in the Bible or out of it, of equal literary merit.—CARLYLE, *Heroes and Hero-worship*.

IN discernment of the real breadth and depth of social duty, nothing has gone beyond the book of Job. Much of it ought to be engraved upon brass and set upon pillars throughout the land, as a perpetual reminder of the truth as between man and man.—W. HALE WHITE in *The Deliverance*.

'There was a man in the land of Uz, whose name was Job.'—JOB I. 1.

TAKING the temptation of Job for his model, Goethe has similarly exposed his Faust to trial, and with him the tempter succeeds. His hero falls from sin to sin, from crime to crime; he becomes a seducer, a murderer, a betrayer, following recklessly his evil angel wherever he chooses to lead him; and yet, with all this, he never wholly forfeits our sympathy. In spite of his weakness, his heart is still true to his higher nature; sick and restless, even in the delirium of enjoyment, he always longs for something better, and he never can be brought to say of evil that it is good. And therefore, after all, the devil is baulked of his prey; in virtue of this one fact, that the evil in which he steeped himself remained to the last hateful to him. Faust is saved by the angels.—FROUDE, *Short Studies*, vol. I.

'And that man was perfect and upright, and one that feared God, and eschewed evil.'—JOB I. 1.

A SHAKESPEAREAN tragedy may be called a story of exceptional calamity leading to the death of a man in high estate. But it is clearly much more than this, and we have now to regard it from another side. No amount of calamity which merely *befell* a man, descending from the clouds like lightning, or stealing from the darkness like pestilence, could alone provide the substance of its story. Job was the greatest of all the children of the East, and his afflictions were wellnigh more than he could bear; but even if we imagined them wearing him to death, that would not make his story tragic. Nor yet would it become so, in the Shakespearean sense, if the fire, and the great wind from the wilderness, and the torments of his flesh were conceived as sent by a supernatural power, whether just or malignant. The calamities of tragedy do not simply happen, nor are they sent; they proceed mainly from actions, and those the actions of men.—PROF. A. C. BRADLEY, *Shakespearean Tragedy*.

REFERENCES.—I. 1.—H. J. Wilmot-Buxton, *Bible Object Lessons*, p. 176. I. 1-5.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, No. 2711. I. 4, 5.—*Ibid.*, vol. vii. No. 352.

'And it was so, when the days of their feasting were gone about, that Job sent and sanctified them, and rose up early in the morning, and offered burntofferings according to the number of them all: for Job said, It may be that my sons have sinned, and cursed God in their hearts. Thus did Job continually.'—JOB I. 5.

THE state of parents is a holy state, in some degree like that of the priesthood, and calls upon them to bless their children with their prayers and sacrifices to God. Thus it was that Job watched over and blessed his children; he sanctified them, he rose up early in the morning and offered burntofferings according to the number of them all. If parents, therefore, considering themselves in this light, should be daily calling upon God in a solemn deliberate manner, altering and extending their intercessions as the state and growth of their children required, such devotion would have a mighty influence upon the rest of their lives. It would make them very circumspect in the government of themselves; prudent and careful of everything they said and did, lest their example should hinder that which they so constantly desired in their prayers.—WILLIAM LAW, *A Serious Call*.

REFERENCE.—I. 5.—T. Arnold, *Sermons*, vol. vi. p. 93.

'And Satan came also.'—JOB I. 6.

'THE adversary appears,' says Miss Wedgwood (*Message of Israel*), 'among the sons of God to accuse a righteous man, but it is to bring forth that righteousness sifted and purified; and after the trials which have separated the chaff from the wheat we hear no more of Satan; the human adversaries are rebuked, but the accusing spirit is forgotten. Was he really an evil spirit? Is not the sifting spirit a part of the agency of heaven? Judaism leaves the question unanswered, or perhaps we may say it suggests an affirmative answer, though the spirit that sifts is too near the spirit that doubts for it to give that answer distinctly. The influence that questions what is

good is wonderfully close to the influence that purifies what is partly evil.'

'Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan came also among them. And the Lord said unto Satan, Whence comest thou? Then Satan answered the Lord, and said, From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it.'—Job i. 6, 7.

Who are these sons of God? It may be that here is a scene in the spiritual world, and that this is a vision given us of what goes on in the presence of God. But there is another explanation of it which seems to me to be far more natural, and very possibly the true one. The sons of God are not necessarily the angels. We read of the sons of God in the book of Genesis, and there it apparently refers to human beings. Man was made originally in the image of God. The sons of God are those who were made in God's image, and even when that image was defiled, still they are God's sons. We know the details of the trials which overtook Job until the time that the Lord turned the captivity of Job, and gave him twice as much as he had before.

I. The Presence of Satan.—It was true in old times that whenever the sons of God came to do their worship and sacrifice, the powers of evil were there to make men cavil and do mischief; and is it not true to-day when we, the sons and daughters of the Lord Most High, come to present ourselves before the Lord our God, in the various congregations to which we belong, that, though there is much to comfort, and help, and to be thankful for, Satan comes also to present himself before the Lord? Satan, the great adversary, is here to mar and spoil the holy worship and the beauty of the sanctuary, for the beauty of holiness is chiefly in a holy worship in the heart.

(*a*) *He comes to the preacher* and tries to make him think more of himself than the Lord Who bought him with His own blood. He tries to make him speak pleasant and smooth words instead of words of truth. He tries to make him do that which he thinks will please men, instead of that which will please God, and serve the Lord Jesus Christ.

(*b*) *He is present in the hearts of the Church officers*, trying to make them think more of the mode in which they do it than of the One to Whom they render up their praise and all their service.

(*c*) *He is in the congregation*, going here and there, walking to and fro, as it were; else why do people in the House of God criticize one another so much? Satan comes to take away the Word that is sown, lest it should sink into the heart and bring forth fruit for the glory of God.

II. A Holier Presence.—But there is a brighter side of the whole picture. If Satan presents himself before the Lord, if he walks up and down in the midst of the congregation, are there no others here? If there are evil powers, are there not good powers, too? If our eyes could be opened we should see here all around us as we go from place to place, the angels of God watching over us. How often our foot slips, and God's angels prevent serious injury. The angels of God are here present now, good angels, to help, befriend, strengthen us, in ways which we know not and cannot understand.

III. The Presence of Jesus.—There is something far higher than the presence of the angels of God; there is the very real presence of Jesus Christ, the Master Himself. He is here to bless every one who will receive Him. You cannot understand all about Christ. You cannot exactly put together these two truths—that He is here, and that He is in heaven, and we long to know often how it can be. But there is the double truth—the Master at God's right hand, ever living to make intercession for us; the Master here in our midst, at our very side.

Reference.—I. 6-22.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xlii. No. 2457.

FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

'Hast thou considered my servant Job,' etc.—Job i. 8.
'I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear,' etc.—Job xlii. 5, 6.

I. God's witness to Job was true, and Job's witness to himself was true also. God had revealed Himself to him, so that he now looked upon himself in the light of God, and felt the infinite distance between his own goodness and that of God, and so abhorred himself. This is the case with all to whom God reveals Himself.

II. When God's light shines into us, it discloses the imperfection of our perfection. All the arguing of Job's friends had failed to convince him of his deficiency. This was reserved for the sight of God Himself. Of course the eye that saw God was Job's inward eye. The eye of his understanding was enlightened.

III. God would not have witnessed to the uprightness of Job if it had not been real; but this did not hinder it from appearing as nothing in the light of God.

IV. This is the repentance of the righteous. It is not that their righteousness has been no righteousness, but God, perhaps in a moment, has shown to them greater heights, deeper depths, more earnest convictions, and so old attainments seem as if they were not. They think all that they have done is foolish, and literally they loathe themselves. 'In me there dwelleth no good thing.'—M. E. Sadler, *Sermon Outlines for the Clergy and Lay-preachers*, p. 75.

'A perfect and an upright man.'—Job i. 8.

We have a picture of the best man who could then be conceived; not a hard ascetic, living in haughty or cowardly isolation, but a warm figure of flesh and blood, a man full of all human loveliness.—Froude *Short Studies*, vol. i. 298.

Reference.—I. 8.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xi. No. 623. I. 8, 9.—J. J. S. Perowne, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxv. p. 81.

'Doth Job fear God for nought.'—Job i. 9.

'I remember,' says Matthew Arnold in the second chapter of *Culture and Anarchy*, 'when I was under the influence of a mind to which I feel the greatest obligations, the mind of a man who was the very incarnation of sanity and clear sense, a man the most

considerable, it seems to me, whom America has yet produced—Benjamin Franklin—I remember the relief with which, after long feeling the sway of Franklin's imperturbable commonsense, I came upon a project of his for a new version of the book of Job, to replace the old version, the style of which, says Franklin, has become obsolete and thence less agreeable. "I give," he continues, "a few verses, which may serve as a sample of the kind of version I would recommend." We all recollect the famous verse in our translation: "Then Satan answered the Lord and said, Doth Job fear God for nought?" Franklin makes this; "Does Your Majesty imagine that Job's good conduct is the effect of mere personal attachment and affection?" I well remember how when I first read that, I drew a deep breath of relief, and said to myself: "After all, there is a stretch of humanity beyond Franklin's victorious good sense".'

He were but a poor lover whose devotion to his mistress lay resting on the feeling that a marriage with her would conduce to his own comforts. That were a poor patriot who served his country for the hire which his country would give to him. . . . If Christianity had never borne itself more loftily than this, do we suppose that those fierce Norsemen who had learnt, in the fiery war-songs of the Edda, of what stuff the hearts of heroes are composed, would have fashioned their sword-hilts into crosses, and themselves into a crusading chivalry? Let us not dishonour our great fathers with the dream of it. The Christians, like the Stoics and the Epicureans, would have lived their little day among the ignoble sects of an effete civilization, and would have passed off, and been heard of no more.—Froude.

Talk of original *Sin!* Can you have a stronger proof of the original Goodness there must be in this nation than the fact that Religion has been preached to us as a commercial speculation, for a century, and that we still believe in a God?—Lewis Carroll.

Religion in most countries, more or less in every country, is . . . for the most part a wise prudential feeling, grounded on mere calculation; a matter, as all others now are, of Expediency and Utility; whereby some smaller quantum of earthly enjoyment may be exchanged for a far larger quantum of celestial enjoyment. Thus Religion too is Profit, a working for wages; not Reverence but only as Hope or Fear. —Carlyle, *Signs of the Times.*

Compare Browning's setting of the verse in *Ferishtah's Fancies* ('Two Camels').

Every good deed does good even to the doer: this is God's law. . . . No good deed is done, except for the sake of the good the doer is to get from it: this is man's intelligent way of blaspheming, and, so far as in him lies, annulling God's law. This is the lesson which the school of selfish philosophers have learnt from their father and prototype, who prided himself on his craft, when he asked that searching question, *Does Job fear God for nought?*—Augustus J. Hare.

Some people are for seeing God with their eyes, as they can see a cow, and would love God as they love a cow (which thou lovest for the milk and for the cheese, and for thine own profit). Thus do all those who love God for the sake of outward riches or of inward comfort; they do not love aright, but seek only themselves and their own advantage.—Meister Eckhart.

Compare also Bunyan's *Grace Abounding*, § 388.

THE FEAR OF GOD

'Then Satan answered the Lord, and said, Doth Job fear God for nought?'—Job i. 9-11.

I. The temptations of poverty are obvious. Satan sees them at a glance. Those of wealth, that wrung from the Great Teacher the words, 'How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God,' are more subtle and hidden. Satan read the one, Jesus Christ the other.

II. The view embodied in Satan's words is one which you may have heard whispered, or loudly spoken, or taken for granted, now and here, as there and then. There is no such thing, you may be told, as a love of goodness for its own sake. There is always some ulterior aim, some selfish motive. Even religion, you will hear, even the religion of Christ, is a mere matter of selfish interest. It is nothing more, even when sincere, than a selfish device to escape from pain, and enjoy happiness hereafter.

III. If Satan is right, it is not only that there is no such thing as disinterested goodness, but God Himself is robbed of His highest and noblest attribute. You see how vital the question which the challenge stirs, and how rightly it has been said, that in the coming contest, Job is the champion, not of his own character only, but of all who care for goodness, and of God Himself.—G. G. Bradley, *Lectures on the Book of Job*, p. 34.

References.—I. 9.—W. L. Watkinson, *The Ashes of Roses*, p. 191. Spurgeon, *Evening by Evening*, p. 22.

'His sons and his daughters were eating and drinking wine.'—Job i. 13.

Apropos of the divergence of sons from the parental religion, it may be noted how Macaulay, as Bagehot observes, 'was bred up in the circle which more than any other has resembled that of the greatest and best Puritans—in the circle which has presented the evangelical doctrine in its most influential and celebrated, and not its least genial form. Yet he has revolted against it. "The bray of Exeter Hall" is a phrase which has become celebrated: it is an odd one for his father's son. The whole course of his personal fortunes, the entire scope of his historical narrative, show an utter want of sympathy with the Puritan disposition.'

Carlyle, in the *French Revolution*, describes a dinner given at Court on the eve of the crisis: 'A natural repast; in ordinary times, a harmlesss one;

now fatal, as that of Thyestes; as that of Job's sons, when a strong wind smote the four corners of their banquet-house'.

'And the Sabeans fell upon them, and took them away. . . . And I only am escaped alone to tell thee.'—Job i. 15.

At the close of the twenty-fourth chapter of his *History of England*, Macaulay recounts the peril and sufferings of the luckless settlers in Darien, when the fort was besieged by an irregular host of natives, Creoles, Spanish, and Indians. 'Before the end of March a treaty was signed by which the Scotch bound themselves to evacuate Darien in fourteen days; and on the eleventh of April they departed, a much less numerous body than when they arrived. In little more than four months, although the healthiest months of the year, three hundred men out of thirteen hundred had been swept away by disease. Of the survivors very few lived to see their native country again. Two of the ships perished at sea. Many of the adventurers, who had left their homes flushed with hopes of speedy opulence, were glad to hire themselves out to the planters of Jamaica, and laid their bones in that land of exile. Shields died there, worn out and heartbroken. Borland was the only minister who came back. In his curious and interesting narrative, he expresses his feelings, after the fashion of the school in which he had been bred, by grotesque allusions to the Old Testament and by a profusion of Hebrew words. . . . The sad story is introduced with the words in which a great man of old, delivered over to the malice of the evil Power, was informed of the death of his children and the ruin of his fortunes: "I alone am escaped to tell thee".'

'While he was yet speaking, there came also another.'—Job i. 17.

After describing, in his essay on Frederic the Great, the first strokes of ill-fortune which befell that monarch in his defeat by Marshal Daun at Kolin and the subsequent raising of the siege of Prague, Macaulay observes: 'It seemed that the king's distress could hardly be increased. Yet at this moment another blow not less terrible than that of Kolin fell upon him. The French under Marshal D'Estrées had invaded Germany. The Duke of Cumberland had given them battle at Hastenbeck, and had been defeated. In order to save the Electorate of Hanover from entire subjugation, he had made, at Closter Seven, an arrangement with the French generals, which left them at liberty to turn their arms against the Prussian dominions. That nothing might be wanting to Frederic's distress, he lost his mother just at this time.'

'Then Job arose, and rent his mantle, and shaved his head, and fell down upon the ground, and worshipped.'—Job i. 20.

'The essence of greatness,' says Emerson again, 'is the perception that virtue is enough. Poverty is its ornament. It does not need plenty, and can very well abide its loss.'

References.—I. 20-22.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xlii. No. 2457.

'Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither.'—Job i. 21.

In his diary for 21 January, 1826, after the news of his great financial failure, Sir Walter Scott writes: 'Things are so much worse with Constable than I apprehended; that I shall neither save Abbotsford nor anything else. Naked we entered the world, and naked we leave it—blessed be the name of the Lord!'

'The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.'—Job. i. 21.

There are many ways of accepting misfortune—as many, indeed, as there are generous feelings or thoughts to be found on the earth; and every one of these thoughts or feelings has a magic wand which transforms the features and raiment of sorrow on the very threshold. Job would say, 'The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord'; Marcus Aurelius perhaps, 'If I am no longer permitted to love those whom I loved far above all others, it is doubtless in order that I may learn to love those whom as yet I love not'.—Maeterlinck.

'I, like all mortals,' said Carlyle, 'have to feel the inexorable that there is in life, and to say, as piously as I can, God's will, God's will.'

References.—I. 21.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—Job*, p. 29. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. liii. No. 3025.

ENDURING TRIAL

'In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly.'—Job i. 22.

That is to say, after all this,—it is trial, it is temptation these losses of his goods, it is loss of all,—it was a great word.

I. In all our fears the main thing is, not to sin.

(*a*) You must not expect that you will go through this world and have it said, 'In all this nobody spoke against him'. That is not a thing to care about—to go through life without calumny; but it is to be desired that we may go through every trouble and every joy without falling into sin.

(*b*) Neither is it a main thing for us to think of going through life without suffering. For God's servants, the best of them, are ripened and mellowed by suffering.

(*c*) Also it should not be our ambition to go through the world without sadness. If you do not feel the rod so as to smart under it, it becomes a non-effective rod to you. But if in your great trouble you do not fall into sin you are more than a conqueror over Satan.

II. In all time of trial there is a special fear of sin.

(*a*) We are very apt to get impatient. We think a trial lasts too long, that the answer to prayer is delayed altogether an unconscionable time.

(*b*) Sometimes we are tempted to the sin of rebellion. If it comes to rebellion against God, you know it will be a poor outlook for us. We do but bring a heavier rod upon ourselves.

(*c*) Sometimes we sin by despair. Now is the time for trust, not for despair. The child that is sullen will probably have a severer discipline yet to bring him to his right bearing.

III. In acts of mourning we are not to sin. It may perhaps be a comfort in your great sorrow to let the hot floods flow. Job mourned, and yet did not sin, for he mourned and worshipped as he mourned.

IV. In charging God foolishly there is great sin.

(*a*) Sometimes we charge God foolishly when we think He is unjust. If He were now to call upon you to account for your sins, and deal with you with the naked edge of the sword, you would be in hell to despair.

(*b*) Some will charge and question His love, but the more He loves you the more He will rebuke you, for He sees in you a something which is so precious to Him that He would make it 'perfect through suffering'.

(*c*) Sometimes we begin charging His power, and think He cannot help us. Shall some tiny animalcula, sporting with myriads of others in a drop of water, begin to judge the sin?

V. In coming clean out of the trial is our great honour. How you are apt to think you will shut yourselves up in a cupboard and never go out in th world any more, never do anything. Why, that would be one big black sin that will blot out all your life.—C. H. Spurgeon, *British Weekly Pulpit*, vol. III. 1890, p. 337.

Reference.—I. 22.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxxvi. No. 2172.

'A perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil.'—Job II. 3.

Compare Lord Cockburn's description of Robert Blair in his *Memorials* (p. 132): 'He was all honesty. The sudden opening of the whole secrets of his heart would not have disclosed a single speck of dishonour.'

Reference.—II. 3.—F. W. Farrar, *Everyday Christian Life*, p. 110.

'Skin for skin, yea all that a man hath will he give for his life.'—Job II. 4.

With man also as well as with the animals, says Martineau, 'Death is the evil from which he most shrinks himself, and which he most deplores for those he loves; it is the utmost that he can inflict upon his enemy, and the maximum which the penal justice of society can award to its criminals. The fear of it it is which gives their vivid interest to all hairbreadth escapes, in the shipwreck, or amid the glaciers, or in the fight; and secretly supplies the chief tragic element his art.'

Let us remember what is involved in the enjoyment and in the loss of life—that perilous and inestimable something, which we all know how much we ourselves prize, and for which, as we have the word long ago of a personage more distinguished for his talent than his virtue, uttered in a Presence when even he dared not lie direct, that 'all that a man hath he will give,' so let it be our endeavour, or its conservators, to give all that *we* have, our knowledge, our affections, our energies, our virtue (ἀρετή, vir-tus, the very essence and pith of a man), in doing our best to make our patients healthy, long-lived, and happy. —Dr. John Brown.

The need for sacrifice is not taken away, only its nature is changed, exalted, deepened; and mild as is the genius of the New Dispensation, its knife goes closer to the heart than that of the elder one, which we are accustomed to think of as so stern and exacting. Behold the goodness and the severity of Christ! 'Skin for skin,' saith Job of old, 'all that a man hath will he give for his life.' And it is this very life which Christ asks us to lay down for Him; this life of which He tells us that he who loveth it shall lose it, and he who loseth it for His sake shall keep it unto life eternal.—Dora Greenwell.

References.—II. 4.—H. Melvill, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 1526. II. 6.—J. Clifford, *Daily Strength for Daily Living*, p. 52.

'So Satan smote Job with sore boils from the sole of his foot unto his crown.'—Job II. 7.

The fiercest passions are not so dangerous foes to the soul as the cold scepticism of the understanding. The Jewish demon assailed the man of Uz with physical ills; the Lucifer of the Middle Ages tempted his passions; but the Mephistopheles of the eighteenth century bade the finite strive to compass the infinite, and the intellect attempt to solve all the problems of the soul.—Margaret Fuller.

Life has its wounds as well as its weapons. Your moral hero occasionally sees not only the discomfiture of Satan, but also the warm blood of his own mortal veins oozing forth as well.—Royce, *The Spirit of Modern Philosophy*, p. 49.

'And he sat down among the ashes.'—Job II. 8.

One of the wildest grandeurs of this poem is that in it the sun is baleful. The sun is in Job as in Homer; but it is no longer the dawn, it is high noon. The sombre oppressiveness of the brazen ray, falling straight down on the desert, pervades the poem, which is heated to a white heat. Job sweats on his dunghill. The shadow of Job is small and black, and it is hidden under him as the snake beneath the rock. Tropical flies buzz on his sores. Job has over his head the fearful Arabian sun—which intensifies plagues, and changes the miasma into the pestilence. —Victor Hugo.

It is our patience that is the touchstone of our virtue. To bear with life even when illusion and hope are gone; to accept this position of perpetual war, while at the same time loving only peace; to stay patiently in the world, even when it repels us as a place of bad company, and seems to us a mere arena of bad passions; to remain faithful to one's own faith without breaking with the followers of the false gods; to make no attempt to escape from the human hospital, long-suffering and patient as Job upon his dunghill;—this is duty. When life ceases to be a promise, it does not cease to be a Task; its true name even is Trial.—Amiel.

It was the fire that did honour to Mutilius Scævola; poverty made Fabricius famous; Rutilius was made excellent by banishment; Regulus by torments; Socrates by prison; Cato by his death; and God hath crowned the memory of Job with a wreath of glory, because he sat upon his dunghill wisely and temperately; and his potsherds and his groans, mingled with praises and justification of God, pleased him like an anthem sung by angels in the morning of the resurrection.—Jeremy Taylor.

'Then said his wife unto him, Dost thou still retain thine integrity? Curse God, and die.'—Job II. 9.

Southey remarks, of John Wesley's wife, that 'of all women she is said to have been the most unsuited to him. Fain would she have made him, like Marc Antony, give up all for love; and being disappointed in that hope, she tormented him in such a manner, by her outrageous jealousy, and abominable temper, that she deserves to be classed in a triad with Xantippe and the wife of Job, as one of the three bad wives.'

Many a time since have I noticed, in persons of Ginevra Fanshawe's light, careless temperament, and fair, fragile style of beauty, an entire uncapacity to endure: they seem to sour in adversity, like small beer in thunder. The man who takes such a woman for his wife, ought to be prepared to guarantee her an existence all sunshine.—Charlotte Brontë in *Villette*.

CURSE GOD AND DIE

In the introduction to *Guy Mannering*, Scott describes the youth of John McKinlay's legend as exposed to despairing fears, which he combated with courage. 'It seemed as if the gloomiest and most hideous of mental maladies was taking the form of religious despair. Still the youth was gentle, courteous, affectionate, and submissive to his father's will, and resisted with all his power the dark suggestions which were breathed into his mind, as it seemed, by some emanation of the Evil Principle, exhorting him, like the wicked wife of Job, to curse God and die.'

It is a brave act of valour to contemn death; but, where life is more terrible than death, it is then the truest valour to dare to live; and herein hath religion taught us a noble example; for all the valiant acts of Curtius, Scævola, or Codrus, do not parallel or match that one of Job; and sure there is no torture to the rack of a disease, nor any poniards in death itself, like those in the way or prologue unto it.—Sir Thomas Browne.

'Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?'—Job II. 10.

Compare Browning's setting of this text in *Ferishtah's Fancies* ('The Melon-Seller').

My God! what poor creatures we are! After all my fair proposals yesterday, I was seized with a most violent pain in the right kidney and the parts adjacent, which, joined to deadly sickness which it brought on, forced me instantly to go to bed and send for Clarkson. . . . I cannot expect that this first will be the last visit of this cruel complaint; but shall we receive good at the hand of God and not receive evil?—Sir Walter Scott's *Journal* for December, 1825.

Mr. James Skene, in his *Reminiscences*, describes the brave, cheery spirit of his friend, Sir Walter Scott, after the crisis in his fortunes. 'The sentiments of resignation and of cheerful acquiescence in the dispensation of the Almighty which he expressed were those of a Christian thankful for the blessings left, and willing, without ostentation, to do his best. It was really beautiful to see the workings of a strong and upright mind under the first lash of adversity, calmly reposing upon the consolation afforded by his own integrity and manful purposes.'

Be it so thou hast lost all, poor thou art, dejected, in pain of body, grief of mind, thine enemies insult over thee, thou art as bad as Job; yet tell me (saith Chrysostom) was Job or the devil the greater conqueror? Surely Job; the devil had his goods, he sat on the muck-hill and kept his good name; he lost his children, health, friends, but he kept his innocency; he lost his money, but he kept his confidence in God, which was better than any treasure. Do thou then as Job did, triumph as Job did, and be not molested as every fool is.—Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy*.

THE WILL OF GOD

'But he said unto her, Thou speakest as one of the foolish women speaketh. What? shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil? In all this did not Job sin with his lips.'—Job II. 10.

I. We have here put before us the very highest and most perfect type of patience in the sense of simple resignation. It is the greatest picture ever drawn of that calm, unhesitating, and profound acquiescence in the will of God, which was one of the 'qualities which marked Eastern religions, when to the West they were almost unknown, and which even now is more remarkably exhibited in Eastern nations than among ourselves'.

II. 'Thy will be done' is 'a prayer which lies at the very root of all religion'. It stands among the foremost petitions of the Lord's Prayer. It is deeply engraven in the whole religious spirit of the Sons of Abraham, even of the race of Ishmael. In the words, 'God is great,' it expresses the best side of Mahommedanism, the profound submission to the will of a Heavenly Master. It is embodied in the very words, Moslem and Islam. And we, servants of the Crucified One, must feel that to be ready to leave all in God's hands, not merely because He is great, but because we know Him to be wise, and feel Him to be good, is of the very essence of religion in its very highest aspect.

III. The very highest type of such submission we have set before us in Job. Poor as he now is, he is rich in trust and nearness to his God; and Christian souls, trained in the teaching of Christian centuries, will feel that if there is a God and Father above us, it is better to have felt towards Him as he felt, than

to have been the lord of many slaves and flocks and herds, and the possessor of unclouded happiness on a happy earth.—G. G. Bradley, *Lectures on the Book of Job*, p. 40.

'Now when Job's three friends heard of all this evil that was come upon him, they came . . . to mourn with him and to comfort him.'—Job II. 11.

'Even the patriarch Job,' says George Eliot in *Felix Holt*, 'if he had been a gentleman of the modern West, would have avoided picturesque disorder and poetical laments; and the friends who called on him, though not less disposed than Bildad the Shuhite to hint that their unfortunate friend was in the wrong, would have sat on chairs and held their hats in their hands. The harder problems of our life have changed less than our manners; we wrestle with the old sorrows, but more decorously.'

The consolation offered by these three men to Job has passed into a proverb; but who that knows what most modern consolation is can prevent a prayer that Job's comforters may be his? They do not call upon him for an hour, and invent excuses for the departure which they so anxiously await; they do not write notes to him and go about their business as if nothing had happened; they do not inflict on him meaningless commonplaces. They honour him by remaining with him, and by their mute homage, and when they speak to him, though they are mistaken, they offer him the best that they have been able to think. Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite, and Zophar the Naamathite, sitting in the dust with Job, not daring to intrude upon him, are for ever an example of what man once was and ought to be to man!—W. Hale White, *The Deliverance*, pp. 132-133.

'So they sat down with him upon the ground seven days and seven nights, and none spake a word unto him: for they saw that his grief was very great.'—Job II. 13.

What majestic tenderness!—Froude.

'We are over-hasty to speak,' says Dinah Morris in *Adam Bede*, 'as if God did not manifest Himself by our silent feeling, and make His love felt through ours.'

Some special gift or beneficent force flows from one when one is in the sympathetic state.—Amiel.

There are silences of all sorts, as there is speech of all sorts. There are silences that set one's teeth on edge—it is always a relief to break them; and there are silences that are gentler, kinder, sweeter, more loving, more eloquent than any words, and which it is always a wrench to interrupt.—F. Marion Crawford.

It is always easy to say of another's misfortune, 'What does it matter to me?' or, 'There must be these sentimental—these emotional—crises. They form the character. It is all for the best. God is good!' All these things are true in substance; all these things occur invariably to the wise spectator of human fates. But more than wisdom—more than the formal utterances of piety is sometimes required of us, and while a sleepless night for your neighbour's woe may not assist him materially in his trouble, we know that the Divine Economy permits nothing to be wasted. Every unselfish thought sends a lasting fragrance into the whole moral atmosphere of the world.—John Oliver Hobbes, *The School for Saints*, chap. xxviii.

GRIEF AND SILENCE

'None spake a word unto him: for they saw that his grief was very great.'—Job II. 13.

They entered into the genius of the occasion—what so few people can do. They want to make the occasion, rather than accept it. Hence the vexation and the heartbreak and the misery of what is called sympathy. Sometimes we do everything by doing nothing. If men could learn this the kingdom of heaven would surely have come amongst us. 'Jesus wept . . . Jesus cried with a loud voice;' would the voice have been so loud and prevalent but for the preceding tears? did not the tears make a way for the voice? Sometimes weakness is power. God is great, in mercy, in pity, in condescension—greater than when He makes stars and heavens and all symbols and parables of majesty. Grief must have its time. Time is not a succession of moments; it is that, and more: we make the moments, we thus cruelly hurt ourselves by ticking off time into pulses. Time, rightly understood, is a great silent, flowing, gracious, healing river; wheresoever the river cometh there is life.

I. Job had to learn to do without things. Is not that life's penultimate lesson? is it not the last lesson but one? We have to do without things that are apparently essential? In our boundless ignorance we say, Without this we could not live; without that life would be intolerable; in the absence of such a presence and such a ministry and such a luxury, life would be one howling wilderness. God has a way of weaning His little ones without hurting them fatally. The way of love herein is most cunning; love is working whilst we are sleeping; love says, He will not miss this so much after I have steeped him in the river of obliviousness. The eagle has to do without its nest; the eagle must be disappointed when it returns to its eyrie heights and finds that the lightning has torn the nest to pieces and the wind has scattered it in contempt.

II. Job had to recognize the inevitable. What is the inevitable? It is that which cannot be turned back, that which must come, that which is ordained and resistless; it cannot be threatened, it cannot be stricken, it cannot be tempted, it cannot be charmed; it must, must come. Better call it the decree of God than the blind will of a blind fate. If I have a choice of words I will choose the better word. If you tell me I have an alternative, God or Fate, I will say, Does God mean life, personality, sovereignty, love, though often not interpreted, and sometimes misinterpreted? If you say yes, I will choose God, rather than Fate, because Fate is impersonal, dumb, far off, mute, careless, callous, incapable of feeling. Do you give me a choice? I accept the choice and elect to be found on the side of God. In the meantime that

choice helps me, and if at last I find out that it is only fate, I have in the meantime had a consolation which not only soothes me, but inspires and nerves and qualifies me for service. I have therefore an infinite advantage over a miserable belief in a miserable, impersonal fate.

III. There is a wonderful ministry in life called the ministry of silence. 'And none spake a word unto him: for they saw that his grief was very great.' Grief silences words. Words are modern inventions; words are petty and often mocking contrivances; there is no reality in them that does not exist without them: we would therefore get back to the primal and rest in the sanctuary whose roof is heaven, whose foundations are the heart of God. Silence is older than speech.

IV. Faith is tried by fire. Until you have lost all you have gained nothing. What you call your gains are but so much stored up to be lost, but after you have lost all God may permit you to begin again and build up little by little a richer treasure and a surer dwelling-place. But is not the loss all the same whether we believe or do not believe? No; in the case of belief there come into the life spiritual ministries, inexplicable agencies of all kinds, suggestions, inspirations, comforts, new ideas, new dreams, new hopes, new possibilities, and along with them a voice which says in whispered thunder, 'Behold, I make all things new'.—Joseph Parker, *City Temple Pulpit*, vol. i. p. 55.

'After this Job opened his mouth, and cursed his day. And Job answered and said: Let the day perish wherein I was born, and the night which said, There is a man child conceived. Let that day be darkness; let not God regard it from above.'—Job iii. 1-4.

He had long been in the habit of 'lamenting' his birthday, though, in earlier days, Stella and other friends had celebrated the anniversary. Now it became a day of unmixed gloom, and the chapter in which Job curses the hour of his birth lay open all day on his table.—Sir Leslie Stephen, *Swift*, p. 198.

'As for that night, let thick darkness seize upon it.'—Job iii. 6.

Sept. 6, 1879. Red Sea.—I am in a very angry mood. I feel sure that, doing my best, I cannot get with credit out of this business; I feel it is want of faith, but I have brought it on myself, for I have prayed to God to humble me to the dust, and to visit all the sins of Egypt and the Soudan on my head; it would be little to say, take my life for theirs, for I do earnestly desire a speedy death. . . . Read the third chapter of Job, it expresses the bitterness of my heart at this moment.—General Gordon.

'Then had I been at rest: with kings and counsellors of the earth.'—Job iii. 13, 14.

Hippocrates after curing many diseases himself fell sick and died. The Chaldeans foretold the death of many, and then fate caught them too. Alexander and Pompey and Cæsar, after so often completely destroying whole cities, and in battle cutting to pieces many thousands of cavalry and infantry, themselves too departed at last from life.—Marcus Aurelius (iii. 3).

'There the wicked cease from troubling; and there the weary be at rest.'—Job iii. 17.

Luxury is indeed possible in the future—innocent and exquisite; luxury for all, and by the help of all; but luxury at present can only be enjoyed by the ignorant; the cruelest man living could not sit at his feast, unless he sat blindfold. Raise the veil boldly; face the light; and if, as yet, the light of the eye can only be through tears, and the light of the body through sackcloth, go thou forth weeping, bearing precious seed, until the time come, and the kingdom, when Christ's gift of bread, and bequest of peace, shall be 'unto this last as unto thee'; and when, for earth's severed multitudes of the wicked and the weary, there shall be holier reconciliation than that of the narrow home, and calm economy, where the wicked cease—not from trouble, but from troubling—and the weary are at rest.—Ruskin, *Unto this Last*, § 85.

Lockhart narrates how Sir Walter Scott one day, at the sad end of his life, fell asleep in his chair among the pillows, and how, 'when he was awaking Laidlaw said to me—"Sir Walter has had a little repose". "No, Willie," said he, "no repose for Sir Walter, but in the grave."'

Compare Charlotte Brontë's words after the death of her sister, Emily, in 1848: 'Some sad comfort I take, as I hear the wind blow and feel the cutting keenness of the frost, in knowing that the elements bring her no more suffering; this severity cannot reach her grave; her fever is quieted, her restlessness soothed; her deep, hollow cough is hushed for ever; we do not hear it in the night nor listen for it in the morning; we have not the conflict of the strangely strong spirit and the fragile frame before us—relentless conflict—once seen, never to be forgotten. A dreary calm reigns round us, in the midst of which we seek resignation.'

'Youth,' says somebody, 'is a garland of roses.' I did not find it such. 'Age is a crown of thorns.' Neither is this altogether true for me. If sadness and sorrow tend to loosen us from life, they make the place of rest desirable.—Carlyle.

'I don't pity anybody who leaves the world,' Thackeray once wrote to Mrs. Brookfield; 'not even a fair young girl in her prime. . . . On her journey, if it pleases God to send her, depend on it there's no cause for grief, that's but an earthly condition. Out of our stormy life, and brought near the Divine light and warmth, there must be a serene climate. Can't you fancy sailing into the calm?'

References.—III. 17.—Archbishop Bourne, *Sermons Preached in Westminster Abbey*, p. 152.—A. K. H. Boyd, *Counsel and Comfort Spoken from a City Pulpit*, p. 128.

'The small and the great are there; and the servant is free from his master.'—Job iii. 19.

Compare Jowett's sentences on Charles Dickens (*Miscellaneous Sermons*, pp. 274-75): 'And so we bid

him "farewell" once more, and return to our daily occupations. He has passed into the state of being, in which, we may believe, human souls are drawn to one another by nearer ties, and the envious lines of demarcation which separate them here are broken down. And, if we could conceive that other world, we might perhaps imagine him still at home, rejoicing to have a place at that banquet to which the poor and the friendless, the halt and the lame, are specially invited. "The small and the great are there, and the servant is free from his master;" "there the prisoners rest together, they hear not the voice of the oppressor"; "there the weary are at rest".'

'Which long for death, and it cometh not.'—Job iii. 21.

We cannot die just when we wish it and because we wish it. . . . Nature compels us to live on, even with broken hearts as with lopped-off members.—Mrs. Craik.

'Which rejoice exceedingly, and are glad, when they can find the grave.'—Job iii. 22.

Epictetus (i. 9) depicts pessimists coming to him with the plaint: 'Epictetus, we can no longer endure being bound to this poor body. . . . Are we not in a sense kinsmen of God, and did we not come from Him? Let us depart to the place whence we came. Here there are robbers and thieves and courts of justice, and those who are named tyrants, and who think they have some power over us thanks to the body and its possessions. . . . And I,' says Epictetus, 'would reply, "Friends, wait for God: when He gives the signal to release you from this service, then go to Him; but for the present endure to dwell in the place where He has put you".'

Most people's downfalls are not dangerous; they are like children who have not far to fall, and cannot injure themselves; but when a great nature is dashed down, he is bound to fall from a height. He must have been raised almost to the skies; he has caught glimpses of some heaven beyond his reach. Vehement must the storms be which compel a soul to seek peace from the trigger of a pistol.—Balzac in *La Peau de Chagrin*, chap. i.

'Why is light given to a man whose way is hid, and whom God hath hedged in?'—Job iii. 23.

This pathetic inquiry rises from all parts of the globe, from millions of human souls, to that heaven from whence the light proceeds. From the young, full of eager aspirations after virtue and glory; with the glance of a falcon to descry the high-placed aim,—but ah! the wing of a wren to reach it! The young enthusiast must often weep. . . . The old! O their sighs are deeper still! They attempt to unroll their charts for the use of their children, and their children's children. They feed the dark lantern of wisdom with the oil of experience, and hold it aloft over the declivity up which these youths are blundering in vain.—Margaret Fuller.

The hardest moment in my present sad life is the morning, when I must wake up and begin the dreary world again. I can sleep during the night, and I sleep as long as I can; but when it is no longer possible, when the light can no longer be gainsaid, and life is going on everywhere, then I too rise up to bear my burden. How different it used to be! When I was a girl I remember the feeling I had when the fresh morning light came round. Whatever grief there had been the night before, the new day triumphed over it. Things must be better than one thought, must be well, in a world which woke up to that new light, to the sweet dews and sweet air which renewed one's soul. Now I am thankful for the night and darkness, and shudder to see the light and the day returning.—From Mrs. Oliphant's *Autobiography*, for 1894.

Fair prospects wed happily with fair times; but alas! if times be not fair! Men have oftener suffered from the mockery of a place too smiling for their reason than from the oppression of surroundings over-sadly tinged.—Thomas Hardy.

The incline was the same down which D'Urberville had driven with her so wildly on that day in June. Tess went up the remainder of its length without stopping, and on reaching the edge of the escarpment gazed over the familiar green world beyond, now half-veiled in mist. It was always beautiful from here; it was terribly beautiful to Tess to-day, for since her eyes last fell on it, she had learnt that the serpent hisses where the sweet birds sing, and her views of life had been totally changed for her by the lesson. She could not bear to look forward into the Vale.—Thomas Hardy, *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*.

References.—III. 23.—R. J. Campbell, *A Faith for To-day*, p. 79. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xlvi. No. 2666. IV. A. W. Momerie, *Defects of Modern Christianity*, p. 93.

'Then Eliphaz the Temanite answered and said.'—Job iv. 1.

If he had been a fool he would never have been dear to Job, nor would he have been one of the three amongst all Job's acquaintances who came to him from afar. . . . Eliphaz is partly a rhetorician, and, like all persons with that gift, he is frequently carried off his feet and ceases to touch the firm earth. . . . A certain want of connexion and pertinence is observable in him. A man who is made up of what he hears or reads always lacks unity and directness. Confronted by any difficulty or by any event which calls upon him, he answers not by an operation of his intellect on what is immediately before him, but by detached remarks which he has collected, and which are never a fused homogeneous whole.—Mark Rutherford in *The Deliverance*.

Suddenly a fresh thought came, and she prayed that, through whatever suffering, she might be purified. Whatever trials, woes, measureless pangs, God might see fit to chastise her with, she would not shrink, if only at last she might come into His presence. Alas! the shrinking from suffering we cannot help. That part of her prayer was vain.—Mrs. Gaskell in *Ruth* (chap. xxiii.).

'According as I have seen, they that plow iniquity, and sow trouble, reap the same.'—Job iv. 8.

Would that I had a folio to write, instead of an article of a dozen pages. Then might I exemplify how an influence, beyond our control, lays its strong hand upon every deed which we do, and weaves its consequences into an iron tissue of necessity.—N. Hawthorne.

'In thoughts from the visions of the night.'—Job iv. 13 f.

There is a passage in the book of Job amazingly sublime, and this sublimity is principally due to the terrible uncertainty of the thing described: '*In thoughts from the visions of the night, when deep sleep falleth on men, fear came upon me, and trembling, which made all my bones to shake. Then a spirit passed before my face; the hair of my flesh stood up: it stood still, but I could not discern the form thereof: an image was before mine eyes, there was silence, and I heard a voice, saying, shall mortal man be more just than God?*' We are first prepared with the utmost solemnity for the vision; we are first terrified before we are let even into the obscure cause of our emotion; but when this grand cause of terror makes its appearance, what is it? Is it not wrapt up in the shades of its own incomprehensible darkness, more awful, more striking, more terrible, than the liveliest description, than the clearest painting, could possibly represent it?—Burke, *On the Sublime and the Beautiful*, § iv.

In his life of Dr. John Donne, Isaak Walton observes that 'most of our world are at present possessed with an opinion that Visions and Miracles are ceased'. 'I am well pleased,' he adds 'that every Reader do enjoy his own opinion. But if the unbelieving will not allow the believing Reader of this story [i.e. a dream of Dr. Donne's], a liberty to believe that it may be true; then I wish him to consider many wise men have believed that the ghost of Julius Cæsar did appear to Brutus, and that both St. Austin and Monica his mother had visions in order to his conversion. And though these, and many others—too many to name—have but the authority of human story, yet the incredible Reader may find in the Sacred Story that Bildad, in the book of Job, says these words; "a spirit passed before my face; the hair of my head stood up; fear and trembling came upon me, and made all my bones to shake" before which words I make no comment, but leave them to be considered by the incredulous Reader.'

'It stood still, but I could not discern the appearance thereof; a form was before mine eyes.'—Job iv. 16.

Did you ever see the 'Jacob's Dream' in the Dulwich Gallery? He is a Dutchman, and an old clothes' man, for any refinement that he has about him. But what a vision he sees! A scrap of desert—a distant hill—a stunted bush shaking at intervals with the night wind is all the material he has about him; but in the dream and vision of the night he sees shapes which hardly separate themselves from the pensive glory and the rolling volume of cloud. Neither bird white-plumaged, nor angel white-winged, nor any other shape distinguishable in member, joint or limb—and yet a shape—sealing instruction as unutterable as the form is dim. 'It stands still; he cannot discern the form thereof; an image is before his eyes; there is silence?' It is like a passage out of the deep book of Job.—Smetham's *Letters*, pp. 267-268

MEMORABLE SIGHTS IN LIFE

'I have seen the foolish taking root.'—Job v. 3.

How many passages are there in Scripture that begin with 'I have seen'? Probably no man has counted the number. Let us keep, however, to that formula; it is interesting and useful to deal with a personal witness, to have a man so to say face to face and in your very grip. How many voices we shall hear if we listen well—the solemn voice, the monotone that has not heart enough to vary its expression, a gamut in one note, and then the lightsome tone of youth and the cheeriness of the early days when all things were dripping with dew and all the dew shot through and through with morning light. These days are gone, but there is a joy in melancholy, there is a species of festival in misery. All that some people now have is their grief; that grief is their wealth, their song, their hope.

I. Take the wonderful instance in the text, 'I have seen the foolish taking root'. That is impossible! No, it is not impossible, it is a fact. It must have been a fact only in very ancient times? No, it is not only a fact in ancient times, it is this morning's fact, God's journal of this day. Such things are permitted. We cannot understand them, they baffle our faith, they confound our imagination. The whole scheme of a righteous universe seems to be turned upside down by that one fact. A bad man can take root, a upas-tree can strike its roots into the earth and from its bending branches can shed deadly poison; the thief and the gambler and the fraudulent may have more money than the man who prays every morning and says amen as if he would hand the case over to high heaven to answer in heaven's own way. Yes, the wicked take root, the foolish have a kind of standing-place; but some things come only for a moment. The mushroom has a root, and so has the oak. We must define even the word root, we must get at its history and its environment, and tear it open that we may read the secret of its fibre. Do not be content with glittering generalities when you judge Providence and propound some critical theory concerning the government of these trembling, awful, gladsome things which we gather up under the name of human life.

II. The Psalmist saw also very much what Eliphaz saw; he says in one Psalm, 'I have seen'—what?—'the wicked in great power, and spreading himself like a green bay-tree'. You saw that? I saw it. You have no doubt whatever that it was a real fact? I have no doubt whatever as to the actuality of the circumstances. I have seen the wicked in great

power, I have seen him taking up so much of the fresh air that there seemed to be no room for any other tree. In everything he seemed to have his own way; he asked, and received; he spake, and 'twas done; he had all manner of things at his immediate disposal. I have seen the wicked in great power, and spreading himself like a green bay-tree; yet he passed away, and lo, he was not; yea, I sought him, but not a fibre of him could be found even in the dust. It is very wonderful how fortune even seems to change. That is not the man we knew five-and-twenty years ago, who was surrounded by all things comfortable, who was indeed characterized by an entourage of extreme richness and delight; he had everything that heart could wish. Yes, that is the man. What! that doubled-up, bent-backed old creature there who seems to have hardly a rag to wear? That is the same man. What has happened? God—has happened. There is no real abidingness in the stuff which is wrongfully gotten or atheistically appropriated, though there may be nothing commercially dishonourable in the mere process of acquisition. It is not blessed bread, there is no nourishment in it.

III. Do not let us yield to the spirit of disappointment. What did you expect? Disappointment is the measure of expectation. You must correct yourself at the point of expectancy.

'I have seen that they that plow iniquity, and sow wickedness, reap the same.' This is a great law. There must be something behind the plougher and the sower. Yes, there is something behind the ploughman and the seed-sower. What is that something? It is less a something than a personality. It is God who is conducting the whole thing, do what you like.

If the wicked man reaps his black harvest, the good man reaps his honest and nourishing wheat. This is not a law that goes on one side; the whole case of life is contemplated by the inspired writers, and the wide outlook and complete grasp at once explains and vindicates their inspiration. Be not deceived, God is not mocked; whatsoever a man soweth, good or bad, he shall reap the same. That is discouraging on the one side, and encouraging on the other. Seed does not die, it grows, and it cries as it were to be reaped; and the good man, who has sown in tears and in self-distrust and with some measure of gloomy disappointment, was bidden to go forth with his sickle; and lo, he returned in the gloaming with sheaves, and with sheaves of song in his heart.—Joseph Parker, *City Temple Pulpit*, vol. iv. p. 250.

'For affliction cometh not forth of the dust, neither doth trouble spring out of the ground; but man is born to trouble, as the sparks fly upward.'—Job v. 6, 7.

Prince Louis de Rohan is one of those select mortals born to honours, as the sparks fly upwards; and alas also (as all men are) to trouble no less.—Carlyle, *The Diamond Necklace*, chap. iv.

'Behold, happy is the man whom God correcteth; therefore despise not thou the chastening of the Almighty. . . For He maketh sore, and bindeth up; He woundeth, and His hands make whole.'—Job v. 17, 18.

So long as any fault whatever seems trifling to us,—so long as we see, not so much the culpability of as the excuses for imprudence or negligence—so long, in short, as Job murmurs, and as providence is thought too severe,—so long as there is any inner protestation against fate, or doubt as to the perfect justice of God,—there is not yet entire humility or true repentance. It is when we accept the expiation that it can be spared us; it is when we submit sincerely that grace can be granted to us. Only when grief finds its work done can God dispense us from it. Trial then only stops when it is useless; that is why it scarcely ever stops.—Amiel.

Reference.—V. 17-27.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—Job*, p. 33.

'Thou shalt be hid from the scourge of the tongue; neither shalt thou be afraid of destruction when it cometh . . . and the beasts of the field shall be at peace with thee.'—Job v. 21-23.

In the fourth volume of *Modern Painters* Ruskin speaks of the repose amid the wild, torn crags of the Alpine valleys. 'It is just where "the mountain falling cometh to naught, and the rock is removed out of his place" (xiv. 18), that, in process of years, the fairest meadows bloom between the fragments, the clearest rivulets murmur from their crevices among the flowers, and the clustered cottages, each sheltered beneath some strength of mossy stone, now to be removed no more, and with their pastured flocks around them, safe from the eagle's stoop and the wolf's ravin, have written upon their fronts, in simple words, the mountaineer's faith in the ancient promise—"Neither shalt thou be afraid of destruction when it cometh"; "For thou shalt be in league with the stones of the field; and the beasts of the field shall be at peace with thee".'

'Thou shalt come to thy grave in a full age, like as a shock of corn cometh in in his season.'—Job v. 26.

Lord Jeffrey said in his old days, which were some of the gentlest and most affectionate that could be passed: 'It is poor wine that grows sour with ye'. . . . And now her latter days embodied a storehouse of all that had gone before, with the latest and ripest fruit added. She had deeply studied the successive lessons of life, and met the last and gravest with reverence and thankfulness. She grew gentle and tender, at no sacrifice of courage and brilliancy. She clung more and more to her friends and to her kindred, and became a centre, round which gathered the tenderest deference and affection.—Lady Eastlake on *Mrs. Grote*.

Pass through this little space of time conformably to nature, and end thy journey in content, just as an olive falls off when it is ripe, blessing nature who produced it, and thanking the tree on which it grew. —Marcus Aurelius.

The spectacle of an old man with his intellect keen, with his experience bitter, with his appetites unsatiated, with the memory of past enjoyment stinging him, and deprived of the physical power to enjoy it, is so familiar that we accept it as one of the commonplaces of life. Scarcely anyone of us remembers that he will in turn live on into such an old age, if he does not sacrifice daily to the invisible powers.—C. H. Pearson.

THE PARABLE OF HARVEST

'Thou shalt come to thy grave in a full age, like as a stock of corn cometh in in his season.'—Job v. 26.

This text is a perfect vision of the closing days of harvest. Every harvest-field is a place of reconciliation between God and man.

I. The first parable of harvest is that harvest is God's memorial, and the parable of His love. His promise is that while the bow is in the heaven, spring-time and harvest shall not fail.

II. The order of the world is use first and beauty second. Christ never illustrates Himself by a superfluity. He is bread, water, light, life; He never says that He is fragrance, or colour, or luxury. He is something we all need.

III. Harvest is the parable of life itself. Youth is wedded to age as spring is wedded to summer and spring-time to harvest, and that which a man sows in youth he likewise reaps in manhood.

IV. Harvest is again the parable of death. Nothing perishes, because there is no waste in nature.

V. The purpose of life is use. That is the great lesson of nature from first to last.—W. J. Dawson, *Harvest and Thanksgiving Services*, p. 50.

References.—V. 26.—H. Woodcock, *Sermon Outlines*, p. 240. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. i. No. 43. V. 27.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxxvi. No. 2175.

'Then Job answered and said, Oh that my vexation were but weighed.'—Job vi. 1 f.

The sixth and seventh chapters are molten from end to end, and run in one burning stream. . . . Everything which can be said by a sick man against life is in these chapters. The whole of a vast subsequent literature is summed up here, and he who has once read it may fairly ask never to be troubled with anything more upon that side.—Mark Rutherford, *The Deliverance*, p. 13 f.

'When He does smite,' wrote General Gordon to his sister from the Red Sea in 1879, 'His arrows are almost too sharp for one to bear: I will not say *too* sharp, for He tempers His wind to the shorn lamb, but it is a wearisome life, and I am tired. . . . The spite in my own heart and in those round me fills me with hatred of any human being. A more detestable creature than man cannot be conceived, and yet you and I are cased, or sheathed in man. But do not fear for me, for, even if He multiplies my woes a million times, He is just and upright, and will give me the necessary strength. What *enrages* the flesh is, that I am in a *cul de sac*, a road which has no *débouche*, a hole out of which I see no exit. *Everything* I do will be *misconstrued*. This shows I have not faith. I do care for what man says, though, in words, I say I do not. I have not overcome the world. Read Job vi. 4; that is the bitter feeling I have. Job was a scoffer—*vide* chap. xii. 2, 3—and so am I in heart and tongue.'

Reference.—VI. 6.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxix. No. 1730.

'Oh that I might have my request; and that God would grant me the thing that I long for! Even that it would please God to crush me.'—Job vi. 8, 9.

In describing Dr. Donne's grief after his wife's death, Izaak Walton writes: 'How grief took so full a possession of his heart, as to leave no place for joy. If it did, it was a joy to be alone, when, like a pelican in the wilderness, he might bemoan himself, without witness or restraint, and pour forth his passions like Job in the days of his affliction: "Oh that I might have the desire of my heart! Oh that God would grant me the one thing that I long for!" For then as the grave is become her house, so would I hasten to make it mine also, that we two might then make our beds together in the dark.'

Reference.—VI. 10.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxv. No. 1471.

'My brethren have dealt deceitfully as a brook; as the channel of brooks that pass away.'—Job vi. 15.

'I have many friends and many enemies,' Swift wrote to Stella, 'and the last are more constant in their nature.'

Never man had kinder or more indulgent friends than I have had; but I expressed my own feeling as to the mode in which I had gained them, in this very year 1829, in the course of a copy of verses. Speaking of my blessings, I said, 'Blessings of friends which to my door *unasked, unhoped*, have come'. They have come, they have gone; they came to my great joy; they went to my great grief.—Newman, *Apologia*, chap. i.

References.—VII. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xlvi. No. 2705. VII. 1.—W. F. Shaw, *Sermon Sketches*, p. 89. G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 286. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxi. No. 1258.

'My days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle, and are spent without hope. . . . As the cloud is consumed and vanisheth away.'—Job vii. 6, 9.

Having gazed, in their brief fate, on a life that is no life at all, they disappear like a vapour, convinced alone of what each hath met in his whirling to and fro in all directions.—Empedocles.

'My life is wind.'—Job vii. 7.

Although we have some experience of living, there is not a man on earth who has flown so high into abstraction as to have any practical guess at the meaning of the word *life*. All literature, from Job and Omar Khayyám to Thomas Carlyle or Walt Whitman, is but an attempt to look upon the human state with such largeness of view as shall enable us to rise from the consideration of living to the Definition of life. And our sages give us about the best satis-

faction in their power when they say that it is a vapour, or a show, or made out of the same stuff with dreams.—R. L. Stevenson in *Æs Triplex*.

'He shall return no more to his house, neither shall his place know him any more.'—Job vii. 10.

Compare the touching lines of Lucretius (iii. 894 f.):
'Soon, soon thy happy home shall no more welcome thee, nor thy true wife; nor shall thy children run to catch the first kiss from thy lips, touching thy heart with a silent joy'.

SPEAKING IN THE WRONG TEMPER

'I will speak in the anguish of my spirit; I will complain in the bitterness of my soul.'—Job vii. 11.

Then he is sure to get wrong. He has already made the vital mistake of his whole harangue. He has given himself away; he is in the wrong mood; he is in the mood in which a man should shut his mouth. But that is the last miracle of grace. He will be eloquent enough, alas! too eloquent. Grief has a rhetoric of its own, but it should be spoken to one hearer who can understand it and pity it and forgive it. Have no fear of the eloquence; yet there is an eloquence to be feared. This Job will get wrong to-day; he has opened his speech in the wrong key; 'anguish' and 'bitterness,' what can these tell of the mystery of God and the tragedy of life? There are times when we should run away from ourselves.

I. You do not know what you have done for your house by much speaking to God in it. You may not have seen the answered prayer; your household is the larger and the lightsomer and the more home-like because of the prayers which you have prayed when you have shut the door and spoken to your Father in secret. The prayer has killed the bacilli. If a word from a human throat can change the colour of a natural or material substance, who can say out of the range of his boundless ignorance what may be done by a sigh, a cry to the living heart of the Infinite pity? Go on with your praying; pray without ceasing; you are changing the very form and fashion of the earth by it, you are enlarging the place of summer, you are enabling men to pull down their barns and build greater; for it was your prayer that made more golden the gold of the harvest-field, that made ruddier the redness of the rose, that made brighter the light of the garden.

II. Many persons have spoken not out of anguish and out of bitterness but out of prejudice, bigotry, ignorance. They have spoken when they ought to have been silent; they have mistaken a form for a power, an environment for a genius or a soul. They have never been in the holy of holies, they talk about bark and shell and crust and phenomena—a word that has nearly been the death of them! They have not talked about soul, inmost meaning, ineffable intent, the yearning of the mother-pity of God.

III. Will God allow us to recall some of our words, to amend them, to expand them, to modify them? I take encouragement from the example of my Saviour: 'And being in an agony He prayed more earnestly'. We should not have thought that possible, but it was not only possible, but actual. There is a pressure heavier than the other pressure; there is a pressure that gouges, forces the life-blood out of you, the last drop, and turns it into a red word, a crimson syllable, a mighty speech with which to assail the heavens. There are second prayers that swallow up first prayers. We grow by praying. First give God an outline of our desire and our wish, and then we, gathering wisdom from experience, go back and amend by expansion our own prayer. 'He prayed again a second time.' Job may have done this. He spoke in anguish and spoke in bitterness, and complained because his grief was intolerable; perhaps by and by he calmed down, and saw the Divine movement from another standpoint, and beheld it with another mystery and interpretation of light upon it; and who knows what he said when that aurora glory beamed upon his trouble?

Let us learn, therefore, a lesson from Job not to speak in the anguish of our spirit or in the bitterness of our soul; and let us learn a lesson from the Psalmist, who says he has made God's Word the man of his counsel and turned the statutes of God into songs in the house of his pilgrimage. In the old, old time when the days were sunnier, they that loved the Lord spake often one to another, and the Lord hearkened and heard, and a book of remembrance was written. Read the history of the whole Church of Christ, and you will find that it was nourished upon the Bible, fed upon the Divine Word, and that it nestled itself in the bosom of God.—Joseph Parker, *City Temple Pulpit*, vol. i. p. 277.

References.—VII. 12.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, No. 2206. VII. 16.—J. Vaughan, *Fifty Sermons* (10th Series) p. 168.

'What is man, that Thou shouldest magnify him?'—Job vii. 17.

It is good to get back and lie on the bosom of the eternal mother, the folds of whose garments are the high mountains, whose feet are set in the laughing ocean, and whose life is the life of the world;—to lie there, while the soul slips away from the sense of its own paltry joys and sorrows, from the narrow hopes and fears of the individual lot; to be made one with the glorious order of created things, the flesh and spirit no longer conscious of weary fightings and divisions; to dream of the everlasting mysteries of birth and growth, and of the fullness of strength and of the failing of strength, and of decay,—and of the mystery of transmuted force, of life again returning out of death, to begin once more the ceaseless round of existence anew; to dream of the mystery of night and morning, summer and winter, seed-time and harvest, rain and shine, while through all the countless ages the Eternal Wisdom and Goodness broods for ever over the broad bright land and sea. 'What is man, that Thou art mindful of him?' Get back, get back to the mother of all.—Lucas Malet.

The names of great men hover before my eyes like a secret reproach, and this grand impassive Nature tells me that to-morrow I shall have disappeared, butterfly

that I am, without having lived. Or perhaps it is the breath of eternal things which stirs in me the shudder of Job? What is man—this weed which a sunbeam withers? What is our life in the infinite abyss?—AMIEL.

REFERENCES.—VII. 17.—G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 20. VII. 17, 18.—J. Keble, *Sermons for Christmas to Epiphany*, p. 170.

'Why hast Thou set me as a mark against Thee, so that I am a burden to myself?'—JOB VII. 20.

HE can hinder any of the greatest comforts in life from refreshing us, and give an edge to every one of its greatest calamities. Who then can bear the thought of being an outcast from His presence, that is, from the comforts of it, or of feeling it only in its terrors? How pathetick is the expostulation of Job, when, for the tryal of his patience, he was made to look upon himself in this deplorable condition! *Why hast Thou set me as a mark against Thee, so that I am become a burthen to myself?*—ADDISON in *The Spectator* (No. 571).

REFERENCES.—VII. 20.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. iii. No. 113. VII. 21.—*Ibid.* vol. xlvi. No. 2705. VIII. 7.—*Ibid.* vol. vi. No. 311.

'For inquire, I pray thee, of the former age, and apply thyself to that which their fathers have searched out. For we are but of yesterday, and know nothing, because our days upon earth are a shadow.'—JOB VIII. 8, 9.

IF we do not take to our aid the foregone studies of men reputed intelligent and learned, we shall be always beginners.—BURKE, *Appeal from New to Old Whigs*.

WHAT makes the Radical of the street is mostly mother-wit exercising itself upon the facts of the time. His weakness is that he does not know enough of the facts of other times.—MORLEY, *Studies in Literature*, p. 125.

'IN his adoration of what he recognized as living,' says Mr. Symonds (*Shelley*, pp. 40 f.), 'Shelley retained no reverence for the ossified experience of past ages. The principle of evolution, which forms a saving link between the obsolete and the organically vital, had no place in his logic.'

SPEAKING of Gibbon's first work, an essay in defence of classical literature and history, Mr. Cotter Morison (*Gibbon*, p. 35) observes that 'this first utterance of his historic genius was prompted by an unconscious but deep reaction against that contempt for the past, which was the greatest blot in the speculative movement of the eighteenth century'.

REFERENCES.—VIII. 11-13.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xi. No. 651. VIII. 14.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—Job*, p. 40. IX. 2.—J. Smith (Edinburgh), *Christian World Pulpit*, 1890, p. 346.

'Which doeth great things past finding out; yea, marvellous things without number. Lo, He goeth by me, and I see Him not; He passeth on also, but I perceive Him not.'—JOB IX. 10, 11.

HE is always equally present with us: but we are so much taken up with sensible things, that, *Lo, He goeth by us, and we see Him not; He passeth on also, but we perceive Him not.* Devotion is retirement from the world He has made, to Him alone: it is to withdraw from the avocation of sense, to employ our attention wholly upon Him as upon an object actually present, to yield ourselves up to the influence of the Divine presence.—BUTLER.

REFERENCES.—IX. 20.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. vii. No. 350. *Ibid.* vol. li. No. 2932.

'Now my days are swifter than a post: they flee away, they see no good. They are passed away as the swift ships: as the eagle that swoopeth on the prey.'—JOB IX. 25, 26.

As in a revolving disc, the further a point lies from the centre, the more rapid is its rate of progression, so it is in the wheel of life; the further you stand from the beginning, the faster time moves for you.—A. SCHOPENHAUER.

CHATEAUBRIAND'S *Memoirs* have as their motto these words, from the Vulgate of this verse: *Sicut naves, quasi nubes, velut umbra.*

'If I wash myself with snow water, and make my hands never so clean.'—JOB IX. 30.

SOME that are coming to Jesus Christ are too much affected with their own graces, and too little taken with Christ's person; wherefore God, to take them off from doting on their own jewels, and that they might look more to the person, undertaking, and merits of His son, plunges them into the ditch by temptations. And this I take to be the meaning of Job: 'If I wash me,' saith he, 'with snow water, and make myself never so clean, yet wilt thou plunge me in the ditch, and mine own clothes shall abhor me'; Job had been a little too much tampering with his own graces, and setting his excellencies a little too high. But by that the temptations were ended, you find him better taught.—BUNYAN.

REFERENCES.—IX. 30, 31.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxxii. No. 1908. IX. 33.—*Ibid.* vol. xi. No. 661.

'My soul is weary of my life; I will give free cause to my complaint; I will speak in the bitterness of my soul. I will say unto God, Do not condemn me; shew me wherefore thou contendest with me.'—JOB X. 1, 2.

'IN a man under the immediate pressure of a great sorrow,' says George Eliot in her *Essays*, 'we tolerate morbid exaggerations, we are prepared to see him turn away a weary eye from sunlight and flowers and sweet human faces, as if this rich and glorious life had no significance but as a preliminary of death; we do not criticize his views, we compassionate his feelings.'

REFERENCES.—X. 2.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. v. No. 283. X. 8.—H. Melvill, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 2342.

'Hast thou not poured me out as milk, and curdled me like cheese?'—JOB X. 10.

THE example of Job protects us from the charge of blasphemy in not suppressing our doubts. Nothing can be more daring than his interrogations. There is no impiety whatever in them, nor are they recognized as impious in the final chapters of the book.—MARK RUTHERFORD, *The Deliverance*, pp. 138, 139.

REFERENCES.—X. 12.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxxix. No. 2314. X. 12, 13.—*Ibid.* vol. xlvi. No. 2682.

'Then answered Zophar the Naamathite and said, . . . Thou shalt forget thy misery, thou shalt remember it as waters that have passed away.'—Job xi. 1, 16.

In her journal, Marie Bashkirtseff observes, of one of her girlish sorrows: 'There is one thing that troubles me; to think that in a few years I shall laugh at it all and have forgotten'. Two years later there is another entry: 'It's two years now, and I don't laugh at it, and I have not forgotten'.

'The secrets of wisdom are double to that which is.'—Job xi. 6.

Every fresh region man breaks into reveals new wonders, and with them new enigmas, calling upon him to solve them or perish. There is a special complication, a pressure in our own day, which is not to be answered by an unmeaning clamour against rational enlightenment. We cannot stay the current that is bearing us onward so swiftly, but we may guide our course upon it, looking to the stars above. In our anxious and inquiring age . . . men shall find their safety, not in placing faith and science in an unreal opposition, not in closing their eyes to the revelation of God's power, but in opening their hearts to the secrets of His wisdom, *double to that which is.*—Dora Greenwell.

'Canst thou by searching find out God? Canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection?'—Job xi. 7.

Poor 'Comtism,' ghastliest of algebraic spectralities—origin of evil, etc.—these are things which, much as I have struggled with the mysteries surrounding me, never broke a moment of my rest. Mysterious! so be it, if you will. But is not the fact clear and certain! Is it a 'mystery' *you* have the least chance of ever getting to the bottom of! Canst *thou* by searching find out God? I am not surprised thou canst *not*, vain fool.—Carlyle.

'It is high as heaven; what canst thou do? deeper than hell; what canst thou know?'—Job xi. 8.

Is this confessed inadequateness of our speech, concerning that which we will not call by the negative name of the unknown and unknowable, but rather by the name of the unexplored and inexpressible, and of which the Hebrews themselves said: *It is more high than heaven; what canst thou do? deeper than hell; what canst thou know?*—is this reservedness of affirmation about God less worthy of Him than the astounding particularity and licence of affirmation of our dogmatists, as if He were a man in the next street? Nay, and nearly all the difficulties which torment theology,—as the reconciling God's justice with His mercy, and so on—come from this licence and particularity; theologians having precisely, as it would often seem, built up a wall first, in order afterwards to run their own heads against it.—Matthew Arnold.

LIMITS

'What canst thou do? . . . what canst thou know.'—Job xi. 8.

These questions were put by an extraordinary contradiction of human manner. They were put by Zophar, a citizen of the fair Naamath—a lovely place, full of flowers: a place that the summer might have haunted, and have lingered until the last beam of light faded behind the hills. Yet this was one of the most rough-spoken men of his day; in this respect the environment and the man were mismatched. Zophar was an accuser, a man of rough tongue; he could not be civil until after he had been rude. He told Job that he, the wasted one, was 'a man of lips,' in the Hebrew tongue, a word-chopper, a gabbler in the face of heaven's patience, and that Job knew nothing about his own case. The ideal and poetic Eliphaz had spoken, and Bildad—the sort of middleman that interprets poetry to prose, and makes the dull dog try to understand a word here and there—and Zophar comes up with the climax of brutality. There is a candour that is not lovely, there is an outspokenness that had better have choked itself before it began to speak. Yet every now and then—for we have called the man a self-contradiction—Zophar comes squarely down on the bedrock of fact and experience, and treats the whole deitic question with wonderful pith, setting it out in glittering generalizations and stunning Job as if by new proverbs.

I. Zophar called Job back to beginnings, to realities, to limitations. Said he in effect, See thee, this is the length of thy tether; thou hast seen a dog straining his neck as if he would get beyond the length of his iron chain, and he could not do it, but he nearly choked himself in the process; be wise; this thing deitic is higher than heaven; what canst thou do? deeper than hell; what canst thou know? 'Do,' 'know'—nearly all the verbs in one couplet.

II. We cannot know the Godhead, for it is higher than heaven, deeper than Hades; it belongs to all the unmeasured space, all the infinite intellectual territory, which has not yet been crushed into maps and made part of some elementary geography. But though I cannot measure the sun, I can enjoy the sunlight. That is my province, then; I cannot measure his diameter, but I can hail his summer and welcome his morning and bathe my cold life in his warm radiance. That is what we can do, and that we are called upon to do. We cannot count the sands upon the seashore, but we can walk over the golden path, and let the blue waves break in white laughter on our feet as we traverse that highway of beauty and vision. We cannot put the Atlantic into a thimble, but we can traverse it, sail upon it, turn it into a highway, utilize it, and make it not the separater, but the uniter of the nations.

So our not knowing and our not being able to do need not prevent our enjoyment and our service and our discipline. Do not imagine that you can get rid of religion by any intellectual act: there still remain the moral duties, the ten commandments, the eternal Sinai. Fool is he who thinks that there is no field beyond his own hedge, and that he has really nothing to do with religion because he cannot find out unto perfection the Almighty Father and Creator of all. To know that we do not know, that is wisdom; to know just where we ought to end, that is understanding.

III. 'What canst thou do? What canst thou know?' We can know Jesus; He speaks the language of little children; we have heard Him say, 'Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest,' and it was just like our mother talking.

'What canst thou do?' We can do the commandments; at least, we can begin to do them; it will take us a long time to penetrate into their metaphysic, but we can begin to do their practical commands at once; we can make an effort in that direction. If Christianity had scented pillows to offer on which the head of weariness could rest, and if it could have some comfortable provision made on its return from slumber, Christianity would become quite a popular religion, but it is known by the badge called the Cross; its home is in Gethsemane and on Golgotha; its command is, Do justly, love mercy, walk humbly with God.

Let us not, therefore, think that we are called upon to give great intellectual answers to unfathomable questions, but we are called upon to do good according to our opportunities, and to redeem the time, and to wait patiently for the Lord, who will give us wider horizons and more enduring suns.—Joseph Parker, *City Temple Pulpit*, vol. II. p. 98.

References.—XI. 13-15.—G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 129. XI. 16.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xlvi. No. 2676.

'No doubt but ye are the people, and wisdom shall die with you!'—Job xii. 2.

Speaking in *Fors Clavigera* (lx.) of the need of acquainting ourselves with the opinions of older thinkers, Ruskin satirically observes: 'For though a man of superior sagacity may be pardoned for thinking, with the friends of Job, that Wisdom will die with him, it can only be through neglect of the existing opportunities of general culture that he remains distinctly under the impression that she was born with him'.

'The just, the perfect man, is a laughing-stock.'—Job xii. 4.

'She saw there something that she had not,' says Meredith of Lady Charlotte in *Sandra Belloni* (chap. xxviii.) 'And being of a nature leaning to greatmindedness, though not of the first rank, she could not meanly mask her own deficiency by despising it. To do this is the secret evil by which souls of men and women stop their growth.'

'In the thought of him that is at ease there is contempt for misfortune.'—Job xii. 5.

Before we reached Adrianople, Methley had been seized with we know not what ailment, and when we had taken up our quarters in the city he was cast to the very earth by sickness. . . . I have a notion that tenderness and pity are affections occasioned in some measure by living within doors; certainly, at the time I speak of, the open-air life which I had been leading, or the wayfaring hardships of the journey, had so strangely blunted me, that I felt intolerant of illness, and looked down upon my companion as if the poor fellow, in falling ill, had betrayed a want of spirit.—Kinglake, *Eothen*, chap. II.

'The tabernacles of robbers prosper, and they that provoke God are secure.'—Job xii. 6.

Now and again while repeating the maxims of piety he [i.e. Theognis] suddenly breaks off, overcome by the thought of the sufferings of the righteous; he turns to Zeus and charges him with injustice in his government of the world in language almost as bold as that of the *Prometheus* of Æschylus, or of the book of Job: 'Zeus, lord beloved, I marvel at thee; for thou reignest over all; thine is honour and great power, and thou knowest the very heart and spirit of each man, for thy might, O king, is supreme. How then, son of Cronos, can thy soul endure to hold in like regard the sinner and the righteous? . . . Heaven has given to mortals no clear token, nor shown the way by which if a man walk he may please the Immortals. Howbeit the wicked prosper, and are free from trouble, while those who keep their soul from base deeds, although they love justice have for their portion poverty — poverty, mother of helplessness, which tempts the mind of man to transgression, and by a cruel constraint mars the reason in his breast.'—S. H. Butcher, *Aspects of the Greek Genius*, pp. 143, 144.

References.—XII. 8.—W. R. Inge, *All Saints' Sermons*, 1905-1907, pp. 191, 201. XII. 9, 10.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. vi. No. 326.

'He looseth the bond of kings, and girdeth their loins with a girdle.'—Job xii. 18.

The People have time enough, they are immortal; kings only are mortal.—Heine.

'He discovereth deep things out of darkness, and bringeth out to light the shadow of death.'—Job xii. 22.

For us vain is the dream of a shadowless world, with no interruption of brilliancy, no remission of joy. Were our heaven never overcast, yet we meet the brightest morning only in escape from recent night. . . . Where is that tincture of sanctity which Christ has given to sorrow, and which makes His form at once the divinest and most pathetic in the world? It is that He has wakened by His touch the illimitable aspirations of our bounded nature, and flung at once into our thought and affection a holy beauty, a Divine Sonship into which we can only grow. And this is a condition which can never cease to be. Among the true children of the Highest, who would wish to be free from it? Let the glorious burden lie! How can we be angry at a sorrow which is the birth-pang of a Diviner life.—Martineau.

'He enlargeth the nations, and straiteneth them again.'—Job xii. 23.

In our greatest literary epoch, that of the Elizabethan age, English society at large was accessible to ideas, was permeated by them, was vivified by them, to a degree which has never been reached in England since. Hence the unique greatness in English literature of Shakespeare and his contemporaries. They were powerfully upheld by the intellectual life of their nation; they applied freely in literature the then modern ideas,—the ideas of the Renascence and

the Reformation. A few years afterwards the great English middle-class, the kernel of the nation, the class whose intelligent sympathy had upheld a Shakespeare, entered the prison of Puritanism, and had the key turned on its spirit there for two hundred years. *He enlargeth a nation*, says Job, *and straiteneth it again.*—Matthew Arnold, *Essays in Criticism*, vol. i. p. 176.

'O that ye would altogether hold your peace! and it should be your wisdom.'—Job xiii. 5.

Great talkers do not at all speak from their having anything to say, as every sentence shows, but only from their inclination to be talking. Their conversation is merely an exercise of the tongue: no other human faculty has any share in it. It is strange these persons can help reflecting, that unless they have in truth a superior capacity, and are in an extraordinary manner furnished for conversation; if they are entertaining it is at their own expense. Is it possible, that it should never come into people's thoughts to suspect, whether or no it be to their advantage to show so very much of themselves? *O that you would altogether hold your peace! and it should be your wisdom.*—Butler.

'Will ye speak wickedly for God? and talk deceitfully for Him?'—Job xiii. 7.

As for the conceit that too much knowledge should incline a man to atheism, and that the ignorance of second causes should make a more devout dependence upon God, which is the first Cause; first, it is good to ask the question which Job asked of his friends: *Will you lie for God, as one man will do for another, to gratify Him?* For certain it is that God worketh nothing in nature but by second causes: and if they would have it otherwise believed, it is mere imposture, as it were, in favour towards God; and nothing else but to offer to the author of truth the unclean sacrifice of a lie.—Bacon, *The Advancement of Learning.*

Wise men, in their despair of accounting for the origin of evil, have been driven to deny its existence in theories too thin to cheat any heart that has been pierced yet enlightened by its sharp reality, and pious men, falling into the snare which Job's integrity declined, have *spoken lies for God and argued deceitfully for Him.* Hence dreams like that of optimism, fictions, such as that of evil being but the privation of good.—Dora Greenwell.

'Will ye accept His person? will ye contend for God.'—Job xiii. 8.

Dr. John Duncan once said that this was 'about the boldest utterance in the Bible. Job says that his friends were partial to God—that they did not judge impartially between him and God. There is a wonderful peace in a good conscience.'

FAITH TRIED AND TRIUMPHING

'Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him.'—Job xiii. 15.

Job was a master sufferer. This was not the utterance of any ordinary commonplace believer. It is the sort of word which could only come from a triumphant Job—triumphant by victorious faith.

I. Faith is the habitual grace of the Christian. The common habit of the Christian is a habit of trusting. The Christian's walk is faith, and his life is faith. It is to him all the spiritual senses, his first and his last, his highest and his lowest. We trust for the pardon of our sins to our God in Jesus Christ, but in God we trust also for the purification of our spirits from all the indwelling power of sin. We trust Him believing that He always must be just, believing that God will never do anything to us but that which is full of love.

II. Those who have learned to trust in God expect their faith to be tried. The text evidently implies that faith will be tried, and tried severely, but true faith scorns trial and outlives it. The trial is greatly for our good and greatly for God's glory. The Christian lives by faith, and he expects the faith to be tried.

III. True faith, put on trial, will certainly bear it. Faith will be justified to the uttermost. We ought to trust Him also to the last, because outward providences prove nothing to us about God. We cannot read outward events correctly; they are written in hieroglyphics. The book of God is readable; it is written in human language; but the works of God are often unreadable. There is another cause why we should always trust in Him. To whom else can we go? We are shut up to this. The course of the Christian's life is such that he feels it more necessary to trust every day he lives. And we may depend upon it God will always justify our faith if we do trust Him. The text means that we surrender all to God, even as Job did. If we say the text, it will take a good deal of saying, and if it is true, it will want the power of God Himself to make it true.—C. H. Spurgeon, *Grace Triumphant*, p. 300.

FAITH AND CHARACTER

'Though He slay, yet will I trust in Him.'—Job xiii. 15.

He only is strong who is strong in God, and he who is strong in God rises superior to all the 'circumstances of human life'. In the text is locked the secret of Job's life, a secret we much need, if it can be discovered.

I. The first lesson we may learn is that the trials of life reveal character and demonstrate the quality and value of our past training. Job was not less religious because his property had gone; not less sincere when socially overthrown; neither did he cease to pray when he ceased to be rich. We shall do well to remember in this connexion that character is not formed by one act or one effort. The discipline of years is essential to growth and strength. Men speak sometimes of "rising to the occasion,' and some would have us believe that Job 'rose to the occasion,' when he declared his faith and attitude of which our text speaks. My reply is that he reached the lofty altitude of courage and faith not in a day, but by the prayer and culture of the past years.

II. The second lesson that we need to learn is that the child of God walks by faith, and not by sight. Job's trust was not in externals, but in the internal; not the seen, but the unseen. Possessions gone, children gone, friends gone, yet he says: 'The Lord gave, and the Lord taketh away; blessed be the name of the Lord'. That was faith, not sight.

III. The value of temptation and of faith. The value of the trial is seen in its driving Job back to first principles and elementary truths. He saw the insignificance of the outward and the importance of the unseen. When he lost the material treasures, he learned the value of an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, which fadeth not away. What of the value of faith? There is one word, and only one is necessary, the word deliverance. Job was delivered! It was a great storm, but he came safely through. Not lost, but saved and purified.—F. Sparrow, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxiii. 1908, p. 372.

'Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him.'—Job xiii. 15.

The Calvinist would declare that if we really understood the universe of which humanity is a part, we should find scientific justification for that supreme and victorious faith which cries, 'Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him!' The man who has acquired such faith as this is the true freeman of the universe, clad in stoutest coat of mail against disaster and sophistry,—the man whom nothing can enslave, and whose guerdon is the serene happiness that can never be taken away.—John Fiske, *Through Nature to God*, p. 21.

In Caroline Fox's journals for 1841 (7 May), there is the following note of conversation with John Sterling: 'Much discourse on special providences, a doctrine which he totally disbelieves, and views the supporters of it as in the same degree of moral development as Job's comforters. Job, on the contrary, saw further; he did not judge of the Almighty's aspect towards him by any worldly afflictions or consolations; he saw somewhat into the inner secret of His providence, and so could say, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him". We must look for the hand of His providence alike in all dispensations, however mysterious to us.'

Why do ye complain of waters going over your soul, and that the smoke of the terrors of a wrathful God do almost suffocate you and bring you to death's brink? I know that the fault is in your eyes, not in Him. It is not the rock that fleeth and moveth, but the green sailor. . . . Now, give God as large a measure of charity as ye have of sorrow. Now, see faith to be faith indeed, if ye can make your grave betwixt Christ's feet, and say, *Though He should slay me, I will trust in Him.*—Samuel Rutherford.

When Job said, *Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him*, no wealth could enrich him after that. He had reached his climax.—James Smetham.

Probably no one can make sacrifices for 'right,' without in some degree personifying the principle of right for which the sacrifice is made, and expecting thanks from it. *Complete* social unselfishness, in other words, can hardly exist; *complete* social suicide hardly occurs to a man's mind. Even such texts as Job's 'Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him,' or Marcus Aurelius's 'If gods hate me and my children, there is a reason for it,' can least of all be cited to prove the contrary. For beyond all doubt Job revelled in the thought of Jehovah's recognition of the worship after the slaying should have been done; and the Roman Emperor felt sure the Absolute Reason would not be all indifferent to his acquiescence in the gods' dislike. The old test of piety, 'are you willing to be damned for the glory of God?' was probably never answered in the affirmative except by those who felt sure in their heart of hearts that God would 'credit' them with their willingness.—Prof. William James, *Textbook of Psychology*, p. 193.

References.—XIII. 15.—E. A. Askew, *Sermons Preached in Greystoke Church*, p. 68. J. H. Newman, *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, vol. iv. p. 117. XIII. 22.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxi. No. 1255.

THE KNOWLEDGE OF SIN

'How many are mine iniquities and sins? make me to know my transgression and my sin.'—Job xiii. 23.

How is the knowledge of sin to be attained?

I. It is the Province of the Holy Ghost.—And first, we must lay it down absolutely to be the province of the Holy Ghost. He, and He alone, ever shows a man his sins. No natural process, no early teaching, no careful training, no preaching, no experience of human nature, no knowledge of the world, will ever do it. Therefore Christ spoke of it as the Spirit's great first office, 'When He is come, He will reprove the world of sin'.

II. By the Word.—But under this great Illuminator of the soul, and Detector of all hidden things, what are the means? The Word. But the Word divides itself for this purpose into two parts. There is the law: 'By the law is the knowledge of sin'. So St. Paul found the knowledge of sin. He found it in the tenth commandment. The tenth commandment relates rather to a state of mind than to a state of life. A ray of the Spirit falling upon the tenth commandment showed this to St. Paul, and led him into the line of thought, that as it was with the tenth commandment, so it must be with all the commandments of God—that they are spiritual, and have reference to an inward condition of heart. And so he writes the narrative of his own discovery of sin: 'I had not known sin but by the law; for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet'. The law becomes the schoolmaster, which, convincing us of sin, leads, or rather drives us to Christ. But then the Word is not only law, still more, the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ is the Word. The more you know of the Lord Jesus Christ, the more you will know, and the more you will be miserable in the knowledge of your own sins. With the knowledge of God's

mercy comes and goes, rises and falls, ebbs and flows, the knowledge, the abhorring knowledge of sin.

III. What Shall You Do?

(*a*) *Pray for more light* to be thrown upon the recesses of your dark heart, till the stains stand out clear in the sunshine, which were not seen in the shadow.

(*b*) *Leave generalities and deal with some one particular sin* that has got great power over you.

(*c*) *Think of the holiness of God* till all that is unlike Him begins to look dark, and you yourself very dark, because very unlike God, and heaven.

(*d*) *Believe in the love of Jesus* to you. It was in the sight of a great miracle of mercy that St. Peter cried out, 'Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord'; but it was under the very falling of the pity of Christ's loving eye that Peter 'went out and wept bitterly'.

References.—XIII. 23.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. viii. No. 336. J. Vaughan, *Fifty Sermons* (6th Series), p. 9.

GOD'S USE OF SIN

'Thou makest me to possess the iniquities of my youth.'—Job xiii. 26.

One of the commonest ideas regarding sin, at the present time, is that when once done, it is also done with. Half the human race persist in viewing sin as no more than a conventional name applied by religious people to the minor slips of life's journey, mere blunders and peccadilloes scarcely worth mentioning, which anyhow leave no trace behind them. They would stare at the suggestion that sin becomes a living bit of ourselves. If some bad habit, like cheating or vanity or drunkenness, begins to get the upper hand, and too much obtrudes its presence, they imagine that there is no more difficulty in dropping it out of the character quietly than when a train shunts a heated wagon into a siding. Only speak the word, and the power of the past is broken.

Let me speak of four ways in which God makes us to inherit our iniquities. They are closely bound up with each other, but we may consider them briefly in separation.

I. Our sins come back on us as *bitter memories*. These bad deeds or thoughts leave poisoned wounds; they leave stains that burn as well as soil; even if there were no God, still we should feel them a disgrace to manhood. And perhaps of all the feelings that visit the human heart none is sadder than the helplessness with which we behold time flowing on resistlessly, bearing with it into the past wrongdoing we can never now set right.

I. Our sins come back on us as *disqualifying infirmities*. It is common knowledge that a man may so live that he becomes unfit for certain kinds of delicate and important work; his hand shakes, his eyesight deteriorates, and he has to step down in the scale of industry, and adopt some lower form of employment. Never more in this world, perhaps, will he be fit for his old business. Now the same thing may happen in the moral and spiritual life. Sin may be pardoned, while yet punishment remains. 'Thou wast a God that forgavest, but Thou tookest vengeance on their inventions.' Moses, for his sin, had to lie down in a lonely grave outside the Promised Land, after one look at the country others were entering. David, because of his blood-stained hands, was refused permission to build God's temple. So, like these men, we may shut ourselves out by sin from certain fields of usefulness or enjoyment.

III. Once more, our sins come back as *guilty burdens*. Time never wears out sin's guilt. To-day in the Egyptian sands they are finding manuscripts two thousand years old; and when the skilled expert pours the reagent over the papyrus surface the old writing stands out again bold and clear; and God can do that with a human soul. He can give the startled conscience a telescopic and a microscopic power which makes past sins present and small sins great.

IV. Lastly, our sins come back as *motives to seek God's mercy*. And here at last we light upon the hidden purpose operating in all the other uses God makes of our transgressions. For remember the most important thing about sin is not its power of embittering memory, or its disqualifying consequences, or even its burden of guilt; the most important thing about sin is this, that it can be forgiven. The prodigal son had been dissolute and reckless; but then the prodigal son had a father. That changed all the outlook. There are two wrong ways of regarding sin, levity and despair; the one declaring that forgiveness is unnecessary, the other protesting that forgiveness is impossible, and that we have no choice but to carry our burden to the end without hope or relief. And the one right way is just trustful penitence, just coming back to God, like the lad in the parable, and saying, 'Father, I have sinned, and am no more worthy to be called Thy son'.—H. R. Mackintosh, *Life on God's Plan*, p. 212.

Reference.—XIV. 1.—Spurgeon, *Evening by Evening*, p. 70.

'He cometh forth like a flower, and is cut down.'—Job xiv. 2.

'I will not now ask, writes Charlotte Brontë in 1848, 'why Emily was torn from us in the fullness of an attachment, rooted up in the prime of her own days, in the promise of her powers; why her existence now lies like a field of green corn trodden down, like a tree in full bearing struck at the root. I will only say, sweet is rest after labour, and calm after tempest, and again that Emily knows that now.'

'He fleeth also as a shadow, and continueth not.'—Job xiv. 2.

What shadows we are, and what shadows we pursue!—Burke.

THE APPARENTLY RIDICULOUS

'Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?'—Job xiv. 4.

Throughout the Bible we shall find that we are always startled by the apparently ridiculous.

I. Take the instance of the text: 'Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?' You must not read that in a schoolboy tone. The meaning of it is in the emphasis or in the very colour of the

voice with which it is read. Bring a clean thing out of an unclean?—impossible! Bring a clean thing out of an unclean?—absurd! God must reduce us to that intellectual confusion before He can make anything good of us.

II. Take another instance, equally potent, and strikingly illustrative of the fundamental position of the discourse. You find it in John III. 4: 'How can a man be born when he is old?' You see the text does not stand alone; Job is corroborated by John. How can a man be born again when he is old? It does not stand to reason; it is ridiculous; I do not like to say so to this fair young man who has wrought all these wondrous miracles, but in my soul I feel that he is out of his head, for he is an innocent or an inoffensive idealist; he dreams well, he talks badly. 'Except a man be born again, he cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven.' 'How can a man be born when he is old?' Thus literalism confronts spiritualism, and they enter into their old and their eternal quarrel. Nicodemus, though a master in Israel, was a literalist; he knew only the alphabet, and then a few of the words, but his words never ran into poetry, never quivered into revelation and apocalypse and idealism. He was great within the four corners of the alphabet; outside of that alphabet he was weak as other men.

III. I read in Jeremiah XIII. 23, 'Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots?' Why, it stands to reason that he cannot, it is ridiculous to think that he can, and yet this is what God is supposed to be calling upon man to do; why, it cannot be done! There you come upon the original difficulty; here is the appeal to the ridiculous with which we are so far familiarly acquainted; we saw it in Job, we heard it in John, and now we go back into the Old Testament and find Jeremiah suggesting or teaching the same doctrine, and making the same appeal to the ridiculous and the impossible. Christianity is an appeal to the impossible.

IV. You will find from the beginning of the Bible to the end inquiries that suggest an appeal to the ridiculous. When men wish to disobey God or when men want to get rid of the Christ, they will say, The incarnation?—why, it stands to reason that the incarnation, as it is usually understood, is quite a mistake, something worse than a dream; that God, eternal, omnipotent, infinite, majestic beyond all conceived majesty, should become a little crying babe in the manger or a stable, why, it is surprising that the world could tolerate the notion for one little moment. So it is, and the world never can entertain it; but this is not an appeal to the world, this is an appeal to the world that is within the world and above the world, and that will outlast it. Faith itself must often be ridiculous to reason, that is, to narrow uncultivated and unsanctified reason; but to reason, when God has undertaken its sanctification, faith is the culmination of reason, the very glory of logic.—Joseph Parker, *City Temple Pulpit*, vol. VII. p. 174.

Reference.—XIV. 4.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, No. 2734.

'His days are determined, the number of his months are with thee.'—Job XIV. 5.

He sendeth us to His world as men to a market, wherein some stay many hours, and eat and drink, and buy and sell, and pass through the fair, till they be weary; and such are those who live long and get a heavy fill of this life. And others again come slipping in to the morning market, and do neither sit nor stand, nor buy nor sell, but look about them a little, and pass presently home again; and these are infants and young ones, who end their short market in the morning, and get but a short view of the fair. Our Lord, who hath numbered man's months, and set him bounds that he cannot pass, hath written the length of our market, and it is easier to complain of the decree than to change it.—Samuel Rutherford.

Job XIV. 6.

This verse is rendered in the Vulgate: 'Dimitte me paululum, ut quiescam, donec optata veniat dies'—'Let me free for a little that I may have quiet till the longed-for day come'. This text is inscribed on a memorial tablet in one of the old churches of Troyes.

'For there is hope of a tree if it be cut down, that it will sprout again.'—Job XIV. 7.

Even as are the generations of leaves such are those likewise of man; the leaves that be the wind scattereth on the earth, and the forest buddeth and putteth forth more again, when the season of spring is at hand.—Homer, *Iliad*, VI. 146 f. (tr. W. Leaf).

'But man dieth, and wasteth away: yea, man giveth up the ghost, and where is he?'—Job XIV. 10.

In his autobiographic sketches De Quincey, after telling how one of his little sisters died when he was in childhood, adds: 'So did my acquaintance (if such it should be called) commence with mortality. Yet, in fact, I knew little more of mortality than that Jane had disappeared. She had gone away; but, perhaps, she would come back. Happy interval of heaven-born ignorance! gracious immunity of infancy from sorrow disproportioned to its strength! I was sad for Jane's absence. But still in my heart I trusted that she would come again. Summer and winter came again—crocuses and roses; why not little Jane?'

HOW TO DIE WELL

Death doth not bring about an end of being, but only a change of state; it is not a goal but a gate. Of what infinite importance is it that we should die well! Is it not wise to learn how to do that which it is of infinite importance to do well?

I. Unless our death be sudden and unexpected, there will come to us all a moment when we shall realize that our life on earth is over, and that our last moments have come. Now it is plain that the time, the circumstances, the causes of our death are beyond our power. There is one thing—and that the essential thing—within it. It matters comparatively little when or where we die, and these things are decided for us. It is of infinite importance how we die, and that depends on ourselves.

II. What, then, is the secret of dying well? The secret is no secret for us, i.e. it is a secret which has been revealed long ago: to die well, the hand of the dying man must clasp the hand of the Lord of Life. This is the one thing needful for us all. Gaining that, we have not lived in vain, whatever we have lost. Losing that, though we have gained the whole world, better were it for us that we had not been born. That our dying hand should grasp the living Christ's, or better still that His hand should grasp ours—this should be our life-long aim, longing, and prayer.

III. Die a penitent and you cannot die ill. One would wish to be prepared for the last difficult steps of our journey by the ministrations of the Church—to be encouraged to make acts of faith and hope, and love, to have our wandering gaze constantly directed to that Lamb of God Who takes away our sins. The conclusion to be drawn from this is plain. We ought to live as men who have to die some day and may die any day. The thought 'Can I meet Jesus thus?' should be a continual restraint to us in our business and our pleasure, in our sorrows and in our joys.—F. Watson, *The Christian Life Here and Hereafter*, p. 207.

Reference.—XIV. 10.—D. G. Watt, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxv. p. 260.

AN ANSWER TO A GREAT QUESTION

'If a man die, shall he live again?'—Job xiv. 14.

I. What does Nature say about it? The economy of Nature says, yes! There is nothing wasted in all God's works, and surely man, the chief of His creation, shall not perish eternally; he shall live again.

II. What does Reason say about it? In all human beings there is a strong repugnance at the thought of death. Reason suggests the answer to the question, 'God will have a desire to His handiwork'.

III. What does Revelation say about it? Our present body is called a natural body, fit only for the soul, the intelligence, to live in. The second body is called the spiritual body, fit for the spirit to live in—an environment of pure affection and absolute holiness. We are, as it were, half in the old life and half in the new.—J. Bentley, *The Church Homilist*, p. 134.

References.—XIV. 14.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—Job*, p. 43. J. Baines, *Sermons to Country Congregations*, p. 136. R. J. Campbell, *City Temple Sermons*, p. 161. Bishop Matthew Simpson, *Sermons*, p. 331. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xiii. No. 764. XIV. 14, 15.—J. Vaughan, *Fifty Sermons* (10th Series), p. 265. XIV. 15.—H. Melvill, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 2161.

'His sons come to honour, and he knoweth it not.'—Job xiv. 21.

'It is the bitterest element in the vast irony of human life,' says Mr. Morley in his *Life of Cobden*, 'that the time-worn eyes to which a son's success would have brought the purest gladness, are so often closed for ever before success has come.'

Reference.—XV. 4.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. li. No. 2943.

HUMBLING QUESTIONS

'Art thou the first man that was born?'—Job xv. 7.

I. 'Art thou the first man that was born?' There must have been a first man. He might possibly have had some measure of independence from a merely superficial view of himself, but he had no real independence, he was part of the next man that was coming, and thus we belong to posterity as well as ancestry, and we hand on the life which we have often stained and spoiled. If I am not the first man that was born, if I am not the only man, then it follows that I must consult some other man. We belong to one another. Your friend knows better than you do how certain cases stand, because you may be part and parcel of the cases, and he stands aside or at a proper distance giving them the right proportion, perspective, and colour, and he, being a wise man, can tell you what to do, and you in your turn may be able to render the same service to him. We belong to one another. There is but one Man—multifold, but one.

II. Thus God makes one man debtor to another, and so creates mutual interests. When you 'take a man in,' using a commercial phrase, you do not enrich yourself. That is curious, but it is true. You enrich yourself apparently or for the moment, you increase your possessions for the moment at least; but you do not really enrich yourself, your soul, and there is no abiding, no durableness, in the stuff that you get with a thief's hand. Honesty is rich, economy is wealth; he who has few wants has many riches.

We are debtors to one another, because the first man belongs to the second man, and the second man to the first man, and when a third man comes they will be divided and sub-divided, and when the three-hundredth man comes we shall begin to shape our relations and define our responsibilities, and make that marvellous star called Society, that no telescope can see thoroughly into and which no calculation can estimate at its full and enduring value. We are members one of another, like the jointed body. This is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes.

III. Applying this line of thought to the highest spiritual things, let us remember that we did not invent the Gospel. This is no modern thought; this is no yesterday's ware turned out of some oven in the manufacturing districts. This is older than man. The Cross is older than Adam; the Cross is just as old as the love of God. When you have fixed the date of the birth of the love of God you have fixed the date of the meaning of the Cross. Yet if we come into historical times, say into Mosaic years, we shall find the Cross in the book of Genesis, we shall find the Cross in the book of Revelation. Jesus Christ is the Lamb slain from before the foundation of the world. Our temptation is to amend the Gospel, to add something to it or take something from it, or set our own finger-mark upon its beauty. If we could but deliver the Gospel instead of attempting to invent it, we might do some good. 'I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received.' That was the

apostolic declaration, and if we would be in the apostolic succession we must do exactly what the Apostle Paul himself did: he 'received' the Gospel and 'delivered' it. That is all we have to do; or if we make any contribution to it, which we cannot make to its substance, but to its illustration, it must be the contribution of our own personal experience in agonizing prayer, in self-crucifixion, and in the dwelling with God in secret places where the fountains throw up their healing waters for our refreshment and our renewal. The Gospel is in every bush of the summer, in every bird of the air, in every act of suffering, in the vicarious mother and the vicarious father: these are parables given to us to help us understand the central Gospel, which is that Jesus Christ tasted death for every man.—Joseph Parker, *City Temple Pulpit*, vol. III. p. 270.

'Hast thou heard the secret of God.'—Job xv. 8.

Compare Fitzgerald's remark (*Letters*, i. p. 231) about a certain vicar, 'he is a good deal in the secrets of Providence'.

'I had a letter from Edward Irving the other day,' wrote Carlyle in 1826 to his brother. '"The Lord," he says, "blesses him; his Church rejoices in the Lord"; in fact, the Lord and he seem to be quite hand and glove.'

References.—XV. 11.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxxv. No. 2099.

'In prosperity the destroyer shall come upon him.'—Job xv. 21.

Some apparent advantages followed for a season from a rule which had its origin in a violent and perfidious usurpation, and which was upheld by all the arts of moral corruption, political enervation, and military repression. The advantages lasted long enough to create in this country a steady and powerful opinion that Napoleon the Third's early crime was redeemed by the seeming prosperity which followed. The shocking prematureness of this shallow condonation is now too glaringly visible for any one to deny it. Not often in history has the great truth that 'morality is the nature of things' received corroboration so prompt and timely.—Morley, *Compromise*, pp. 25, 26.

'Miserable comforters are ye all.'—Job xvi. 2.

In no respect was Mrs. Grote's knowledge of the human heart more apparent than in her intercourse with a mariner. With the unfailing freshness she put into all she said, she called herself 'a good affliction woman'. In the first place she *admitted* the reality of the trial, without which no one attempting to help—no matter in what—can be either just or kind. Then she dealt in no commonplaces on any subject in the world, least of all on that of deep grief. She knew that *nothing* could soothe which had not the ring of truth. There was therefore no prescribing this or that nostrum (which prescribers here never proved) for the cure of sorrow—no pharisaical reproofs for its supposed indulgence. Diversion of thought was given in the least suspected way: the languor of the mind stimulated by healthy counter-interests; while as to cases where the anguish was still fresh, no words ever more truly hit the mark; 'Let the wound bleed'.—Lady Eastlake's *Mrs. Grote: A Sketch*, p. 156.

It is a barbarous part of inhumanity to add unto any afflicted parties misery, or endeavour to multiply in any man a passion whose single nature is already above his patience. This was the greatest affliction of Job, and those oblique expostulations of his friends a deeper injury than the downright blows of the devil. —Sir Thomas Browne.

'His archers compass me round about, He cleaveth my reins asunder.'—Job xvi. 13.

In the introduction to *A Mortal Antipathy*, Dr. O. W. Holmes describes the case of a doctor 'who was the subject of a slow, torturing, malignant, and almost necessarily fatal disease'. During his illness 'his wife, who seemed in perfect health, died suddenly of pneumonia. Physical suffering, mental distress, the prospect of death at a near, if uncertain, time always before him, it was hard to conceive a more terrible strain than that which he had to endure. When, in the hour of his greatest need, his faithful companion, the wife of many years of happy union, whose voice had consoled and cheered him, was torn from him after a few days of illness, I felt that my friend's trial was such that the cry of the man of many afflictions and temptations might well have escaped from his lips: "I was at ease, but He hath broken me asunder: He hath also taken me by my neck, and shaken me to pieces, and set me up for His mark. His archers compass me round about, He cleaveth my reins asunder, and doth not spare; He poureth out my gall upon the ground." I had dreaded meeting him for the first time after this crushing blow. What a lesson he gave me of patience under sufferings which the fanciful description of the Eastern poet does not picture too vividly.'

References.—XVI. 22.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxiii. No. 1373. XVII. 1.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, No. 2868. XVII. 9. —J. Vaughan, *Fifty Sermons* (4th Series), p. 125. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxiii. No. 1361. J. Clifford, *Daily Strength for Daily Living*, p. 325.

'My purposes are broken off, even the thoughts of my heart.' —Job xvii. 11.

Happy is the man, no matter what his lot may be otherwise, who sees some tolerable realization of the design he has set before him in his youth or in his earlier manhood. Many there are who, through no fault of theirs, know nothing but mischance and defeat. Either sudden calamity overturns in tumbling ruins all they had painfully toiled to build, and success for ever afterwards is irrecoverable; or, what is most frequent, each day brings its own special hindrance, in the shape of ill-health, failure of power, or poverty, and a fatal net is woven over the limbs preventing all activity.—Mark Rutherford, *The Deliverance*, p. 142.

THE BED OF DARKNESS

'I have made my bed in the darkness.'—Job xvii. 13.

These words said in a moment of profound depression by Job, and untrue for him, are yet terribly true for others.

I. Terribly true will these words be to him who has spent his life without making eternity his aim, whose days are past, and his purposes, all of this world, are broken off. How true also of one whose mind is occupied exclusively by business. We are given the taper of life, by which we are to prepare our future bed, by the light of which we are to make ready for the place of our repose. If we have employed our time otherwise, shall we find rest on that ill-made couch? I trow not, we have made our bed in the darkness.

II. We have here a work to do. God did not send us here to dawdle through life. Every day brings with it responsibilities. We are sent into the world to glorify God and save our own souls. It is work done, and not work to be done, that we shall look to with confidence, and which will deserve commendation of God. Look to what God has set thee to do—see how much of it thou hast accomplished. Injuries forgiven, not to be forgiven; restitution made, not to be made; pardon asked, not to be asked; confession made, not to be made; responsibilities executed, not merely undertaken.—S. Baring-Gould, *Sermon-Sketches*, p. 201.

References.—XVII. 14.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons Preached in Sackville College Chapel*, vol. ii. p. 169. XVIII. 12.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxv. No. 1510. XIX.—*Ibid.* No. 2909.

'He hath stripped me of my glory, and taken the crown from my head. He hath destroyed me on every side, and I am gone: and mine hope hath He removed like a tree.'—Job xix. 9, 10.

Compare the use of this passage by Scott in the affecting interview between Jeanie Deans and her sister, when the latter (*Heart of Midlothian*, chap. xx.) upbraids herself for having forgotten 'what I promised when I faulded down the leaf of my Bible. "See," she said, producing the sacred volume, "the book opens aye at the place o' itsell. O see, Jeanie, what a fearfu' scripture!" Jeanie took her sister's Bible, and found that the fatal mark was made at this impressive text in the book of Job: 'He hath stripped me of my glory, and taken the crown from my head. He hath destroyed me on every side, and I am gone: and mine hope hath He removed like a tree.' "Isna that ower true a doctrine?" said the prisoner—"Isna my crown, my honour removed? and what am I but a poor wasted, wan-thriven tree, dug up by the roots, and flung out to waste in the highway, that man and beast may tread it under foot? I thought o' the bonny bit thorn that our father rooted out o' the yard last May, when it had a' the flush o' blossoms on it; and then it lay in the court till the beasts had trod them a' to pieces wi' their feet. I little thought, when I was wae for the bit silly green bush and its flowers, that I was to gang the same gate mysell!"'

'Have pity upon me, have pity upon me, O ye my friends; for the hand of God hath touched me.'—Job xix. 21.

'Men,' wrote Luther in 1527, 'who ought to have compassion on me are choosing the very moment of my prostration to come and give me a final thrust. God mend them and enlighten them!'

'Graven with an iron pen and lead in the rock for ever!'—Job xix. 24.

How insignificant, at the moment, seem the influences of the sensible things which are tossed and fall and lie about us, so, or so, in the environment of early childhood. How indelibly, as we afterwards discover, they affect us: with what capricious attractions and associations they figure themselves on the white paper, the smooth wax, of our ingenuous souls, 'as with lead in the rock for ever'!—Pater, *Miscellaneous Studies*, p. 176.

'I know that my Redeemer liveth.'—Job xix. 25.

Yes, the Redeemer liveth. He is no Jew, or image of a man, or surplice, or old creed, but the Unnamable Maker of us, voiceless, formless within our own soul, whose voice *is* every noble and genuine impulse of our souls. He is yet there, in us and around us, and *we* are there. No eremite or fanatic whatever had more than we have; how much less had most of them?—Carlyle.

'I know that my Redeemer liveth' is a state of mind of which ordinary men cannot reason; but which in the practical power of it, has always governed the world, and must for ever.—Ruskin, *Fors Clavigera* (xcii.).

In Faraday's journal for 1841 he describes a Swiss graveyard at Oberhofen, where 'one who had been too poor to put up an engraved brass plate, or even a painted board, had written with ink on paper the birth and death of the being whose remains were below, and mounted on the top of a stick at the head of the grave, the paper being protected by a little edge of roof. Such was the simple remembrance, but Nature had added her pathos, for under the shelter by the writing a caterpillar had fastened itself, and passed into its death-like state of chrysalis, and having ultimately assumed its final state, it had winged its way from the spot, and had left the corpse-like relics behind. How old and how beautiful is this figure of the resurrection!'

References.—XIX. 25.—J. L. Moody, *The Fullness of the Gospel*, p. 62. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, No. 2909. XIX. 25, 26.—G. W. Bethune, *American Pulpit*, p. 320. H. Melvill, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 2747. XIX. 25-27.—A. B. Davidson, *The Waiting God*, p. 79. J. Clifford, *Daily Strength for Daily Living*, p. 305. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. ix. No. 504.

Job xix. 26, 27.

When Madame de Gasparin, author of *The Near and Heavenly Horizons*, lay dying, her faith was strengthened, after a transient crisis of doubt, by the words of this passage. She pronounced with a calm, strong, and confident voice the text: 'Though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my

flesh shall I see God. Whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold and not another'.—*La Comtesse Agénor de Gasparin et sa Famille*, p. 379.

References.—XIX. 28.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. ix. No. 505. *Ibid.* vol. xxvii. No. 1598.

'Though wickedness be sweet in his mouth, though he hide it under his tongue; though he spare it, and will not let it go, but keep it still within his mouth.'—Job xx. 12, 13.

Zophar, the Naamathite, mentioneth a sort of men in whose mouths wickedness is sweet. 'They hide it under their tongues, they spare it, and forsake it not, but keep it still in their mouths.' This furnisheth me with a tripartite division of men in the world.

The first and best are those who spit sin out, loathing it in their judgments, and leaving it in their practice.

The second sort, notoriously wicked, who swallow sin down, actually and openly committing it.

The third, endeavouring an expedient between heaven and hell, neither do not deny their lusts, neither spitting them out, nor swallowing them down, but rolling them under their tongues, epicurizing thereon in their filthy fancies and obscene speculations.—Thomas Fuller.

'He hath oppressed and forsaken the poor.'—Job xx. 19.

What right have we to complain of the indifference of the universe, what right have we to declare it unintelligible and monstrous? Why this surprise at an injustice in which we ourselves have taken so active a part? . . . Poverty, for example, which we continue to rank among the irremediable ills, such as shipwrecks and plagues; poverty, with all its crushing sorrows and transmitted degeneration—how often may this be ascribed to the injustice of the elements, and how often to the injustice of our social condition, which is man's crowning injustice? When we see undeserved misery, need we look to the skies for the reason of it, as if a flash of lightning had caused it?—Maeterlinck in *The Buried Temple*.

The hidden and awful Wisdom which apportions the destinies of mankind is pleased so to humiliate and cast down the tender, good, and wise; and to set up the selfish, the foolish, or the wicked. Oh, be humble, my brother, in your prosperity! Be gentle with those who are less lucky, if not more deserving. Think, what right have you to be scornful, whose virtue is a deficiency of temptation, whose success may be a chance, whose rank may be an ancestor's accident, whose prosperity is very likely a satire.—Thackeray, *Vanity Fair*, chap. lvii.

'The heavens shall reveal his iniquity, and the earth shall rise up against him.'—Job xx. 27.

Commit a crime, and the earth is made of glass. Commit a crime, and it seems as if a coat of snow fell on the ground such as reveals in the woods the track of every partridge and fox and squirrel and mole. Some damning circumstance always transpires.—Emerson.

Reference.—XXI. 2.—H. Melvill, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 2183.

'Wherefore do the wicked live, become old, yea wax mighty in power? Their houses are safe from fear, neither is the rod of God upon them.'—Job xxi. 7, 9.

'Napoleon,' observes Lord Rosebery, 'is often only thinking aloud in the bitterness of his heart,' in his conversation on religion, 'as when he says that he cannot believe in a just God punishing and rewarding, for good people are always unfortunate and scoundrels are always lucky: "look at Talleyrand, he is sure to die in his bed".'

Quoting this and similar passages from Job in the fourth chapter of his *Service of Man*, Mr. Cotter Morison adds: 'Probably few religious persons have escaped the bitterness of feeling that they were unjustly chastened, that the rod of God was upon them and not upon the wicked. They no doubt repelled the thought with an *apage Satana!* regarding it as a snare of the tempter. But because the thought was banished from the mind, was the load removed from the heart? This is a trial which theologians must admit is all their own—a clear addition to the weary weight "of all this unintelligible world". Agnostics, at least, when smitten by the sharp arrows of fate, by disease, poverty, bereavement, do not complicate their misery by anxious misgivings and painful wonder why they are thus treated by the God of their salvation. The pitiless brazen heavens overarch them and believers alike; they bear their trials, or their hearts break, according to their strength. But one pang is spared them, the mystery of God's wrath that He should visit them so sorely.'

'They said unto God, Depart from us; for we desire not the knowledge of Thy ways.'—Job xxi. 14.

'There is a story,' says Mr. C. H. Pearson in his *National Life and Character* (p. 283), 'that an Ultramontane speaker in an Austrian Parliament addressed the House with the interrogation: "I suppose we all believe in the Church?" and was met with a shout from the left, "We believe in Darwin". What is apprehended is that the whole world may come to be divided in the same way, and that the disciples of Darwin—or of Darwin's successor—will be the more numerous.'

References.—XXI. 15.—A. F. Forrest, *Christian World Pulpit*, No. 12, 1890. XXI. 29-31.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. vii. No. 410.

'How then comfort ye me in vain, seeing in your answers there remaineth only falsehood?'—Job xxi. 34.

'Once more,' in this chapter, says Mark Rutherford, 'Job takes his stand on actual eyesight. He relies, too, on the testimony of those who have travelled. He prays his friends to turn away from tradition, from the idle and dead ecclesiastical reiteration of what had long ago ceased to be true, and to look abroad over the world, to hear what those have to say who have been outside the narrow valleys of Uz. Job demands of his opponents that they should come out into the open universe. . . . Herein lies the whole contention of the philosophers against the preachers. The philosophers ask nothing more than that the

conception of God should be wide enough to cover *what we see;* that it shall not be arbitrarily framed to serve certain ends.'

VAIN COMFORT

'How then comfort ye me in vain, seeing in your answers there remaineth falsehood?'—Job xxi. 34.

The gloomiest of all Job's utterances.

I. He no longer cries, My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me? There is that within him that would forbid even this sacred cry to pass his lips. If He who rules the world habitually leaves it to misrule, if it is a world in which favour is lavished on the bad, and the tide of misery flows at random on His best servants, what avails the complaint, the prayer, the appeal, the cry?

II. The righteous must hold on his way, in gloom and darkness. He must do what he can, bear what he can of his burden of sorrow or of doubt. For clouds and darkness are around him, and his eye cannot pierce to the sky that lies behind.

III. He knew not that, as his earlier submissiveness and resignation had won the attention of the dwellers in other spheres than earth, so his wild complaints could win the sympathy and touch the heart of far distant ages. He knew not, but he was soon to be taught, that his Heavenly Father looked gently on His erring child; on his wild perplexity and despairing words; and that the spark of faith, which would not be extinguished, was infinitely dear in that Father's sight.—G. G. Bradley, *Lectures on the Book of Job*, p. 156.

'Is not thy wickedness great? neither is there any end to thine iniquities. For thou hast taken pledge of thy brother for naught, and stripped the naked of their clothing.'—Job xxii. 5 f.

'There was no shadow of truth in the accusation,' Mark Rutherford observes. 'But what a world that must have been when the Church's anathemas were reserved for him who exacted pledges from his brother, who neglected the famishing, and who paid undue respect to the great!'

We require higher tasks because we do not recognize the height of those we have. Trying to be kind and honest seems an affair too simple and too inconsequential for gentlemen of our heroic mould; we had rather set ourselves to something bold, arduous and conclusive; we had rather found a schism or suppress a heresy, cut off a hand or mortify an appetite.—R. L. Stevenson.

'Is not God in the height of heaven? and behold the height of the stars, how high are they!'—Job xxii. 12.

The last word of each of the three parts of the *Divina Commedia* is 'stelle' (stars). To the stars Dante always returned; and they must indeed be the last word of any utterance, be it in glorious verse or humble prose, that is concerned with the mystery of man's relation to the infinite. This it is that, to the thinking mind, lends life at once its zest and its dignity. This it is that reduces to an infinitesimal pettiness all our cupidities, our vanities, our egoisms. —From *Let Youth but Know*, p. 207.

Reference.—XXII. 15-17.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xv. No. 859.

'Who said, What can the Almighty do for us? Yet he filled their houses with good things.'—Job xxii. 17, 18.

It requires greater virtues to support good fortune than bad.—La Rochefoucauld.

Reference.—XXII. 21.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—Job*, p. 49.

'Acquaint now thyself with Him, and be at peace.'—Job xxii. 21.

I think we lose much from beginning our religion at the wrong end, concerning ourselves first and principally, with the idea of what we are or ought to be to God, without sufficiently considering the converse; what He is to us. *Acquaint thyself*, said one of old, *with God, and be at peace.*—Dora Greenwell.

To win true peace, a man needs to feel himself directed, pardoned, and sustained, by a supreme power, to feel himself in the right road, at the point where God would have him be—in order with God and the universe. This faith gives strength and calm. I have not got it. All that is, seems to me arbitrary and fortuitous. It may as well not be, as be. Nothing in my own circumstances seems to me providential.—Amiel.

'Horace,' says Mr. Walter Bagehot in his study of Béranger, 'is but the extreme and perfect type of a whole class of writers, some of whom exist in every literary age, and who give an expression to what we may call the poetry of equanimity, that is, the world's view of itself; its self-satisfaction, its conviction that you must bear what comes, not hope for much, think *some* evil, never be excited, admire little, and then you will be at peace.'

When the Bible says, 'acquaint thyself with God, and be at peace,' it means to say that there is something in God which necessarily gives peace to everyone that knows it. If a soul is not at peace, the only reason is because it does not know God. . . . Since God does love us and has forgiven us, we need not do anything to change God's feelings, and all that is necessary for our peace and confidence is to know what the actual state of God's feelings are towards us, and this is salvation by faith, *c'est-à-dire*, salvation by knowing our real circumstances.—Erskine of Linlathen to *Madame de Staël* (in 1829).

THE TREASURE OF HEAVEN

'And the Almighty shall be thy treasure, and precious silver unto thee.'—Job xxii. 25.

The Almighty shall be thy treasure, or thy gold, as it is in the marginal reading. That, then, is the treasure of heaven. The thirst for gold in the human race is a strong and impelling one. There is no question as to the ardent desire for this precious metal. Is it hurtful in its effects as it is potent in its attraction?

I. It is interesting to find that the first reference to gold in the Bible is of a kind that commends it. 'The gold of that land is good,' we read in the second chapter of Genesis. You will find also that gold in itself is never spoken of in the Bible as bad. It is the love of money, not money itself, that is the root of all evil. Do not, then, let us run down gold in itself; we know the value of it in connexion with human affairs. Here is a poor sufferer languishing upon a bed of sickness. There is hope of recovery if only nourishing food could be obtained. Is it filthy lucre when some one comes to the help of the sufferer with means of procuring the prescribed necessities? Nay, the gold is good.

II. All the same it is only to a certain extent that gold can be a help. No one knows better than a millionaire how little, after all, money can do in the way of bringing true happiness. It is that that Marie Corelli deals with in her work *The Treasure of Heaven*. It is a rather improbable story, but the object of it is plain enough. The writer wishes to bring out the power of love, and the need of the human heart for love, as the one thing of true value in life's pilgrimage. In general we cannot go among our fellows and look too searchingly for a disinterested love on their part. Human kindness would be paralysed if we were to examine too minutely into the spirit in which helpful deeds are either given or received.

III. But there is one great spring of love in the world's story that accounts for untold kindness in the affairs of men. Your eyes must be dim if you cannot see what the love of Christ has done and is doing among men, and your powers of imagination must be very weak if they cannot realize to some extent how bare and grey the world would be but for the sunshine of that love that is shed abroad in many hearts. Apart from that, there is very little truly disinterested love among men. Some humorist has said, that after all, there is a great deal of human nature in man. And one might add on the other side, that after all, there is very little humanity in man. What is there in the savage or the leper, in the criminal, in the morally degraded, that, so far as they themselves are concerned, would command the loving ministrations of others? It may be said that the sentiment of pity should be sufficient, but as the case stands it is a higher force than that that proves to be the impelling power, a force dauntless in the face of perils, and that never leads to despair. Consider all that is done in the way of disinterested love in the world at the present moment, and you must admit that the love of Christ is the secret of most of it. For His sake is the inspiring motive.

AN OUTLINE OF THE DEVOUT LIFE

'For then shalt thou have thy delight in the Almighty, and shalt lift up thy face unto God.

'Thou shalt make thy prayer unto Him, and He shall hear thee, and thou shalt pay thy vows.

'Thou shalt also decree a thing, and it shall be established unto thee: and the light shall shine upon thy ways.

'When men are cast down, thou shalt say: . . . lifting up; and he shall save the humble person.'—Job xxii. 26-29.

I. I note first that life may be full of delight and confidence in God. Now when we 'delight' in a thing, or a person, we recognize that that thing, or person, fits into a cleft in our hearts, and corresponds to some need in our natures. And so these things, the recognition of the supreme sweetness and all perfect adaptation and sufficiency of God to all that I need—these things are the very heart of a man's religion. There is no religion worth naming of which the inmost characteristic is not delight in God.

II. So secondly, note, such a life of delighting in God will be blessed by the frankest intercourse with Him. That is to say, if a man really has set his heart on God, and knows that in Him is all that he needs, then of course he will tell Him everything. A true love to God makes it the most natural thing in the world to put all our circumstances, wants, and feelings into the shape of prayers. All life may become a thank-offering to God. First a prayer, then the answer, then the rendered thank-offering, thus in swift alternation and reciprocity is carried on the commerce between heaven and earth, between man and God.

III. Then, thirdly, such a life will neither know failure nor darkness. To serve Him and to fall into the line of His purpose, and to determine nothing, nor obstinately want anything until we are sure that it is His will—that is the secret of never failing in what we undertake. To the measure of our love for Him are our discernment and realization of what is truly good.

IV. Lastly, such a life will be always hopeful, and finally crowned with deliverance. The devout life is largely independent of circumstances, and is upheld and calmed by a quiet certainty that the general trend of its path is upward, which enables it to trudge hopefully down an occasional dip in the road. It is the privilege of Christian experience to make hope certainty. And the end will vindicate such confidence. For the issue of all will be 'He will save the humble person'; namely, the man who is of the character described and who is 'lowly of eyes' in conscious unworthiness, even while he lifts up his face to God in confidence in his Father's love.—Alexander Maclaren, *The God of the Amen*, p. 118.

References.—XXII. 26.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxxi. No. 1839.

'Thou shalt make thy prayer unto Him, and He shall hear thee.'—Job xxii. 27.

Commenting on Numa's injunction to the Romans to sit after they had offered prayers to the gods, Plutarch observes that 'this act of sitting after prayer was said to indicate that such as were good people would obtain a solid and lasting fulfilment of their petitions.

Reference.—XXII. 29.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xiii. No. 731.

'He shall deliver even him that is not innocent; yea, he shall be delivered through the cleanness of Thine hands.'—Job xxii. 30.

I cannot contentedly frame a prayer for myself in particular, without a catalogue for my friends . . .; and if God hath vouchsafed an ear to my supplications, there are surely many happy that never saw me, and enjoy the blessing of mine unknown devotion.—Sir Thomas Browne, *Religio Medici* (pt. ii.).

References.—XXIII.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxxviii. No. 2272. *Ibid.* vol. xliii. No. 2546. *Ibid.* vol. xlvii. No. 2732.

'Oh that I knew where I might find Him! that I might come even to His seat!'—Job xxiii. 3.

'I remember one day in the early spring-tide,' Tolstoy writes in his *Confessions*, 'I was listening to the sounds of a forest, and thinking only of one thing, a thing of which I had thought for two years on end—I was again seeking for a God. . . . I remembered that I had lived only when I believed in a God. As it was before, so was it now; I had but to know God, in order to live; I had but to forget Him, to cease believing in Him, and I died. What was the meaning of this despair and renewal? I do not live when I lose faith in the existence of a God; long ago I should have killed myself, had I not had a dim hope of finding Him. I only live in reality when I feel and seek Him. "What more then do I seek?" a voice seemed to cry within me. "This is He, He without whom there is no life. To know God and to live are one. God is life. Live to seek God and life will not be without Him." Whereupon, stronger than ever life rose up in me, and the light that shone then has never left me. Thus was I saved from suicide. . . . The state of mind in which I was then may be compared to this. It was as if I had suddenly found myself sitting in a boat which had been pushed off from a shore unknown to me, as if I had been shown the direction of the opposite shore, furnished with oars, and left alone. I ply the oars as best I can. I row on, but the further I go the stronger becomes the current that sweeps me out of my course, and the oftener I meet with other navigators also carried away by the stream. From all sides these cheerful and triumphant mariners, as they row or sail down the stream, call to me that this is the one course. I believe them and drift down with them, carried so far that I can hear the roar of the rapids in which I am bound to perish. Already I see boats wrecked there. Then I come to myself. Before me I see nothing but destruction. I am hurrying towards it. What, then, am I to do? On looking behind me, I see a countless number of boats not drifting but battling with the current, and then I remember all about the shore, the ocean, the true course; all at once I start to row hard up the stream, towards the shore.

'The shore is God, the course and current, tradition, the oars, the free-will given me to make for the shore and seek union with the Deity. And thus it was that the vital force revived within me, and once more I began to live.'

It is the infinite for which we hunger, and we ride gladly upon every little wave that promises to bear us towards it.—Havelock Ellis.

Were the soul separate from the body, and with one glance of thought should start beyond the bounds of creation, should it for millions of years continue its progress through infinite space with the same activity, it would still find itself within the embrace of its Creator, and encompassed round with the immensity of the Godhead. Whilst we are in the body He is not less present with us, because He is concealed from us. 'Oh that I knew where I might find Him!' (says Job). 'Behold, I go forward, but He is not there; and backward, but I cannot perceive Him: on the left hand where He worketh, but I cannot behold Him: He hideth Himself on the right hand, that I cannot see Him.' In short, reason as well as revelation assures us, that He cannot be absent from us, notwithstanding He is undiscovered by us.—Addison in *The Spectator* (No. 566).

I know not how it is, but the more the realities of heaven are clothed with obscurity the more they delight and attract; and nothing so much heightens longing as such tender refusal.—St. Bernard.

Quoting this passage in his *Religious Aspect of Philosophy* (pp. 218 f.), Prof. Royce comments: 'The moral insight cares not for individual rewards. . . . Job seeks, in his consciousness of moral integrity, for outer support in the midst of his sufferings. Now, whatever he may think about rewards, they are not only rewards that he seeks. He wants a vindicator, a righteous, all-knowing judge, to arise, that can bear witness how upright he has been; such a vindicator he wants to see face to face, that he may call upon him as a beholder of what has actually happened. . . . The knowledge such as a Job sought, the knowledge that there is in the universe some consciousness which sees and knows all reality, including ourselves, for which therefore all the good and evil of our lives is plain fact—this knowledge would be a religious support to the moral consciousness.'

'Why is God so far from us' is the agonizing question which has depressed so many hearts, so long as we know there were hearts, has puzzled so many intellects, since intellects began to puzzle themselves. But the moral part of God's character could not be shown to us with sensible, conspicuous evidence; it could not be shown to us as Fleet Street is shown to us, without impairing the first pre-requisite of disinterestedness, and the primary condition of man's virtue. And if the moral aspect of God's character must of necessity be somewhat hidden from us, other aspects of it must equally be hidden.—Bagehot on *The Ignorance of Man.*

All here seems so permanent, so still, so secure, and yet we are spinning and whirling through space to some unhuman goal. What are the thoughts of the mighty unresting Heart, to whose vastness and agelessness the whole mass of these flying and glowing suns are

but as a handful of dust that a boy flings upon the air? How has He set me here, a tiny moving atom, yet more sure of my own minute identity than I am of all the vast panorama of things which lies outside of me? Has He indeed a tender and a patient thought of me, the frail creature whom He has moulded and made? I do not doubt it; I look up among the star-sown spaces, and the old aspiration rises in my heart, 'Oh that I knew where I might find Him! that I might come even into His presence!' How would I go, like a tired and sorrowful child to his father's knee, to be comforted and encouraged, in perfect trust and love, to be raised in His arms, to be held to His heart! He would but look in my face, and I should understand without a question, without a word!—A. C. Benson, *From a College Window*, pp. 325, 326.

Compare Butler's Thirteenth Sermon.

References.—XXIII. 3.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxxviii. No. 2272. *Ibid.* vol. xlv. No. 2615. XXIII. 3, 4.—G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 231. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xii. No. 700.

'I would order my cause before Him, and fill my mouth with arguments.'—Job xxiii. 4.

The *Book of Job* and the *Prometheus* of Æschylus may be placed side by side as the two protests of the ancient world against Divine oppression—the one the protest of monotheism, the other of polytheism. . . . Just as Prometheus at the outset maintains silence—one of those eloquent Æschylean silences—so too Job held his peace 'seven days and seven nights'; and then, like Prometheus, reviews his own life, proudly proclaiming his own innocence.—S. H. Butcher.

References.—XXIII. 6.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. iii. No. 108. XXIII. 8-10.—*Ibid.* vol. xlvii. No. 2732.

THE GOSPEL OF THE LEFT HAND

'On the left hand, where He doth work.'—Job xxiii. 9.

There is great insight in that idea. It is no mere casual remark. Why did the Spirit of the Lord inspire Job to make that impressive allusion? Surely it was to tell us, to our great and endless comfort, that there is a gospel of the left hand. On the unfortunate side of things we may expect to find the operation of God. Job is describing his unsuccessful quest of God. 'Behold, I go forward, but He is not there; and backward, but I cannot perceive Him. On the left hand, where He doth work, but I cannot behold Him. He hideth Himself on the right hand, that I cannot see Him.'

It means much that Job so emphatically asserts that God works on the left hand of things. 'I go—on the left hand,' says the troubled patriarch. We all do, and we often do. But we shall find that God doth work there. This is the gospel of the left hand, and we greatly need it. It is easy to find a gospel of the right hand. But much of life is spent on the left hand, and a gospel of the left hand is precious as rubies.

I. God Works on the Undesired Side of Things.—'The left hand' has always and everywhere typified what is undesired. 'The left' is the term by which the Opposition is described in the Parliaments of the Continent of Europe; and I have not observed that statesmen and politicians are eager to be numbered among 'the left'.

In temporal matters we often discover the operation of our loving God where all is adverse. Sinister experiences prove to be Divine experiences. When we are where we deprecate being we behold the handiwork of God. When health fails, when business deteriorates, when friends cast us asunder, when sorrow darkens our home, when causes languish which we dearly love—on the left hand God doth work. What a grateful gospel this! How sanguine it should make us! Here is a fountain of sanest optimism. We need not dread being driven to the left hand of life, if there we meet our redeeming God. The undesired is desirable if there the Father worketh.

And this is equally true in spiritual things. Our soul is too often on the left hand. But even there God works. He is ready to pardon. Mercy is His supreme delight. And our grateful song shall presently arise, 'He restoreth my soul'.

II. God Works on the Awkward Side of Things.—'The left hand' is the popular parable of the awkward. It is a dictionary's definition of the word 'awkward' that it is 'not dexterous'. A child knows that dexterity is right-handedness. So the right hand speaks of what is graceful, facile, and the left hand of that which is awkward. How strange the persistent ill-repute of the left hand! The 'left-handed man' is the awkward, clumsy, resourceless man. Many of our current phrases illustrate this idea of the left hand as the symbol of the awkward.

We are ever apt to be called to the awkward experiences of life. Many of us are, perhaps, at this moment, most awkwardly situated. Our location is 'on the left hand'. But God is located there too! It is 'where He doth work'. Life's awkward spheres would be unendurable but for this. The redemption of the left hand is the active presence of Jehovah.

III. God Works on the Neglected Side of Things.—The left hand is the abiding symbol of the inauspicious. Who goes to the left hand if he can help it? It is a region shunned of all. No sphere is so unpopular. Avoid it, pass it by, is the general counsel; and it is a counsel thoroughly well acted upon.

But on the left hand '*He* doth work'. He loves to cultivate a neglected land. No man's land is His Paradise of Delights. Whom man forsakes the pitiful God assists. Where others are wanting, and when others are wanting, He is sweetly in evidence. The country that is not watered with the foot the Lord waters out of His chambers.

IV. On the Unsuccessful Side of Things God Works.—From the beginning believers in 'luck' have deplored and denounced the left hand. They have always described it as unlucky. When the

Roman augur found his birds appearing on the left hand they were unlucky omens to him. The left hand is, and always has been, the sign of the unsuccessful.

Instinctively we feel we need a God who will work in the latitudes of the unsuccessful. And such a God is the God of the Bible. Many are ready to help the successful, till the familiar proverb is substantially justified that 'Nothing succeeds like success'. But God intervenes in behalf of those who fail. He cares for the beaten-in-life. He works for the disconsolate.

V. God Works on the Unhopeful Side of Things.—The left hand is the region where hope is abandoned. It is the country unillumined by the kindly light of anticipation. But where human hope is wanting God is not wanting. Job knew, if ever man did, what it was to be on the left hand, but he declares, 'He knoweth the way that I take. When He hath tried me I shall come forth as gold.' On the left hand he discovered the effectual working of God.

VI. God Works on the Undiscerning Side of Things.—The left hand has always been regarded as figurative of what is dull, stupid, unapprehensive. Job complained: 'I go . . . on the left hand, where He doth work, but I cannot behold Him.' Many, when they go on the left hand, cannot behold God and His working. But He works where undiscerned. Like Job, we may not see Him or His operations, but when we are on the left hand we are in the privileged area of His ministrations. He is near many who do not behold Him. Many are saved who do not know that they are saved. God works in the interests of multitudes who cannot behold Him. O soul, opaque and dejected, know that God is working where thou dwellest. Our vision may be dim, but His work is glorious.—Dinsdale T. Young, *The Gospel of the Left Hand*, p. 3.

'He Hideth Himself on the right hand, that I cannot see Him.'
—Job xxiii. 9.

A World without a contingency or an agony could have no hero and no saint, and enable no Son of Man to discover that he is a Son of God. But for the suspended plot that is folded in every life, history is a dead chronicle of what was known before as well as after. . . . There is no Epic of the certainties; and no lyric without the surprise of sorrow and the sigh of fear.—Martineau.

References.—XXIII. 10.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxxviii. No. 2098. XXIII. 11, 12.—*Ibid.* vol. xxvi. No. 1526. XXIII. 13.—*Ibid.* vol. vii. No. 406. XXIV.—*Ibid.* vol. xlvii. No. 2732.

'They are wet with the showers of the mountains.'—Job xxiv. 8.

In his *Week on the Concord* (Tuesday), Thoreau quotes this passage from Belknap, the historian of the State, upon the mountains and the rain: 'In the mountainous parts of the country the ascent of vapours, and their formation into clouds, is a curious and entertaining object. The vapours are seen rising in small columns like smoke from many chimneys. When risen to a certain height, they spread, meet, condense, and are attracted to the mountains where they either distil in gentle dews, and replenish the springs, or descend in showers, accompanied by thunder. After short intermissions, the process is repeated many times in the course of a summer day, affording to travellers a lively illustration of what is observed in the book of Job—"They are wet with the showers of the mountains".'

'Yet God imputeth it not for folly.'—Job xxiv. 12.

I see every day in the world a thousand acts of oppression which I should like to resent, but I cannot afford to play the Quixote. Why are the English to be the sole vindicators of the human race? Ask Mr. Meynell how many persons there are within fifteen miles of him who deserve to be horsewhipped, and who would be very much improved by such a process. But every man knows he must keep down his feelings, and endure the spectacle of triumphant folly and tyranny.—Sydney Smith to *Mrs. Meynell* (in 1823).

'In the dark they dig through houses, which they had marked for themselves in the daytime.'—Job xxiv. 16.

What have they, 'i.e. the wicked,' to supply their innumerable defects, and to make them terrible even to the firmest minds? *One* thing, and *one* thing only—but that one thing is worth a thousand—they have *energy*.—Burke, *Remarks on Policy of Allies.*

Speaking once of a robbery, Sydney Smith observed: 'It is Bacon, I think, who says so beautifully, "He that robs in darkness breaks God's lock". How fine that is.'

References.—XXIV. 18.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons for the Church Year*, vol. ii. p. 202.

'God giveth them to be in security, and they rest thereon; but His eyes are upon their ways. They are exalted; yet a little while, and they are gone; yea, they are brought low.'
—Job xxiv. 23, 24.

Without any touch of envy, a temperate and well-governed mind looks down on such as are exalted with success, with a certain shame for the imbecility of human nature, that can so far forget how liable it is to calamity, as to grow giddy with only the suspense of sorrow, which is the portion of all men.—Steele in *The Spectator* (No. 312).

WHENCE DID JOB DRAW HIS PICTURES?

'And if it be not so now, who will make me a liar, and make my speech nothing worth?'—Job xxiv. 25.

Job has once more protested his innocence of any conscious offence that could have drawn down God's anger; and once more, with an almost passionless calm, he has followed out, to their terrible result, the suggestions of his friends, and the promptings of his own bewildered brain.

I. If God's justice is to be measured, as his friends tell him, by the measure of happiness or of misery dealt out to every man on this earthly scene, then it is an evil world, and Job has a weight on his soul, heavier than any burden which his own pain or

misery can lay upon him. For the world is a scene of suffering, oppression, violence, and wrong; and the conclusion to which this points is very terrible. You see at once its full force; you see how he lays his hand, this saint of the Old Testament, on the world-old problem of the existence of evil.

II. The author of the book must have been familiar, as we see, with phases of experience that lay beyond the circle of Arab life. The crowded city, the very factory, we might almost say, the miseries of the cultivators of field and vineyard, the hard usurer, the oppressed and toiling masses—these are pictures which can hardly have fallen on his mental retina from a mere effort of the imagination. From what age, from what scene, we ask, and ask in vain, comes this mysterious figure of the Arab patriarch?

III. The question occurs with increasing interest as we listen to his words, words that are the expression of no extinct or obsolete range of ideas, but of feelings that are as strong and living to-day, in and outside the crowded capitals of Europe, as they were when they first found utterance. What a fresh force they lend to the words of Him to whom the poor man's cause was dear. 'The poor ye have always with you.'—G. G. Bradley, *Lectures on the Book of Job*, p. 212.

References.—XXV. 2.—J. Vaughan, *Fifty Sermons*, 1874, p. 72. XXV. 3.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons for Some Feast Days in the Christian Year*, p. 271.

JUSTIFICATION

'How then can man be justified with God.'—Job xxv. 4.

Conversion is a human act. It is the turning of the sinner in will and in act to his God. Justification is a Divine act, or rather a series of acts. Man turns, but it is only God who justifies.

I. It is plain that when summoned to and standing before God's judgment-seat, no sorrow, however deep and real, for the past; no promise, however reliable, for the future, will suffice us. Plainly, then, the justification of the sinner is not an act of his own. It is God that justifieth. We cannot, as innocent, claim justification; but we may, as guilty, crave pardon. He can forgive us our sins. He can acquit us for the sake of another, not our own. This is what God's justification in the first instance means. It is pardon, it is remission of sins.

II. Then comes the difficult question: How can God's mercy be reconciled with His justice? How can God justly pardon sinners? That was a truth hidden from the ages and generations, and revealed to us in Jesus Christ. We are justified freely by God's grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus. Thus, sinful in ourselves, we are justified in Christ, as joined to Christ, as part of Christ. The justification of man is thus the Divine acquittal of man for the Son of Man's sake. God accepts us in His Beloved Son, who for our sins deserved to be rejected.

III. But we must not stop here. God's purpose, God's redeeming and sanctifying work, for and in us all has this great end and aim to make us holy. Human happiness, apart from holiness, is not God's purpose. Holiness, without happiness, is indeed, though men do not realize it, a practical impossibility. God regards us as part of the new creation. He pardons us for the sake of Him to Whom we are united. We are taught that justification, like sanctification, is a work of the Spirit of God. God's mercy is man's only plea. Death is sin's wages. Eternal life is God's gift.—F. Watson, *The Christian Life Here and Hereafter*, p. 15.

'Behold even to the moon, and it shineth not; yea, the stars are not pure in His sight. How much less man?'—Job xxv. 5, 6.

The penitential tone of all Christian devotion bears witness to the conscious depth of the moral life,—to the beauty of God's holiness that makes a blot of our saintliest light ('beholding the moon and it shineth not'). In all things, the sense of *shortcoming* has pervaded the consciousness of modern times. Martineau.

References.—XXV. 13.—W. Sinclair, *Words from St. Paul's*, p. 32.

APPEARANCES

'He hangeth the earth upon nothing.'—Job xxvi. 7.

Let us see how oftentimes appearances are false. A great many things seem to be . . . and are not. We think we see; we say, Seeing is believing: but it is not.

It does seem as though the Lord did hang the world or the earth upon nothing. But what if 'nothing' be greater than something? It would be like the Bible thus to educate us.

I. Now take an instance or two in illustration of the fact that the Bible often says things which it means to be taken in the contrary way. 'The children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness' (Matt. viii. 12). Is it possible that the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness? It is not. Then what are we to make of these words? Exactly what the Speaker intended us to make of them; He uses a figure of speech, He Himself is a living parable. That is what we forget; He did not make parables, He was Himself a Parable. What, then, if He always spake in parables? The apparent children of the kingdom, the persons who set up paper claims to be in the family; the persons who professed to be children, and so much professed it as to deny that any other were children except themselves. This was Christ's way of describing a life of hypocrisy and appearance only, a cloaked life, rottenness clad in purple, pestilence covered with a robe of silk; so-called, self-called children of the kingdom—oh, the mockery of that tone as He uttered the words!—shall be cast out into outer darkness.

II. Take another instance given by the Apostle Paul himself—1 Corinthians i. 21, 25—two instances almost in the same line—'the foolishness of preaching' and 'the foolishness of God'. Surely these terms are so startling as to be self-annotating. The meaning is so deeply concealed as to be to spiritual

discernment patent and almost glaring. 'The foolishness of God;' that is to say, man looking upon the apparatus, says, The whole thing is absolutely impossible; that you should simply send forth men without swords, without purses, almost without sandals to their feet, and hardly a staff to his hand has the apostle, and he is going forth to pull down the empires that are of granite and gold and wrought iron. And he will do it. Things are not what they seem.

III. Then, again, we read in Job xxvi. 11, 'The pillars of heaven trembled'. They did nothing of the sort; they looked as if they trembled. It was to indicate a great action on the other side of things; compared with the greater thunder, the immenser energy, it seemed as if the very pillars of heaven trembled, reeled, and would fall; the pillared firmament was rottenness, and earth's base built on stubble. Nothing of the kind. The geometry of the universe is perfectly safe. But it seemed as if it were so. Ay, that seeming will be the ruin of us all, if we do not take care. 'There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof is death.'

Dozens of these verses could be cited, and if they were set in consolidated array, they would all speak with one voice, saying in effect, Beware of appearances; beware of simulations; beware even of language that seems to be perfectly plain and clear; do not deceive yourselves by probabilities and by phantasmagoria of divers colour and action; always lay hold of the upper wisdom, and in the strength of that copartnery read even the simplest document which a man sends to you; the signature may be right, but it may be subscribed to a document that is full of grammatical puzzle and contradiction; pray for the discerning mind, the penetrating soul, the all but infallible intuition and instinct.—Joseph Parker, *City Temple Pulpit*, vol. vii. p. 205.

THE VOICES OF GOD

'Lo, these are but the outskirts of His ways: and how small a whisper do we hear of Him! But the thunder of His power who can understand?'—Job xxvi. 14.

All the billows of trouble had swept over the heart of Job. His riches had taken wings and fled away; his physical strength had become as weakness itself until the grasshopper was a burden; his good name had vanished; the friends that at first praised him remained only to curse. And he bemoaned the silence of God in these hours of trouble. Sooner or later in life we all feel what Job felt—stars over us silent; graves under us silent; all the presences around about us—all are silent.

I. God's Effort to Speak to Us.—Now I suppose your scholars are right in thinking that some four thousand years have passed away since Job uttered that sentence, and men are a little inclined to believe that Job over-estimated the silence of God, and all our philosophers, and our poets, and our practical men are a little bit in danger in the hour of trouble of thinking that the silence is more marvellous than the speech. And perhaps when we come back again to larger knowledge we must think with Jesus Christ that it is the speech of God that is the wonderful thing—that instead of God being the silent one, He is the one Being who has worn His heart upon His sleeve, unrolled all His secrets, and syllables are spoken unto us by ten thousand thousand voices, and that it is man's ear that is deaf and does not listen to the sweetest voice that was ever heard, that it is man's eye which is blind to the marvellous writings that are yonder on pages of blue, that it is man's heart that is dead and utterly inert in the presence of One who is trying to speak unto His children in all these various voices.

II. Our Deafness—not God's Silence.—God is the world's great artist framing Himself forth in the landscapes. God is the world's great harvest-maker expressing Himself in the fruits and the flowers and the blossoms. God is the first great poet and philosopher and speaker. Patriots, martyrs, poets, statesmen and heroes—they all borrow their qualities and heroism from Almighty God, they dim the qualities in borrowing them from God. It is the pathos of God who is speaking that is manifest in our unwillingness to hear. We have forgotten about His voices.

III. God's Voice in Nature's Laws.—Law is simply God's way of doing things. The laws of Almighty God are around us, and they express His Divine will, so that when we come to study the great laws of Nature, we know that this is God speaking. When therefore we speak of the sciences we mean a copy of the laws of God. Geology copies God's handwriting on the pages of His rocks; astronomy copies God's handwriting and voice on the pages of His stars; physiology copies God's speech uttered through the human body; psychology—it is a copy of the laws of the human intellect; art—it is a copy of God's beautiful thoughts; tools—they are God's useful thoughts organized into terms of steel or iron or wood, and they give us these marvellous textures. These laws of nature through land and sea and sky, through all the fruits, through all that lends us beauty and truth—they are the voices of God speaking to us. We never can escape from Him. The angel of His goodness goes before us; the angel of His mercy follows after us. If we have a mind that is sensitive to His overtures of love, then the manifold voices of God in physical nature are the marvellous fact and event of human life.—N. Dwight Hillis, *The Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxxiv. 1908, p. 65.

'Lo, these are but the outskirts of His ways: and how small a whisper do we hear of Him! But the thunder of His power who can understand?'—Job xxvi. 14.

'Science,' observes Herbert Spencer, 'realizes to us in a way which nothing else can, the littleness of human intelligence in the face of that which transcends human intelligence. While towards the traditions and authorities of men its attitude may be proud, before the impenetrable veil which hides the Absolute, its attitude is humble—a true pride and a true humility. Only the sincere man of science (and by

this title we do not mean the mere calculator of distances, or analyser of compounds, or labeller of species; but him who through lower truths seeks higher, and eventually the highest)—only the genuine man of science, we say, can truly know how utterly beyond, not only human knowledge but human conception, is the Universal Power of which Nature, and Life, and Thought, are manifestations.'

'He dreamed of the grandeur and presence of God,' says Victor Hugo of Bishop Myriel in *Les Misérables* (chap. I.); 'of future eternity, that strange mystery; of past eternity, that even stranger mystery; of all the infinities that buried themselves before his eyes in all directions; and without seeking to comprehend the incomprehensible, he gazed at it. He did not study God; He was dazzled by Him.'

Say what we can about God, say our best, we have yet, Israel knew, to add instantly: 'Lo, these are *fringes* of His ways; but how little a portion is heard of him!'—Matthew Arnold.

Most people with whom I talk, men and women even of some originality and genius, have their scheme of the universe all cut and dried—very *dry*, I assure you, to hear, dry enough to burn, dry-rotted and powder-pest, methinks—which they set up between you and them in the shortest intercourse. . . . The perfect God in His revelations of Himself has never got to the length of one such proposition as you, his prophets, state. Have you learned the alphabet of heaven and can count three? Do you know the number of God's family? Do you presume to fable of the ineffable? Pray, what geographer are you, that speak of heaven's topography?—Thoreau, *A Week on the Concord.*

References.—XXVII.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xliv. No. 2557. XXVII. 2.—*Ibid.* XXVII. 5—A. G. Mortimer, *The Church's Lessons*, vol. i. p. 165.

'My righteousness I hold fast, and will not let it go.'—Job xxvii. 6.

Human nature is a noble and beautiful thing; not a foul nor a base thing. . . . Have faith that God made you upright, though *you* have sought out many inventions; so you will strive daily to become more what your Maker meant and means you to be, and daily gives you also the power to be,—and you will cling more and more to the nobleness and virtue that is in you, saying, 'My righteousness I hold fast, and will not let it go'.—Ruskin in *The Crown of Wild Olive.*

The great thing in the world is not so much to seek happiness as to earn peace and self-respect.—Huxley.

Reference.—XXVII. 10.—H. J. Wilmot-Buxton, *Sunday Lessons*, p. 135.

'Surely there is a mine for silver, and a place for gold where they refine.'—Job xxviii. 1.

Speaking in *Sesame and Lilies* of gold, the physical type of wisdom, Ruskin observes: 'There seems, to you and me, no reason why the electric forces of the earth should not carry whatever there is of gold within it at once to the mountain tops, so that kings and people might know that all the gold they could get was there; and without any trouble of digging, or anxiety, or chance, or waste of time, cut it away, and coin as much as they needed. But Nature does not manage it so. She puts it into little fissures in the earth, nobody knows where; you may dig long and find none; you must dig painfully to find any. And it's just the same with men's best wisdom. When you come to a good book, you must ask yourself, 'Am I inclined to work as an Australian miner would?'

Reference.—XXVIII. 1, 2, 5.—E. A. Askew, *Sermons Preached in Greystoke Church*, p. 233.

THE KNOWN AND THE UNKNOWN

'There is a path which no fowl knoweth, and which the vulture's eye hath not seen.'—Job xxviii. 7.

The Divine Speaker knows what He is talking about. We read in the fiftieth Psalm, 'I know all the fowls of the mountains'—I made their wings, I kindled the fire of their eyes, I know their power of sight and of flight: there is a way which no fowl knoweth, and there is a path which the vulture's eye hath not seen. Let us insert a word that will give emphasis to the expression: There is a path which even the vulture's eye hath not seen: the greatest eye, the eye that looks from horizon to horizon as if it were but a handbreadth in space; the eye that drinks in the morning and dares the noonday: even that eye has not seen all the paths which radiate from the throne of God.

I. It is something in our highest education to know the limitations within which we live.

Until we know all we should not pass judgment upon all. That would seem to be a sensible proposition; it would apply to physics and to commerce and to daily experience and to religion. If we would carry up some of our maxims from the market-place into the Church, we should often be surprised at the clear, sound rationalism, or best reason, of the Christian faith. A man must be God to deny God. It is not within our limited lips to throw a contradiction wide enough for the subject upon the infinite proposition that God is. There is a way which the fowl doth not know, there is a path which even the vulture's eye hath not seen; along that road and along that path when you are permitted to enter you may discover the sanctuary of God, the shekinah that lights the mornings of the universe. It is always distressing, if it were worth being distressed about, that ignorance should pronounce universal and final judgments.

II. One of the first conditions of true knowledge is to know that knowledge is limited. You begin your education most fruitfully and satisfactorily when you lay it down as a certainty that for the present some things are inaccessible and unknowable. Religion is the best economist of time. True piety is the least wasteful of all mental exercises: it knows what it can do, what it may do, what it ought to do, what it cannot do, what it is not expected to do.

III. The very keenest sight known to men requires assistance. That may be a very humbling confession,

but it is in strict harmony with fact. Even the vulture's eye hath not seen every path, and even the human eye has not seen everything which it is supposed to have seen. Sometimes that wondrous organism, the human eye, has to buy itself a little piece of glass in order to see how to write a letter to a child.

IV. To know is the blessing. Not the quantity we know, but the fact that we can know—that is the distinguishing attribute of man. To know is better than knowledge; the power of knowledge is greater than the acquisition that is secured. The soul is greater than any education it can receive. The text is the answer to intellectual ambition. There is a point to stop at; there is a place to sit down because to attempt to advance would be to attempt an impossibility. The text is, secondly, an encouragement to beginners in spiritual inquiry. They may say to themselves, We are not expected to know everything; we are privileged to know a little, we can make certain advance and progress in the Divine kingdom, but we are severely limited, and beyond our limitation we have no responsibility. And, thirdly, the text imposes no limit of moral excellence. Where is there a text that says you are good enough, stand still? There is no such text. There is a text which says, 'Grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ'. When we have obeyed that text fully, we may ask for another.—Joseph Parker, *City Temple Pulpit*, vol. i. p. 10.

Reference.—XXVIII. 7, 8.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xlix. No. 2862.

'He putteth forth His hand upon the flinty rock; He overturneth the mountains by the roots.'—Job xxviii. 9.

'The whole book of Job,' says Ruskin in his *Lectures on Architecture and Painting* (p. 79), 'appears to have been chiefly written and placed in the inspired volume in order to show the value of natural history, and its power on the human heart. I cannot pass by it without pointing out the evidences of the beauty of the country that Job inhabited.' Then, after pointing out it was an arable country (i. 14), a mountain country (vi. 15-17), and a rocky country (viii. 16-17, v. 23), 'visited, like the valleys of Switzerland by convulsions and falls of mountains' (xiv. 18, v. 9; xxviii. 9), he concludes: 'You see, Job's country was one like your own, full of pleasant brooks and rivers, rushing among the rocks, and of all other sweet and noble elements of landscape. The magnificent allusions to natural scenery throughout the book are therefore calculated to touch the heart to the end of time.'

'His eye seeth every precious thing.'—Job xxviii. 10.

But there are a great many things in this world at least, that are not 'precious' at all: indifference and ease, which are burdens upon the life of the world; vanity, selfishness, and malice, which are its poison and pestilence. These things also are not unseen by Him: lurk they under ever so fair a disguise, the cloak of wisdom, the decencies of wealth, or the gloss of an untarnished name, He looks at them with Divine sorrow and displeasure, and leaves them till they turn and look at Him. It is the shadow of His glance that falls on them; for evil ever hides itself and skulks before His holy face; and a man whose life and thought are only for himself feels hurt and flurried at the name of God, and helpless as in a strange land without an interpreter. But it is with a soft light and a tender meaning that 'His eye seeth every *precious* thing'; drawn thither by likeness and the affinity of love, and resting there with pure content. His perception singles out the jewels of the universe. . . . God, in the midst of a mixed universe, Lord of the eternal contest between good and ill, has an eye for 'every precious thing,' mingles with every noble strife; burns in the blush of holy shame, aspires in our heavenward aspirations, and weeps in our repentant tears.—Martineau.

Reference.—XXVIII. 10.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xvii. No. 985.

'But where shall wisdom be found? and where is the place of understanding? . . . God understandeth the way thereof, and He knoweth the place thereof. . . . And unto man He said, Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding.'—Job xxviii. 12-28.

Before quoting this passage in his *Notes Upon Life* (pp. 104 f.), Sir Henry Taylor writes: 'Wisdom will have no hold on the heart in which joy is not tempered by fear. The fear of the Lord, we know, is the beginning of it; and some hallowing and chastening influences of fear will always go along with it. Fear, indeed, is the mother of foresight; spiritual fear, of a foresight that reaches beyond the grave; temporal fear, of a foresight that falls short; but without fear there is neither the one foresight nor the other; and as pain has been truly said to be the deepest thing in our nature, so it is fear that will bring the depths of our nature within our knowledge.'

THE MORAL GROUNDWORK OF CLERICAL TRAINING

'But where shall wisdom be found? and where is the place of understanding.'—Job xxviii. 12.

The idea of Wisdom fills a great place in the mind of the Old Testament. How to acquire wisdom; how wisdom will be rewarded; how the history of Israel and Israel's saints and heroes, is a long illustration of the power of wisdom: these are the topics of the book which bears its name. There are no allusions to the Law of Sinai, to the promises, to the history, to the worship of Israel, in the whole compass of the book. In this somewhat negative but very important manner, the writings of the Kochmah in the Old Testament are a direct anticipation of the Gospel. They name and centre in a word to which Christ alone has done justice; it is His Name from Everlasting—the Wisdom of the Father.

I. Where shall wisdom be found? Wisdom is here the Ideal according to which God created the world. When God thus gave outward form to Wisdom in creating the world, He also gave man the law by obeying which man corresponds to what he was meant to be in the archetypal world—and par-

ticipates, after his measure, in wisdom. A comprehensive intellectual apprehension of the real nature of things is beyond man's mental grasp. He cannot without a revelation really contemplate things as they are—as they are seen by God: but he can correspond to the realities as God sees them by obedience to elementary moral truth—by fear of the perfect moral Being—by practical renunciation of evil. Dogmatic wisdom has its root and beginning in the culture of those moral and spiritual sensibilities which Scripture calls the 'fear of the Lord'.

II. If a theological college is to recognize the principle, that spiritual and theological wisdom must have a basis in conduct, in life, in conscience, it will be necessary for such an institution to develop at least two things: first, a system, secondly, a spirit or atmosphere. Not merely study, but prayer, meditation, if need be, confession, exercise, sleep, recreation, should, as far as possible, be ordered by rule. A house which has a religious purpose should be a house of rule; it should be governed by system. But system alone will not suffice. A theological college must develop a spirit—a moral and religious atmosphere—which will justify and interpret its system to those who live in it. A spirit which is earnest and practical tends insensibly to clothe itself with system.—H. P. Liddon, *Clerical Life and Work*, p. 73.

MAN'S HIGHEST WISDOM

'But where shall wisdom be found? and where is the place of understanding? And unto man He said, Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding.'—Job xxviii. 12, 28.

Here we have a human question, and a Divine answer. Let us consider—

I. The Human Question.

(*a*) By whom was the question put? It was originally put by Job, a prince in the land of Uz.

(*b*) Under what circumstances was the question put? Here you have a man without a book, without a Bible, without even the fragment of a Bible, striving to solve the mysteries of being and of the universe.

(*c*) What is the purport of the question? The key to the long discussion in the book of Job may be found in the question which Satan, the great accuser, puts to God. 'Doth Job fear God for nought?' Satan suggests that Job's religion was selfish, that he was good simply because his goodness was marked by temporal blessings. He boldly asserts that if God would only withdraw these external blessings Job would cast off his allegiance, and curse God to His face. The question is thus distinctly raised, Can goodness exist irrespective of reward?

II. The Divine Answer is Manifold.

(*a*) Negative. The wisdom which surrounds the mystery of the Divine dealings man cannot obtain. Neither the living nor the dead, neither the visible nor the invisible, neither the occupants of the air, nor the earth, nor destruction can supply us with the wisdom which solves the mysteries of the works and ways of God with man upon the earth.

(*b*) Job now tells us that God alone possesses this wisdom. The darkness in which God enshrouds Himself may be bewildering to us, but it hides nothing from Him.

(*c*) We have God's solemn announcement that man's highest wisdom consists in reverent obedience to that great God who works these mysteries. The spiritual supernatural truth of Christianity cannot be apprehended by the intellect. If you cannot know the things by the medium of the bodily senses how then are they to be known? You must put yourself into harmony with God, love what He loves, hate what He hates.—R. Roberts, *My Closing Ministry*.

Reference.—XXVIII. 12.—J. Vaughan, *Sermons* (10th Series), p. 133.

WHAT MONEY CANNOT BUY

'It cannot be gotten for gold.'—Job xxviii. 15.

I have been much impressed of late with the way in which the Bible depreciates money. In this, as in most things, it is remote from the spirit of the world. The Word of God has often an almost contempt for money. Men make it an idol. The Bible esteems it as vanity. Something of this healthy disesteem of money would be a benediction to multitudes to-day when money is frequently held in supreme adoration.

Money and gems are held cheaply in the colloquy of which the text forms part. It appears that there are seven Hebrew words for gold, and no less than four of them appear in five verses of this dramatic chapter. The gold alluded to in the sentence before us is refined gold—gold, laid up in treasures. And heavenly wisdom, true religion, 'cannot be gotten' even for such 'gold'.

Delitzsch's rendering is, 'Pure gold cannot be given for it'.

I. Life's Most Excellent Things 'Cannot be Gotten for Gold'.—'Money answereth all things' the cynic affirms. And yet, though most men believe this, we frequently are disillusioned. When we come to reflect and observe, our estimate of what money can obtain is greatly modified. Not only is it true that some things cannot be bought with money, but it is also true that the best things of life defy purchase. They have no equivalent in finance. Gold has no relation to them. It is a fact easily observed that of many a noble thing it is true that 'it cannot be gotten for gold'.

II. The Greatest of all Things 'Cannot be Gotten for Gold'.—'Wisdom' is the immediate theme of the eloquent paragraph before us. This is but a title—one of a crowd of noble titles—of true religion. And we never can too fully familiarize ourselves with the truism that spiritual things have no material equivalent whatever.

III. It is Man's Blessedness that the Best 'Cannot be Gotten for Gold'.—Many purposes of good this serves. Let it be again and yet again insisted that it reveals the limitations of money. Men worship 'gods of gold'. They always have done, and

till the end of the age they always will. Even the Christian Church is apt to exaggerate the functions of gold. The rich man is often a hero in the Church the poorest of all poor men founded. He gets his way. He may be coarse and vulgar, but he is obeyed. The complex and costly organization of many churches makes rich men a necessity. And innumerable evils follow. So that saints and sinners alike need to realize what money cannot buy.

God gives an opportunity to *all* in ordaining that the best 'cannot be gotten for gold'. Here is an equality of opportunity. Every man has a chance of the prize of life. The poor may achieve noble things. When Christ was here He had no money. The Apostles were forbidden to provide gold for themselves. Peter declared, 'Silver and gold have I none'. It is not along golden roads God's children pass to bliss. Thank God for beatitude for all men. All may of God partake. Heaven's conditions all may fulfil.

This should make the Gospel very attractive. Its demands are such as the poor can comply with. Its invitation is to all.—Dinsdale T. Young, *The Gospel of the Left Hand*, p. 207.

WHERE IS WISDOM?

'Whence then cometh wisdom?'—Job xxviii. 20.

The answer to this question is given as the conclusion of one of the most eloquent and poetic descriptions discoverable.

I. Not in Intelligent Development.—The passage enables us to answer the question whether man can attain the highest wisdom, or, in other words, 'the highest state of excellence,' without a revelation from God. That there is such a revelation we Christians believe, and that the Bible contains such a revelation the answer to a question like this goes to prove. The attentive reader will observe that the sacred writer (Job xxviii.) employs terms of expression which show that he had an intimate knowledge of mining operations. The statement is made for the purpose of showing that man's faculties, his industry and enterprise, have been marvellously developed in regard to all physical phenomena. Knowledge and skill have been manifested by man for a far longer period than is consistent with some modern theories of his development. In very remote ages, at least 1000 years before Job, there were gold mines in Egypt. He reminds us that man, through the triumphs of his reasoning faculty, can scale the heavens, and penetrate into the hidden laws which govern the universe. But when man is thus set before us as possessing powers and capacities which may be said to conquer nature, how comes it to pass that intelligent development is not equalled by moral elevation? He is described as not having found wisdom. The want of wisdom in Scriptural language is to be in a state of folly, that state of the man who says in his heart 'There is no God,' or practically lives without any recognition of the claims of God to obedience. We may well ask, 'Have they no knowledge that work iniquity, not calling upon God?' Knowledge they may have, but not true wisdom.

II. Not in Wealth.—The question waits for an answer, 'Where shall wisdom be found, and where is the place of understanding?' Fallen, though intellectual, man has not found it. But has he power to procure, can he purchase it? An answer is given. He may acquire wealth, but he cannot put a price upon wisdom. He may have gold of Ophir, and jewels, and precious stones. The habitable earth may have been traversed, the depths of the ocean explored for his benefit. He may possess all that the diver or miner has collected, and that the merchant has transported over the seas, but he has acquired nothing which can give peace, nothing which he can keep, nothing which he can exchange for true wisdom. 'The price of it is above rubies.'

III. Where, then, is Wisdom?—But there is no room for despair. The Bible tells of man's restoration and renewal as well as of his origin and fall. Where is wisdom? 'God understandeth the way thereof.' And the point of importance is that 'the way thereof God has made known'. His own light has shone on the way thereof. Holy Scripture given by inspiration contains the statement that the wisdom which maketh wise unto salvation is connected with faith in Christ Jesus; that what is sometime shadow is elsewhere clearly manifested in the face of Him; that personified Wisdom is seen in the person of Christ; that in Him, Christ Jesus, are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge; and, moreover, that the first discovery of these treasures that truly enrich, and sanctify, and save were made through the revelation of God; that the first light that shone out of darkness was seen in the promise that the 'seed of the woman should bruise the head of the serpent'; that after obtaining the knowledge of good and evil, man only learnt where true wisdom was to be found when God said to man, 'Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding'.

'The fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding.'—Job xxviii. 28.

The book of Job is admittedly a difficult book. It relates to times contemporary with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. It is believed to have been written between the entry into and the exodus from Egypt. It has been conjectured that Moses was the writer of the book, owing, no doubt, to the similarity of some parts of the book to some parts of Genesis. But that is not the case. It is essentially an historical book, and Job is an historical personage. His name is wonderfully significant—Job, which means 'the assaulted one'.

I. Job's Character and Trial.—Now what do we know of Job's character? He is described by God Himself in the eighth verse of the first chapter. He was a 'perfect and an upright man; one that feareth God and escheweth evil'. Yet it was such an one

that Satan was allowed to tempt and to afflict; yet in all this Job sinned not. Again, the tempter was allowed to afflict him, this time by assaulting his body. Yet 'in all this did not Job sin with his lips'. It is at this stage that Job's 'three friends' came on the scene, and the chapters from the third to the thirty-seventh are a record of the conversations that ensued between Job and his friends. They had not much cheer or encouragement to offer him, and their pessimism is remembered to this day in the homely phrase we apply to those who take dark views of life—that they are 'Job's comforters'. It is in the thirty-eighth and subsequent chapters that we see Job's vindication, when the Lord answered Job, turned his captivity, and blessed his latter days more than his beginning. The 'patience of Job' has been an object-lesson to the Christian Church in every age. What was its secret? Surely it is to be found in the words of the text.

II. The Fear of the Lord.—The text occurs in the answer made by Job himself to one of the three friends—Bildad the Shuhite—and it seems to have been an answer to Bildad's question (xxv. 4), 'How then can man be justified with God?' Now 'the fear of the Lord' was essentially an Old Testament thought. We find it conspicuous, too, in the New Testament, but with a more glorious meaning, for the Gospel has shed its bright beams upon it. It was the theme of the song of the Blessed Virgin, 'His mercy is on them that *fear* Him'. We find St. Peter, too, laying it down as a command, '*Fear* God; honour the King'. But, some one will ask, does not St. John say, 'Perfect love casteth out fear'; and that 'he that *feareth* is not made perfect in love'? Quite true; but the contradiction is only apparent, not real. There are two kinds of fear: (*a*) The filial fear, which fears to do a wrong against one who loves and is loved; and (*b*) servile fear, which trembles at the consequence of wrongdoing. It is the servile fear which love casts out.

III. What it Produces.—Beyond all question we need at the present day a deeper realization of the fear of the Lord.

(*a*) *A perfect faith.*—We need the filial fear, which is not irreverent, but is based on the knowledge of the truth, and which leads to perfect faith. Job was a man who feared the Lord, and this led him to a life of perfect faith, so that he could say: 'Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him'.

(*b*) *A godly wisdom.*—This is 'the fear of the Lord' which Job declares to be 'wisdom'. The world is in search of wisdom to-day, but a large number of people want to find it apart from God.

(*c*) *A relationship of Father and Son.*—The fear of the Lord, again, brings us into right relationship with God. He is our Father; we are His children. Are we not reminded of this when we read, 'They that *feared* the Lord spake often one to another, and the Lord hearkened and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before Him for them that *feared* the Lord and that thought upon His Name. And they *shall be Mine*, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up My jewels.'

(*d*) *A departure from evil.*—Once more the fear of the Lord promotes a departure from evil, for in this case 'wisdom' and 'understanding' are almost identical terms. 'To fear God and to keep His commandments' is described as the whole duty of man. If we fear the Lord as Job did, we shall, like him, examine ourselves, our thoughts, our words, our deeds. Nor must the Christian precept be forgotten—'Let every one that nameth the Name of Christ depart from iniquity'.

MAN'S BEST WISDOM

'Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding.'—Job xxviii. 28.

Job in his calmer mood feels that he has attempted to deal with questions too high for him.

I. He forgets for a while his own pangs and sorrows; the pressure of God's heavy hand is withdrawn, and there rises before him a vision of that wisdom, which, as in the opening portion of the book of Proverbs, so here, and in later generations, as for instance in the age at which the 'Book of Wisdom' was written, embodied to the pious Jew the combination of the highest knowledge with the truest goodness.

II. And this, in his baffled and wearied, yet more tranquil frame, he feels to be beyond his reach. There is a touch at once of hopelessness and of cheering faith in his words. He dwells on the unapproachable, the inscrutable nature of true wisdom, in terms which the most enlightened Christian may in one sense fully echo.

III. 'We know that what we see forms but the outskirts of creation; that the power and the wisdom which rule this vast universe must lie beyond the reach, not only of our understanding, but also of our furthest speculation.' Yet we know also how much of God's nature, which was hidden from Job, has been revealed to us in Christ: that if we 'know in part' only yet in part we *do* know; and we may thankfully welcome and accept the vast revelations of that book of nature which we have received from the progress of human science.

IV. But when all this has been fully acknowledged, we still feel the force of Job's words, that there is something higher yet than any knowledge regarded as knowledge, whether it be scientific, or whether it be theological knowledge. The truest wisdom is 'to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with our God'.—G. G. Bradley, *Lectures on the Book of Job*, p. 238.

'Oh that I were as in the months of old, as in the days when God watched over me.'—Job xxix. 2.

At the close of his paper on Good-Nature (*Spectator*, No. 171), Addison quotes this chapter as one of 'several passages which I have always read with great delight in the book of Job. It is the Account which that Holy Man gives of his Behaviour in the Days of his Prosperity; and, if considered only as a human Composition, is a finer picture of a charitable and good-natured man than is to be met with in any other author.'

'People do not dream when they are happy. For the last few days,' says Miss Thackeray of her heroine, Catherine, in *The Village on the Cliff*, 'she had remembered without bitterness. Life seemed to have grown suddenly bearable, and almost easy once more. If she had known how short a time her tranquillity was to last, she might have made more of it perhaps, and counted each minute as it passed. But she did not know, and she wasted many of them as she was doing now, as we all do, in unavailing hankering and regrets—precious little instants flying by only too quickly, and piping to us very sweetly, and we do not dance. Looking back, one laments not so much the unavoidable sorrows of life, as its wasted peace and happiness, and then more precious minutes pass in remorse for happiness wasted long ago.'

References.—XXIX. 2.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. i. No. 51. XXIX. 2-4.—*Ibid.* vol. xvii. No. 1011.

'When my children were about me.'—Job xxix. 5.

'When I get down to my home from this House,' said Bright in the House of Commons during the American Civil War, 'I find half a dozen little children playing upon my hearth. How many Members are there who can say with me, that the most innocent, the most pure, the most holy joy which in their past years they have felt, or in their future years they have hoped for, has not arisen from contact and association with our precious children?'

'When I went forth to the gate unto the city, the young men saw me and hid themselves, and the aged rose up and stood. The princes refrained talking. . . When the ear heard me, then it blessed me; and when the eye saw me, it gave witness unto me: because I delivered the poor that cried, the fatherless also, that had none to help him. The blessing of him that was ready to perish came upon me, and I caused the widow's heart to sing for joy.'—Job xxix. 7 f.

To Sir Alexander Ball exclusively the Maltese themselves attributed their emancipation; on him, too, they rested their hopes of the future. Whenever he appeared in Valetta, the passengers on each side, through the whole length of the street, stopped and remained uncovered till he passed, the very clamours of the market-place were hushed at his entrance, and then exchanged shouts for shouts of joy and welcome. Even after the lapse of years he never appeared in any one of their casals, which did not lie in the direct road between Valetta and St. Antonio, his summer residence, but the women and children, with such of the men who were not at labour in their fields, fell into ranks, and followed, or preceded him, singing the Maltese song which had been made in his honour, and which was scarcely less familiar to the inhabitants of Malta and Gozo than 'God save the King' to Britons. 'When he went to the gate through the city, the young men refrained talking; and the aged arose and stood up. When the ear heard, then it blessed him; and when the eye saw him, it gave witness to him: because he delivered the poor that cried, and the fatherless, and those that had none to help them. The blessing of them that were ready to perish came upon him; and he caused the widow's heart to sing for joy.'—Coleridge in *The Friend*.

Reference.—XXIX. 16.—J. Baldwin Brown, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xx. pp. 264, 280.

EARTHLY ANTICIPATIONS

'Then I said, I shall die in my nest; and I shall multiply my days as the sand.'—Job xxix. 18.

We seem to learn from these anticipations of Job in the days of his former prosperity and comfort the delusions relative to things tending to their own good and to the glory of God, which may especially be imposed upon the godly in seasons of great and uninterrupted prosperity.

I. An overrated estimation of their own comfort, 'I shall die in my nest'. If your hearts are in heaven, you will find your conflicts upon earth, which will effectually hinder you from the making of nests in a world of sin and sorrow.

II. A forgetfulness of their character as strangers and pilgrims upon earth, 'I shall multiply my days as the sand'. Job manifested the presumption of long life, on which the rich man went, who is the subject of a parable in the gospel, 'Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years, take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry. But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee, then whose shall those things be which thou hast provided?'

III. A disposition to estimate their time upon earth, rather upon the score of its comfort, or its duration than of its usefulness. What is the value of all that comfort to a sinner in which God is not glorified? What is the value of multiplied days, if they do not speak to the praise of Jehovah?—W. Borrows, *Select Sermons*, p. 216.

Reference.—XXIX. 20.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxviii. No. 1649.

'I sat chief, and dwelt as a king in the army, as one that comforteth the mourners.'—Job xxix. 25.

How easy it is to shed human blood! How much in all ages have wounds and shrieks and tears been the cheap and vulgar resources of the rulers of mankind! How difficult and noble it is to govern in kindness, and to found an empire upon the everlasting basis of justice and affection! . . . The vigour I love consists in finding out wherein subjects are aggrieved, in relieving them, in the laborious, watchful, and difficult task of increasing public happiness by allaying each particular discontent.—Sydney Smith, *Peter Plymley's Letters* (ix.).

'My welfare passeth away as a cloud . . . the days of affliction have taken hold upon me.'—Job xxx. 15, 16.

This sickness brought him so near to the gates of death, and he saw the grave so ready to devour him, that he would often say, his recovery was supernatural. And then, being with his eldest daughter, Mrs. Harvey, at Abury Hatch in Essex, he there fell into a fever, which, with the help of his constant infirmity—vapours from the spleen—hastened him into so visible a consumption, that his beholders might say of him,

as St. Paul of himself, 'I die daily,' and he might say with Job, 'My welfare passeth away as a cloud, the days of my affliction have taken hold of me'.—Izaak Walton, *Life of Dr. Donne*

'Thou art turned to be cruel to me: with the might of thy hand thou persecutest me. Thou liftest me up to the wind, thou causest me to ride upon it; and thou dissolvest me in the storm.'—Job xxx. 21, 22.

'The blasphemy of great natures,' said Renan once, 'is more acceptable to God than the interested prayer of the common person; for, while the blasphemy denotes an imperfect view of things, it includes an element of just protest, whereas egoism has not a particle of truth at all.

References.—XXX. 23.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxxii. No. 1922. XXX. 25.—*Ibid.* vol. viii. No. 479.

'I made a covenant with mine eyes; how then should I look upon a maid?'—Job xxxi. 1.

'Chastity,' said Bishop Camus of Belley, 'is timid and sensitive, trembling at every shadow, quick at every sound, fearing every peril. It takes alarm at a glance—as a very Job, who had made a covenant with his eyes; the slightest word disconcerts it; it is suspicious of sweet scents; good food seems a snare, mirth a levity, society treacherous, light reading a danger. It moves along all eyes and ears, like one covered with jewels who crosses a forest, and starts at every step, fancying he hears robbers.'

Chastity is the flowering of man; and what are called Genius, Heroism, Holiness, and the like, are but various fruits which succeed it.—Thoreau, *Walden* ('Higher Laws').

Reference.—XXXI. 14.—G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 130.

'Did not He that made me in the womb make him?'—Job xxxi. 15.

The races to whom we owe the Bible were cruel in war; they were revengeful; their veins were filled with blood, hot with lust; they knew no art, nor grace, nor dialectic, such as Greece knew, but one service they at least have rendered to the world. They have preserved in their prophets and poets this eternal verity—*He that made me in the womb made him*—and have proclaimed with Divine fury a Divine wrath upon all who may be seduced into forgetfulness of it.—Mark Rutherford in *The Deliverance*.

When Job had spoken of his duty to the lowly, he had given the sanction for it in the thought: *Did not One fashion us?* Jesus gives a higher sanction: Does not one Father love you all? In the presence of the Father the children are to lose their separateness.—Royce, *Religious Aspect of Philosophy*, p. 42.

'If I have withheld the poor from their desire . . . or have eaten my morsel alone, and the fatherless hath not eaten thereof.'—Job xxxi. 16, 17.

Eugenius prescribes to himself many particular days of fasting and abstinence, in order to increase his private bank of charity, and sets aside what would be the current expences of those times for the use of the poor. He often goes afoot when his business calls him, and at the end of his walk has given a shilling, which in his ordinary methods of expence would have gone for coach hire, to the first necessitous person that has fallen in his way. I have known him, when he has been going to a play or an opera, divert the money which was designed for that purpose upon an object of Charity whom he has met in the street. —Addison, *Spectator* (No. 177).

'If I have seen any perish for want of clothing, or any poor without covering.'—Job xxxi. 19.

'It was one of Job's boasts that "he had seen none perish for want of clothing"; and that he had often "made the heart of the widow to rejoice". And doubtless Dr. Sanderson,' says Izaak Walton, 'might have made the same religious boast of this and very many like occasions. But, since he did not, I rejoice that I have this just occasion to do it for him.'

'If I have said to the fine gold, thou art my confidence.'—Job xxxi. 24.

If we command our wealth, we shall be rich and free; if our wealth command us, we are poor indeed.—Burke, *First Letter on a Regicide Peace*.

'If I beheld the sun when it shined, or the moon walking in brightness; and my heart hath been secretly enticed, and my mouth hath kissed my hand.'—Job xxxi. 26, 27.

'The scholar of the sixteenth century,' says Ruskin in the third volume of *The Stones of Venice*, 'if he saw the lightning shining from the east to the west, thought forthwith of Jupiter, not of the Son of Man; if he saw the moon walking in brightness, he thought of Diana, not of the throne which was to be established for ever as a faithful witness in heaven; and though his heart was but secretly enticed, yet thus he denied the God that is above.'

'Were I obliged to have a religion,' said Napoleon, 'I would worship the sun—the source of all life—the real God of the earth.'

'Then was kindled the wrath of Elihu against Job.'—Job xxxii. 2.

Job's friends kindly argued with him, 'You are suffering, therefore you are guilty'. And the argument was bad, because they only saw an exceptional accident in the life of a good man; but if that eternal life had been passed in continual residence on this globe, if notorious bad fortune had pursued him through eternity in the nineteenth generation, his descendants might well have said, 'Oh, Job, there is something wrong in you, for you never come out right'.—Bagehot on *The Ignorance of Man*.

'Now Elihu had waited to speak unto Job, because they were elder than he.'—Job xxxii. 4.

'I speak not as claiming reverence for my own age and office,' says Mr. Lyon to Felix Holt (*Felix Holt*, chap. v.), 'not to shame you, but to warn you. It is good that you should use plainness of speech, and I am not of those who would enforce a submissive silence on the young, that they themselves, being elders, may be heard at large; for Elihu was the youngest of

Job's friends, yet was there a wise rebuke in his words.'

'I said, Days should speak, and multitude of years should teach wisdom.'—Job xxxii. 7.

If youth is the season of unrest, when change is welcomed for its own sake, and when orderly growth is despised, it is also the brooding-time of speculation, the maturing-time of adventure. Old men are probably best fitted for carrying on the mechanical and routine work of the world, but the artists, the poets, the explorers, the propagators of new ideas, are habitually to be found among the young. Of two great changes that have powerfully influenced modern society, it may probably be said that both the Reformation and the Revolution owed their impetus to the generation under forty.—C. H. Pearson.

'There is a spirit in man, and the breath of the Almighty giveth him understanding.'—Job xxxii. 8.

Here it is that humanity culminates, or reveals the summit of its dignity; it is, in being, spirit, and, as such, open to the visitation and the indwelling power of God. This it is, and this only, that makes us properly religious beings. No created being can excel in order a soul so configured to God as to be inspirable by Him, able to receive His impulse, fall into His movement, rest in His ends, and be finally perfected in the eternity of His joys.—Bushnell.

What the light of your mind, which is the direct inspiration of the Almighty pronounces incredible,—that, in God's name, leave uncredited; at your peril do not try believing that.—Carlyle, *Life of Sterling*.

Thy own God-created Soul; dost thou not call that a 'revelation'? Who made *Thee?* where didst thou come from? The voice of eternity, if thou be not a blasphemer, and poor asphyxiated mute, speak with that tongue of thine! *Thou* art the latest birth of Nature; it is 'the inspiration of the Almighty' that giveth thee understanding.—Carlyle, *Past and Present*.

True, nevertheless, forever it remains that Intellect is the real object of reverence, and of devout prayer, and zealous wish and pursuit among the sons of men; and even, well understood, the one object. It is the Inspiration of the Almighty that giveth men understanding. . . . Human Intellect, if you consider it well, is the exact summary of Human *Worth*.—Carlyle, *Latter-day Pamphlets* (iii.).

Carlyle, never tired of quoting this verse, recurs again to it in describing the Presbyterianism of Scotland (in the essay on *Sir Walter Scott*): 'A country where the entire people is, or even once has been, laid hold of, filled to the heart with an infinite religious idea, has "made a step from which it cannot retrograde". Thought, conscience, the sense that man is denizen of a Universe, Creature of an Eternity, has penetrated to the remotest cottage, to the simplest heart. Beautiful and awful, the feeling of a Heavenly Behest, of Duty God-commanded, over-canopies all life. There is an inspiration in such a people; one may say in a more special sense, "the inspiration of the Almighty giveth them understanding".'

Reference.—XXXII. 8.—J. E. Vaux, *Sermon Notes* (4th Series), p. 22.

'It is not the great who are wise, nor the aged that understand judgment.'—Job xxxii. 9.

We are idolaters of the old. We do not believe in the riches of the soul, in its proper eternity and omnipresence. We do not believe there is any force in to-day to rival or recreate that beautiful yesterday. We linger in the ruins of the old tent, where once we had bread and shelter and organs, nor believe that the spirit can feed, cover, and nerve us again. But we sit and weep in vain. The voice of the Almighty saith, 'up and onward for evermore'. We cannot stay among the ruins.—Emerson.

In these days, what of *lordship* or leadership is still to be done, the youth must do it, not the mature or aged man; the mature man, hardened into sceptical egoism, knows no monition but that of his own frigid cautions, avarices, mean timidities; and can lead nowhither towards an object that even seems noble. —Carlyle, *Latter-day Pamphlets* (i.).

I know nothing can conduce more to letters than to examine the writings of the ancients, and not to rest on their sole authority or take all upon trust from them. . . . For to all the observations of the ancients we have our own experience: which if we will use and apply, we have better means to pronounce. Let Aristotle and others have their dues; but if we can make further discoveries of truth and fitness than they, why are we envied?—Ben Jonson.

An institution is healthy in proportion to its independence of its own past, to the confident freedom with which it alters itself to meet new conditions.—Prof. Seeley.

'Great men are not always wise; neither do the aged understand judgment.'

This verse is put as the motto to the fifth chapter of Mr. Winston Churchill's biography of his father, which describes Lord Randolph's outburst in 1885 against 'the old men who crooned over the fires at the Carlton' and the older leaders of the Conservative Party.

Age is no better, hardly so well, qualified for an instructor than youth, for it has not profited so much as it has lost. One may almost doubt if the wisest man has learned anything of absolute value by living. Practically, the old have no very important advice to give the young, their own experience has been so partial, and their lives have been such miserable failures, for private reasons, as they must believe. I have lived some thirty years on this planet, and I have yet to hear the first syllable of valuable or even earnest advice from my seniors. They have told me nothing, and probably cannot tell me anything to the purpose.—Thoreau, *Walden* ('Economy').

Compare the words of the Fool to Lear (Act i.

Scene 4): 'Thou hadst little wit in thy bald crown, when thou gavest thy golden one away'.

'Therefore I said, Hearken to me; I also will shew mine opinion.'—Job xxxii. 10.

'We once were lusty youths and tall:' one by the younger men, 'we still are stout, come, try a fall'; and the third by the children, 'but we'll be stronger than you all'.—Plutarch (describing the Spartan festivals, at which three choruses were sung).

The centuries are conspirators against the sanity and authority of the soul. . . . Man is timid and apologetic,—he is no longer upright; he dare not say, 'I think,' 'I am,' but quotes some saint or sage. He is ashamed before the blade of grass or the blowing rose. These roses under my window make no reference to former roses or to better ones; they are for what they are; they exist with God to-day.—Emerson.

In *The Pilgrimage of Pleasure* Swinburne makes Youth cry as follows:—

'Away from me, thou Sapience, thou noddy, thou green fool! What ween ye I be as a little child in school? Ye are as an old crone that mooneth by a fire, a bob with a chestnut is all thine heart's desire.'

'Neither will I give flattering titles unto any man. For I know not to give flattering titles; else would my Maker soon take me away.'—Job xxxii. 21, 22.

Among all the Diseases of the Mind, there is not one more epidemical or more pernicious than the love of flattery. . . . When there is not Vanity enough awake in a man to undo him, the flatterer stirs up that dormant weakness, and inspires him with Merit enough to be a Coxcomb.—Steele in *The Spectator* (No. 238).

Villari, in the ninth chapter of his *Savonarola*, describes Lorenzo the Magnificent on his death-bed as unable to 'believe in his confessor's sincerity. Accustomed to see his slightest wish obeyed, and all the world bow to his will, he could not realize that anyone would dare to deny him absolution. Accordingly the blessing of the Church was powerless to lighten the weight burdening his conscience, and he was more and more cruelly tortured by remorse. No one has ever dared to refuse me anything—he thought to himself, and then the idea that had once been his pride became his worst torment.'

What is it we heartily wish of each other? Is it to be pleased and flattered? No, but to be convicted and exposed, to be shamed out of our nonsense of all kinds, and made men of, instead of ghosts and phantoms.—Emerson on *New England Reformers*.

Reference.—XXXIII.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xliii. No. 2505.

'Job, I pray thee, hear my speech.'—Job xxxiii. 1.

Why is it that the just must endure such suffering on earth? The book of Job does not solve this perplexing question. On the contrary, this very book is the Song of Songs of scepticism, and in it the loathsome serpents of doubt writhe and hiss out their everlasting 'why?' How was it that, at the return from Babylon, the pious Commission of the Temple Archives, over which Ezra presided, admitted this book into the canon of the Holy Scriptures? I have often asked myself this question. My belief is that these Divinely enlightened persons did so, not from any lack of intelligence, but simply because, in their sublime wisdom, they saw that doubt was deeply rooted and grounded in human nature, and that it is not to be suppressed by any silly device, but must undergo its own appropriate cure. . . . This poison could not be spared from the Bible, the great medicine-chest for the family of mankind. Yes, just as man when he suffers must weep out his sufferings, so must he also think out his doubts when he feels that he is cruelly disappointed in his claims to earthly happiness.—Heine.

Reference.—XXXIII. 6-33.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xlii. No. 2453.

'For God speaketh once, yea twice, though man regardeth it not. In a dream, in a vision of the night, when deep sleep falleth upon men.'—Job xxxiii. 14, 15.

Must not what is called 'Revelation' be simply either *Anticipation*, or *Suggestion*, or *Confirmation?* Some favoured and highly strung natures tell us that they have arrived at this confirmation by 'spiritual discernment,' and can feel not the shadow of a doubt about the matter. . . . The truth, they say, was revealed to them, 'borne in upon their souls,' vouchsafed to them in a sudden gleam of light, 'in a dream, in a vision of the night,' and so on; and the moment it thus flashed upon them, it wrote itself upon their mental frame-work by its own illumination. What is this phraseology but simply a more lofty and excited, or more poetical way of saying (as we often hear contemplative thinkers of soberer temperaments say) that the conception suddenly *occurred* to them, flashed upon them, and was instinctively recognized at once as the true solution of the problem which had exercised their minds so long? And what in reality is this instantaneous *recognition*—this εὕρηκα cry—but the proof that the mind was capable of the discovery, and had long been on the brink of it?—W. Rathbone Greg, *Miscellaneous Essays*, pp. 264, 265.

Reference.—XXXIII. 14-18.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xlii. No. 2453.

'He keepeth back his soul from the pit, and his life from perishing by the sword. He is chastened also with pain upon his bed.'—Job xxxiii. 18, 19.

It would be a poor result of all our anguish and our wrestling if we won nothing but our old selves at the end of it—if we could return to the same blind loves, the same self-confident blame, the same light thoughts of human suffering, the same frivolous gossip on human lives, the same feeble sense of that Unknown towards which we have sent forth irrepressible cries in our loneliness.—George Eliot, *Adam Bede* (chap. vii.).

THE MINISTRY OF INTERPRETATION

'An interpreter, one among a thousand.'—Job xxxiii. 23.

We shall always need a ministry of interpretation, a discriminating, highly intellectual, most penetrative ministry, that sees the little things as well as the great things, the coupling nexus, the filament, the plasm, the thing that is not yet a thing but will be a thing by and by in the out-throwing of all the purpose and issues of Divine providence. Nine hundred and ninety-nine of us therefore will do well to listen, to attend, to obey.

I. 'An interpreter,' that is emphatically what the Bible is. The Bible is the interpreter of God; the Bible has but one subject, all other subjects are cognate to it; they are, however, but collateral and minor; he only who keeps company with the Apostles, the minstrels, and the prophets can really interpret God.

The Bible shirks no great subject, it invites the soul to the discussion of the highest themes, it is not afraid to go into the cemetery and interpret the graves into resurrections; it is an infinite succour and a most tender strength.

II. Experience is the best commentator on the Bible. Salvation is not of grammar or of criticism. The great discussions do not turn upon points of etymology, syntax, or prosody. Every man is an interpreter of the Bible if he has rich and deep and varied experience; he can make the Bible prove itself. Never believe any man upon any subject who has not deep personal experience in relation to it. Mere intellectual expertness is becoming quite a nuisance; we want the voice of the heart, especially upon those subjects which concern the heart, and to other voices we cannot listen.

III. Jesus is the interpreter of God. He gathered us round His knee, so to say, and told us that God's real name was Father. We said, not like our father? Yes, was the gracious reply, like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that love Him. But not like some fathers? No, because some fathers are not fathers, they do despite to the genius of fatherhood; they are brutes, ruffians, cruel wicked persons, to whom the name father ought never to be given; but because there are these evil specimens of degenerate fatherhood the inner genius and spirit of fatherhood cannot be touched; that fatherhood means tenderness, love, law, sympathy, the large righteousness which melts into tears or burns into blossom. There is no interpreter of God equal to the Son of God.—Joseph Parker, *City Temple Pulpit*, vol. i. p. 180.

References.—XXXIII. 23, 24.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xv. No. 905. XXXIII. 24.—*Ibid.* vol. xliii. No. 2505. XXXIII. 27-29.—C. Perren, *Revival Sermons*, p. 303.

'Lo, all these things doth God work, twice, yea thrice, with a man, to bring back his soul from the pit, that he may be enlightened with the light of the living.'—Job xxxiii. 29, 30.

Take courage, say the happy to those in sorrow and trouble; are there not many mansions even here? seasons in their course; harvests in their season, thanks be to the merciful ordinances that mete out sorrow and peace, and longing and fulfilment, and rest after the storm. Take courage—say the happy—the message of the sorrowful is harder to understand. The echoes come from afar, and reach beyond our ken. As the cry passes beyond us into the awful unknown, we feel that this is, perhaps, the voice in life that reaches beyond life itself. Not of harvests to come, nor of peaceful home hearts do they speak in their sorrow. Their fires are out, their hearths are in ashes, but see, it was the sunlight that extinguished the flame.—Miss Thackeray in *Old Kensington*.

References.—XXXIII. 29, 30.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xix. No. 1101. XXXIV.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xlvi. No. 2670. XXXIV. 29.—*Ibid.* vol. xiii. No. 737. XXXIV. 31, 32.—*Ibid.* vol. xxii. No. 1274. XXXIV. 32.—J. Vaughan, *Sermons* (9th Series), p. 21. XXXIV. 33.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xlvi. No. 2670. *Ibid.* vol. xlix. No. 2834.

'None saith, where is God my Maker, which giveth songs in the night?'—Job xxxv. 10.

Do we not fail to accord to our nights their true value? We are ever giving our days the credit and blame of all we do and misdo, forgetting those silent, glimmering hours when plans—and sometimes plots—are laid; when resolutions are formed or changed; when heaven, and sometimes heaven's enemies, are invoked; when anger and evil thoughts are recalled, and sometimes hate made to inflame and fester; when problems are solved, riddles guessed, and things made apparent in the dark, which day refused to reveal. Our nights are the keys to our days. They explain them. They are also the day's correctors. Night's leisure untangles the mistakes of day's haste. We should not attempt to comprise our pasts in the phrase, 'in those days'; we should rather say, 'in those days and nights'.—G. W. Cable, *The Grandissimes* (chap. xvii.).

Nothing astonishes me more, when a little sickness clogs the wheels of life, than the thoughtless career we run in the hour of health. 'None saith, where is God, my Maker, that giveth songs in the night, who teacheth us more knowledge than the beasts of the field, and more understanding than the fowls of the air?' Give me, my Maker, to remember Thee!—Burns to *Mrs. McLehose*.

References.—XXXV. 10. — Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xliv. No. 2558. XXXV. 10, 11.—*Ibid.* vol. xxvi. No. 1511. XXXVI. 2.—*Ibid.* vol. xxiv. No. 1403.

'I will fetch my knowledge from afar, and will ascribe righteousness to my Maker.'—Job xxxvi. 3.

To gain a true view we must take into account all varied forms of contemporary experience, and all the experiences of different ages. He will best see the whole, and each part in relation to the whole most truly, who has the widest and best proportioned knowledge founded on the experience of others, and at the same time controls all by his own experience.—Dr. Hort, *Hulsean Lectures*, pp. 172, 173.

'Behold, God is mighty, and He despiseth not any.'—Job xxxvi. 5.

'It struck me,' says Carlyle, 'that Sterling's was not intrinsically, nor had ever been in the highest or

chief degree, a devotional mind. Of course all excellence in man, and worship as the supreme excellence, was part of the inheritance of this gifted man: but if called to define him, I should say, artist not Saint was the real bent of his being. He had sudden admiration, but intrinsically rather a deficiency of reverence in comparison. Fear, with its corollaries, on the religious side, he appeared to have none, nor ever to have had any.' Earlier in the memoir, he makes a similar criticism. 'An eye to discern the divineness of the Heaven's splendours and lightnings, the insatiable wish to revel in their godlike radiances and brilliances; but no heart to front the scathing terrors of them, which is the first condition of your conquering an abiding place there.' Yet, at the close of the biography, Carlyle tells how, on his death-bed, Sterling was wont to murmur, 'God is great, God is great'.

We may confidently trust that we have over us a Being thoroughly robust and grandly magnanimous, in distinction from the Infinite Invalid bred in the studies of sickly monomaniacs, who corresponds to a very common human type, but makes us blush for him when we contrast him with a truly noble man, such as most of us have had the privilege of knowing both in public and in private life.—O. W. Holmes, *The Poet at the Breakfast Table* (x.).

Strong Son of God, Immortal Love.—Tennyson.

Reference.—XXXVI. 5.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxiii. No. 1379.

'If they be bound in fetters, and be holden in cords of affliction, then He sheweth them their work, and their transgressions that they have exceeded.'—Job xxxvi. 8, 9.

'It is a very melancholy Reflection,' Steele observes in *The Spectator* (No. 312), 'that Men are usually so weak, that it is absolutely necessary for them to know Sorrow and Pain to be in their right senses.'

'He openeth also their ear to discipline, and commandeth that they return from iniquity. If they obey and serve Him, they shall spend their days in prosperity, and their years in pleasure.'—Job xxxvi. 10, 11.

The weakness of the will begins, when the individual would be something of himself. All reform aims, in some one particular, to let the soul have its way through us; in other words, to engage us to obey.—Emerson on *The Oversoul*.

'Remember that thou magnify His work, whereof men have sung. All men have looked thereon; man beholdeth it afar off. Behold, God is great, and we know Him not.'—Job xxxvi. 24-26.

In his paper on 'Madame Sand and the New Apocalypse' in *The Paris Sketch-Book*, Thackeray bursts out with the indignant cry: 'O awful, awful name of God! Light unbearable! Mystery unfathomable! Vastness immeasurable!—Who are these who come forward to explain the mystery, and gaze unblinking into the depths of the light, and measure the immeasurable vastness to a hair? Oh name, that God's people of old did fear to utter! Oh light, that God's prophet would have perished had he seen! Who are these that are now so familiar with it? Women, truly; for the most part weak women—weak in intellect, weak mayhap in spelling and grammar, but marvellously strong in faith: women, who step down to the people with stately step and voice of authority, and deliver their twopenny tablets as if there were some Divine authority for the wretched nonsense recorded there.'

Reference.—XXXVII. 6.—H. W. Beecher, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxvii. p. 6.

'Hearken unto this, O Job: stand still, and consider the wondrous works of God. Dost thou know how God layeth His charge upon them?'—Job xxxvii. 14, 15.

When Hooker lay on his death-bed, he was asked what were his thoughts. 'To which,' says Izaak Walton, he replied: 'that he was meditating the number and nature of Angels, and their blessed obedience and order, without which peace could not be in heaven: and oh! that it might be so on earth'.

'Dost thou know the balancings of the clouds, the wondrous works of Him which is perfect in knowledge?'—Job xxxvii. 16.

I rather believe that some of the mysteries of the clouds never will be understood by us at all. 'Knowest thou the balancings of the clouds?' Is the answer ever to be one of pride? The wondrous works of Him, Who is perfect in knowledge? Is *our* knowledge ever to be so? . . . For my own part, I enjoy the mystery, and perhaps the reader may. I think he ought. He should not be less grateful for summer rains, or see less beauty in the clouds of morning, because they come to prove him with hard questions.—Ruskin, *Frondes Agrestes*, p. 24.

COMPENSATION

'Dost thou know the balancings of the clouds?'—Job xxxvii. 16.

These words were spoken by Elihu—one of the five actors in the drama of the book of Job. Before he gave his opinion, two other opinions had been advanced as to the government of God. The first was that of Job's three critics—Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar. They represented God as very stern to the sinner. The second was that of Job. He said that the clouds of life were so unequally distributed as to lead to the conclusion that joy and pain were irrespective of goodness or badness. He thought that the clouds fell indiscriminately on the evil and the righteous. But Elihu steps forward with a third theory. He turns to Job and says: 'Admitting that the clouds fall equally on the evil and the righteous, how does that prove that the righteous suffer as much as the evil? Do you know the balancing of these clouds? Do you imagine that the same calamity falling on two men at the same time must mean the same amount of suffering? Do you not take into account the previous condition of the soul which meets it? Are you not aware that every calamity may be either aggravated or counterbalanced from within? Until you have learned this you are in no condition to measure the justice of God.' And of the three doctrines I agree with that of Elihu. Be-

fore I can judge of any calamity I must know whether there is anything to counterbalance it, to compensate it, to weigh against it. I have seen children playing in squalid lanes and wretched alleys, oblivious of the mean environment; they were blinded to the pain by their own buoyancy. I have seen the soldier unconscious of weary marches; he forgot fatigue in the ardour of his cause. I have seen the student pass hours without food and nights without repose; the inward fire burned up hunger and consumed the need of sleep. I have heard the martyr in the agonies of death cry to his fellow-sufferers, 'Be of good cheer: we shall kindle a torch that will never be extinguished!' In all these cases there was a counterbalancing of the cloud. Without the inward counterpoise the poverty would have repelled, the march exhausted, the abstinence killed, the martyrdom unmanned. But the cloud was balanced by a ray of glory.—G. MATHESON, *Messages of Hope*, p. 208.

'And now men see not the bright light which is in the clouds.'—JOB XXXVII. 21.

THINGS which, at some time, appeared to be dark—afflictions, losses, trials, wrongs, defeated prayers, and deeds of suffering patience yielding no fruit—are very apt, afterwards, to change colour and become visitations of mercy. And so where God was specially dark, He commonly brings out, in the end, some good or blessing in which the subject discovers that his Heavenly Father only understood his wants better than he did himself. God was dark in His way, only because His goodness was too deep in counsel, for him to follow it to its mark. It is with him as with Job, whose latter end, after he had been stripped of everything, was more blessed than his beginning.—BUSHNELL.

ONE of the greatest of German teachers said some years ago: 'I see before my countrymen a deep abyss, but above it shines a bright light. Is it the dawn, or is it the evening twilight?' Shall we hesitate as to our answer now? The light has grown brighter since Neander put the question, and in that light may we work as it grows onward to the perfect day.—WESTCOTT.

'MANY a political leader during the last two years,' says a writer in the *Spectator* (8 Sept. 1906) on the Russian Troubles, 'has momentarily turned from his bright hopes and schemes to the painful contemplation of this black cloud on the horizon. For this danger there is a special word which is constantly in use and can be vaguely rendered as "despondency". The Speaker of the late Duma, speaking for others and not for himself, put the matter thus: "It is hard to work, when you never see your reward coming". It seems as though, when in the family of nations the sunshine of the world is divided up between the different children of hope, one child, Russia, is passed over at each distribution. At last comes the announcement, "and here is one sunbeam for Russia"; but the belated peasant only makes the bitterness more acute to the land which Gogol described as "the country forgotten by God". And thus, after a moment of hope, the darkness is again accepted almost as if it were the only thing natural.'

REFERENCES.—XXXVII. 21.—E. H. Bickersteth, *Thoughts in Past Years*, p. 201. XXXVII. 23.—J. Budgen, *Parochial Sermons*, vol. i. p. 133.

'Then the Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind.'—JOB XXXVIII. 1.

'IN the centre of the world-whirlwind,' says Carlyle in the first part of *Past and Present* (chap. II.), 'verily now as in the oldest days, dwells and speaks a God. The great soul of the world is *just*. O brother, can it be needful now, at this late epoch of experience, after eighteen centuries of Christian preaching for one thing, to remind thee of such a fact.'

SANS-CULOTTISM will burn much; but what is incombustible it will not burn. Fear not Sans-culottism; recognize it for what it is, the portentous, inevitable end of much, the miraculous beginning of much. One other thing thou mayest recognize of it: that it too came from God; for has it not *been*? From of old, as it is written, are His goings forth; in the great Deep of things; fearful and wonderful now as in the beginning: in the whirlwind also He speaks; and the wrath of man is made to praise Him.—CARLYLE.

THE FIRST CHAPTER OF GENESIS

'Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? declare, if thou hast understanding.'—JOB XXXVIII. 4.

THE real object of the narrative in Genesis is not to teach scientific truth, but to teach religious truth.

I. One object of the narrative will be evident at once: it is to show, in opposition to the crude conceptions current in many parts of the ancient world, that the world is not self-originated; that it was called into existence, and brought gradually into its present state, at the will of a Spiritual Being, prior to it, independent of it, deliberately planning each stage of its development. The fact of a Creator is the fundamental teaching of the cosmogony of Genesis.

II. The first chapter of Genesis is not meant to teach authoritatively the actual past history of the earth. Its object is to afford a view true in conception, if not in detail, of the origin of the earth as we know it, and to embody this not in an abstract or confused form which may soon be forgotten, but in a series of representative pictures which may impress themselves upon the imagination, and in each one of which the truth is insisted on, that the stage which it represents is no product of chance, or of mere mechanical forces, but that it is an act of the Divine will.

III. A third point on which the record insists is the distinctive pre-eminence belonging to man. 'Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.' What, then, do we suppose to be meant when it is said that man was made in the 'image of God'? It is meant that he has been endowed with that highest and noblest of gifts, the gift of self-conscious reason.

IV. The cosmogony of Genesis teaches the absolute

supremacy of the Creator in His work of Creation: it exhibits to us, in a series of representative pictures, how every stage of His work was dependent upon His will and realized His purpose: it emphasizes the distinctive pre-eminence belonging to man.—S. R. Driver, *Sermons*, p. 163.

'Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth?'—Job xxxviii. 4.

Was man with his experience present at the creation, then, to see how it all went on? Have any scientific individuals yet dived down to the foundations of the universe, and gauged everything there? Did the Maker take them into His counsel; that they read His ground-plan of the incomprehensible All; and can say, This stands marked therein, and no more than this? Alas, not in anywise! These scientific individuals have been nowhere but where we also are; have seen some handbreadths deeper than we see into the Deep that is infinite, without bottom as without shore.—Carlyle, *Sartor Resartus* (book iii. chap. viii.).

References.—XXXVIII. 4.—A. Ainger, *The Gospel and Human Life*, p. 108. G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 288.

'When the morning stars sang together, and all the Sons of God shouted for joy.'—Job xxxviii. 7.

Every time that analysis strips from nature the gilding that we prized, she is forging thereout a new picture more glorious than before, to be suddenly revealed by the advent of a new sense whereby we see it—a new creation, at sight of which the sons of God shall have cause to shout for joy.—Prof. W. K. Clifford.

'Neither say,' Carlyle writes in the *Sartor Resartus*, chap. vii., 'that thou hast now no Symbol of the Godlike. Is not God's Universe a Symbol of the Godlike; is not Immensity a Temple; is not Man's History, and Men's History, a perpetual Evangel? Listen, and for organ-music thou wilt ever, as of old, hear the Morning-stars sing together.'

Does there not exist a perfected sense of Hearing—as of the morning-stars singing together—an understanding of the words that are spoken all through the universe, the hidden meaning of all things, the Word which is creation itself—a profound and far pervading sense, of which our ordinary sense of sound is only the first novitiate and initiation.—Edward Carpenter, *Civilization—Its Cause and Cure*, p. 98.

The office of the artist should be looked upon as a priest's service in the temple of Nature, where ampler graces are revealed to those that have eyes to see, just as ever gentler chords announce the fuller life to those that have ears to hear, while declared Law opens up wide regions unordered and anarchic, where selfish greed has yet to be tutored into wise rule. In the circle of the initiated, responsive beings recognize the elimination of immature design in creation to be a triumph of patient endeavour, and they join in the chorus of those who 'sang together for joy' on the attainment of the ideal of Heaven's Artist, who in overflowing bounty endowed the colourless world with prismatic radiance, prophesying of Titians yet to be, who should go forth to charm away scales from the eyes of the blind.—W. Holman Hunt in the preface to his *Pre-Raphaelitism*.

'*Werther*,' Carlyle writes in his essay on Goethe's works, 'we called the voice of the world's despair: passionate, uncontrollable is this voice; not yet melodious and supreme,—as nevertheless we at length hear it in the wild apocalyptic *Faust:* like a death-song of departing worlds; no voice of joyful "morning-stars singing together" over a creation; but of red nigh-extinguished midnight stars, in spheral swan-melody, proclaiming, It is ended.'

The great advantage of this mean life is thereby to stand in a capacity of a better; for the colonies of heaven must be drawn from earth, and the sons of the first Adam are only heirs to the second. Thus Adam came into this world with the power also of another; not only to replenish the earth but the everlasting mansions of heaven. Where we were when the foundations of the earth were laid, when the morning-stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy. He must answer who asked it. —Sir Thomas Browne.

'Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further: and here shall thy proud waves be stayed.'—Job xxxviii. 11.

You have indeed winged ministers of vengeance, who carry your bolts to the remotest verge of the sea. But there a power steps in, that limits the arrogance of raging passions and furious elements, and says, 'So far shalt thou go and no further'. Who are you, that should fret and rage, and bite the chains of nature?—Burke, *Speech on Conciliation with America*.

The unavoidable aim of all corporate bodies of learning is not to grow wise, or teach others wisdom, but to prevent anyone else from being or seeming wiser than themselves; in other words, their infallible tendency is in the end to suppress inquiry and darken knowledge, by setting limits to the mind of man, and saying to his proud spirit, *Hitherto shalt thou come, and no further!*—Hazlitt, *Table-Talk*.

'It is always hard,' wrote Dr. Mandell Creighton to a young friend, 'to curb oneself within the possibilities of one's own particular life! How happiness consists in recognizing limits, and how hard it is to do so!' To his wife he wrote thus in 1871: 'Everybody obeys the doctrine of limits, not every one recognizes the fact and owns it; the last persons in the world to be lazy, to be indolent, or to be cowardly are those who can recognize limits as self-imposed; they are decidedly not under the power of circumstances, but rather are entire masters of them.'

In *Old Mortality* Scott makes young Morton soliloquize thus: 'Alas! what are we that our best and most praiseworthy feelings can be thus debased and depraved—that honourable pride can sink into haughty and desperate indifference for general

opinion, and the sorrow of blighted affection inhabit the same bosom which licence, revenge, and rapine, have chosen for their citadel? But it is the same throughout; the liberal principles of one man sink into cold and unfeeling indifference, the religious zeal of another hurries him into frantic and savage enthusiasm. Our resolutions, our passions, are like the waves of the sea, and, without the aid of Him who formed the human breast, we cannot say to its tides, "Thus far shall ye come, and no further".'

DESCRIBING, in the first volume of *The Stones of Venice*, the Alpine peak, Ruskin ejaculates: 'There was it set, for holy dominion, by Him who marked for the sun his journey, and bade the moon know her going down. It was built for its place in the far-off sky; approach it, and, as the sound of the voice of man dies away about its foundation, and the tide of human life, shattered upon the vast aerial shore, is at last met by the eternal "Here shall thy waves be stayed," the glory of its aspect fades into blanched fearfulness.'

LET anyone look on the long wall of Malamocco, which curbs the Adriatic, and pronounce between the sea and its master. Surely that Roman work (I mean *Roman* in conception and performance) which says to the ocean 'Thus far shalt thou come and no further,' and is obeyed, is not less sublime and poetical than the angry waves which vainly break beneath it.—BYRON.

COMPARE the closing paragraphs of Carlyle's essay on *Taylor's Survey of German Poetry*, especially the sentences on the rise of literature in the age. 'Higher and higher it rises round all the Edifices of Existence; they must all be molten into it, and anew bodied forth from it, or stand unconsumed among its fiery surges. Woe to him whose Edifice is not built of fine Asbest, and on the Everlasting Rock; but on the false sand, and of the driftwood of accident, and the paper and parchment of antiquated Habit! For the power, or powers, exist not on earth, that can say to that sea, Roll back, or bid its proud waters be still.'

REFERENCES.—XXXVIII. 11.—T. Spurgeon, *Down to the Sea*, p. 105. XXXVIII. 13.—D. Roberts, *Christian World Pulpit*, October 1, 1890. XXXVIII. 17.—H. Woodcock, *Sermon Outlines*, p. 104. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. li. No. 2917. XXXVIII. 22.—W. L. Watkinson, *The Ashes of Roses*, p. 5. XXXVIII. 25-27.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xliv. No. 2583.

'Hath the rain a father?'—JOB XXXVIII. 28.

TWO passages of God's speaking, one in the Old and one in the New Testament, possess, it seems to me, a different character from any of the rest, having been uttered, the one to effect the last necessary change in the mind of a man whose piety was in other respects perfect; and the other, as the first statement to all men of the principles of Christianity by Christ Himself—I mean the 38th to 41st chapters of the book of Job, and the Sermon on the Mount. Now the first of these passages is, from beginning to end, nothing else than a direction of the mind which was to be perfected to humble observance to the works of God in nature. And the other consists only in the inculcation of *three* things: 1st, right conduct; 2nd, looking for eternal life; 3rd, trusting God, through watchfulness of His dealings with His creation; and the entire contents of the book of Job, and of the Sermon on the Mount, will be found resolvable simply into these three requirements from all men—that they should act rightly, hope for heaven, and watch God's wonders and work in the earth; the right conduct being always summed up under the three heads of *justice*, *mercy*, and *truth*, and no mention of any doctrinal point whatsoever occurring in either piece of divine teaching.—RUSKIN.

REFERENCE.—XXXVIII. 28.—W. R. Inge, *Faith and Knowledge*, p. 29.

'Canst thou bind the cluster of the Pleiades? or loose the bands of Orion?'—JOB XXXVIII. 31.

SO far as the Jewish prophets made use of such astronomy as they had, they used it altogether in the sense in which the modern agnostics use their heliocentric astronomy—to impress upon man his utter insignificance in creation. . . . When the author of the book of Job, in urging what another prophet calls 'the Lord's controversy,' wants to convince Job of his nothingness, what is his most impressive illustration?—'Canst thou bind the sweet influences of the Pleiades'—[or, as the Revised Version puts it, 'Canst thou bind the cluster of the Pleiades?']—'or loose the bands of Orion? Canst thou lead forth the signs of the Zodiac in their season, or canst thou guide the Bear with her train? Knowest thou the ordinances of the heavens? Canst thou establish the dominion thereof in the earth?'—language surely, if ever language could be used, which suggests that to control the heavenly bodies implies a force of far mightier scope and magnitude than any which is needed only for our little planet.—R. H. HUTTON, *Contemporary Thought and Thinkers*, vol. I. p. 291.

REFERENCE.—XXXVIII. 31.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xiv. No. 818.

'Knowest thou the time when the wild goats of the rock bring forth?'—JOB XXXIX. 1.

IF the baffled inquirer drops out the search after God, as many do, and says—I will go down to nature and it shall, at least, be my comfort that nature is intelligible, and even a subject of definite science, he shortly discovers that science only changes the place of mystery and leaves it unresolved. . . . Asking what is matter, what is life, animal and vegetable, what is heat, light, attraction, affinity, he discovers that, as yet, we really comprehend nothing, and that nature is a realm as truly mysterious even as God. Not a living thing grows out of the earth, or walks upon it, or flies above it; not an inanimate object exists, in heaven, earth, or sea, which is not filled and circled about with mystery as truly as in the days of Adam or Job, and which is not really as much above the understanding of science, as the deepest things of God's eternity or of His secret life.—BUSHNELL.

'Will the wild-ox be content to serve thee? or will he abide by thy crib.'—Job xxxix. 9.

A community which has heard the voice of truth and experienced the pleasures of liberty, in which the merit of statesmen and systems are freely canvassed, in which obedience is paid, not to persons but to laws, in which magistrates are regarded, not as the lords but as the servants of the public, in which the excitement of a party is a necessary of life, in which political warfare is reduced to a system of tactics; such a community is not easily reduced to servitude. Beasts of burden may easily be managed by a new master. But will the wild ass submit to the bonds? Will the unicorn serve and abide by the crib? Will leviathan hold out his nostrils to the hook?—Macaulay, Essay on *Hallam's Constitutional History*.

'Hast thou given the horse strength? Hast thou clothed his neck with thunder? Canst thou make him afraid as a grasshopper?'—Job xxxix. 19 f.

After quoting this passage in his *Literary Essays*, Mr. R. H. Hutton observes: 'This deeper insight into the natural constitution and beauty of the universe, and complete disavowal of all power on the part of man to form any judgment upon it, is especially remarkable as compared with the bold justification of the spiritual participation of human nature in one of the attributes of God. It proves that the Hebrew poet had already distinguished between the direct knowledge of God's spirit which spiritual communion gives, and the indirect knowledge of His mysterious ways which can only be gained by a study of those ways. It shows that he had mastered the conviction, that to neglect the study of the natural mysteries of the universe leads to an arrogant and illicit intrusion of moral and spiritual assumptions into a different world—in a word, to the false inferences of Job's friends as to his guilt, and his own equally false inference as to the injustice of God.'

'He mocketh at fear, and is not dismayed; neither turneth he back from the sword.'—Job xxxix. 22.

Carlyle finely applies this passage, in his essay on *The Death of Irving*: 'A giant force of activity was in the man; speculation was accident, not nature. Chivalry, adventurous field-life of the old Border, and a far nobler sort than that, ran in his blood. There was in him a courage, dauntless not pugnacious, hardly fierce, by no possibility ferocious; as of the generous war-horse, gentle in its strength, yet that laughs at the shaking of the spear.'

'Doth the hawk soar by thy wisdom, and stretch out her wings toward the south?'—Job xxxix. 26.

In the ninth chapter of *The Revolution in Tanner's Lane*, Mr. Hale White depicts Zachariah Coleman wandering about in Manchester, looking out for work. 'And it was curious that, as he paced those dismal Manchester pavements, all their gloom disappeared as he reargued the universal problem of which his case was an example. He admitted the unquestionable right of the Almighty to damn three parts of creation to eternal hell if so He willed; why not, then, one sinner like Zachariah Coleman to a weary pilgrimage for thirty or forty years? He rebuked himself when he found that he had all his life assented so easily to the doctrines of God's absolute authority in the election and disposal of the creatures He had made, yet that he revolted when God touched him, and awarded him a punishment which, in comparison with the eternal loss of His presence, was as nothing. At last—and here, through his religion, he came down to the only consolation possible for him—he said to himself, "Thus hath He decreed; it is foolish to struggle against His ordinances; we can but submit". "A poor gospel," says his critic. Poor!—yes, it may be; but it is the gospel according to Job, and any other is a mere mirage. "Doth the hawk fly by thy wisdom, and stretch her wings towards the South?" Confess ignorance and the pity of insurrection, and there is a chance that even the irremediable will be somewhat mitigated. Poor! yes; but it is genuine; and this at least must be said for Puritanism, that of all the theologies and philosophies it is the most honest in its recognition of the facts; the most real, if we penetrate to the heart of it, in the remedy which it offers.'

How dare he lift himself up against the Almighty's designs? The Almighty asked him the question eternally repeated to us, which He had asked thousands of years ago, 'Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? Declare, if thou hast understanding. . . . Doth the hawk fly by thy wisdom, and stretch her wings forward to the earth?' 'The hawk flies not by my wisdom,' murmured Michael to himself, 'nor doth the eagle at my command make her nest on high. Ah, it is by His wisdom and at His command; how should I dare to interfere? I see it—I see it all now.' After his fashion and through his religion he had said to himself the last word that can be uttered by man. He knelt down and prayed.—Mark Rutherford, in *Michael Trevanion*.

Reference.—XL. 3, 4.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. ii. No. 83.

'Behold, I am of small account; what shall I answer Thee? I lay mine hand upon my mouth.'—Job xl. 4.

All through the book of Job the question, how this can be, is over and over again asked, and never answered; inadequate solutions are offered and repelled, but an adequate solution is never reached. The only solution reached is that of silence before the insoluble: 'I will lay my hand upon my mouth'. —Matthew Arnold.

'Pour forth the overflowings of thine anger: and look upon every one that is proud, and abase him. Look on every one that is proud, and bring him low; and tread down the wicked where they stand.'—Job xl. 11, 12.

This, says Lucretius (v. 1231 f), is Nature's prerogative and function: 'So doth some hidden power trample ever on things human, seeming to tread under foot and mock at the fine forces and cruel axes of men.

'Behold now behemoth, which I made with thee.'—Job xl. 15.

'Humility,' says Ruskin in the third volume of *Stones of Venice*, 'is the principal lesson we are intended to be taught by the book of Job; for there God has thrown open to us the heart of a man most just and holy, and apparently perfect in all things possible to human nature except humility. For this he is tried, and we are shown that no suffering, no self-examination, however honest, however stern, no searching out of the heart by its own bitterness, is enough to convince man of his nothingness before God; but that the sight of God's creation will do it. For, when the Deity Himself has willed to end the temptation and to accomplish in Job that for which it was sent, He does not vouchsafe to reason with him, still less does He overwhelm him with terror, or confound him by laying open before his eyes the book of his iniquities. He opens before him only the arch of the dayspring, and the fountains of the deep; and amidst the covert of the reeds, and on the heaving waves, He bids him watch the kings of the children of pride—'Behold now behemoth, which I made with thee? And the work is done.'

'Canst thou draw out leviathan with an hook? or his tongue with a cord which thou lettest down?'—Job xli. 1.

For the sake of its literary interest, Charles Lamb's famous application of this verse in his essay on 'Shakespeare's Tragedies' may be cited: 'The play (i.e. King Lear') is beyond all art, as the tamperings with it show: it is too hard and stony; it must have love scenes and a happy ending. It is not enough that Cordelia is a daughter, she must shine as a lover too. Fate has put his hook in the nostrils of this leviathan, for Garrick and his followers, the showmen of the scene, to draw the mighty beast about more easily.

Reference.—XLII. 1-10.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—Job*, p. 63.

THE DIVINE ATTRIBUTES

'I know that Thou canst do everything, and that no thought can be withholden from Thee.'—Job xlii. 2.

The meaning is that there is no purpose which the Almighty cannot carry out.

I. Though literally the words seem merely an acknowledgment of power they are also an admission of wisdom, the plans or purposes of which may be beyond the understanding of man.

II. Job does not, as might have been expected, acknowledge the Divine righteousness. His confession corresponds to the Almighty's address to him. That address did not insist on any one Divine attribute, but rather represented God in the whole circle of His attributes, power and wisdom but also goodness; and His omnipotence goes hand in hand with His moral rule.

III. The Divine nature is not a segment but a circle. Any one Divine attribute implies all others.

IV. Similarly Job's reply reflects the great general impression God now made on him. The exhibition of the Divine wisdom as it operates in nature has led him to feel that within his own history also there is a Divine 'thought' or 'counsel,' though he is unable to understand it.—A. B. Davidson, *The Book of Job*, p. 286.

THE BOOK OF JOB

'I know that Thou canst do all things, and that no purpose of Thine can be restrained.'—Job xlii. 2.

The author of the book of Job is entirely unknown; guesses have, to be sure, been made as to his name, but they are unsupported by any evidence worthy of credit. It is tolerably certain that Luther was right in his opinion that the book of Job is a religious drama, in which, somewhat as in Goethe's 'Faust,' the experiences of a well-known figure in legendary history are made the vehicle for expressing the anxious questionings of men as to the deepest problems with which the mind of man can be engaged, and that the book was marked off as unlike other books, that it was counted worthy of a place in the Sacred Canon of the Old Testament, will not be thought surprising by anyone who is at the pains to think over its wonderful teaching, who observes the reverent and piercing insight with which this inspired poet has justified the ways of God to man.

I. This is the main subject of the book. Job is a man who has met with extraordinary misfortunes. The devil uses them as a means by which he may shake Job's faith in God, his trust in an overruling Providence. But it is in vain. Still greater trials are in store. Well-meaning friends come to visit him. Throughout their long speeches they return again and again to this one principle, that suffering is always and invariably the consequence of sin. Sin is always punished by the Supreme, they say, and such misery as this of yours can spring from nothing else but some violation of God's law or neglect of His will, some proud boastfulness or secret indulgence in wrongdoing. Confident in his innocence Job dares to appeal from the judgment of man to the judgment of the All Righteous One Himself, who will surely deliver him in due time.

II. The next section of the book is taken up with the speeches of Elihu, who through respect for his elders has kept silent until now. The insignificance and the ignorance of man he speaks of; and he adds a thought which none of the older men had put forward, as to the educational value of pain in the formation of character. This mystery of sorrow may be part of the discipline by which man is trained to holiness.

III. Man's finitude and God's infinite wisdom and power are the topic of the concluding chapters, in which Jehovah is represented as answering Job out of the whirlwind and the storm. The littleness of man. The greatness of God. It is this thought of the unmeasured greatness of the Supreme, this thought of the infinite resourcefulness of the Divine Wisdom, that brought relief to the faith of the stout-hearted old saint. Man is ignorant, weak, and sinful. Aye, but God is wise and powerful and Holy; so wise, so good, so merciful that no complexity of circumstances is too difficult to disentangle, no life too insignificant to be

guarded by His love, no sorrow too humble to be relieved by His compassion.—J. H. Bernard, *Via Domini*, p. 21.

'I know Thou canst do all things, and that no purpose of Thine can be restrained. Who is this that hideth knowledge? Therefore have I uttered that which I understood not.'—Job xlii. 2, 3.

The God who is the antagonist of Prometheus has power, but he has not goodness: the God who is the antagonist of Job is perfect in goodness as in power. And so Prometheus, strong in conscious right and in foreknowledge of the future, remains unshaken by persuasions and threats. At the close of the drama, from out of elemental ruin—earthquake and lightning and tempest—he utters his last defiant words: 'Thou seest what unjust things I suffer'. Job, who in all his troubled questionings has never lost his central trust in the God whom he has upbraided, ends by a retractation: 'I know that Thou canst do all things, and that no purpose of Thine can be restrained. . . . I have uttered that which I understood not, things too wonderful for me, which I knew not.' The infinite mysteries of creation, as they are flashed before him in a series of sublime descriptions, have subdued the heart as well as the intellect. Love, dormant throughout, is now fully awakened. Yet even for Job the bewildering problem remains unsolved. Jehovah's answer had merely shown him Nature's immensity and the nothingness of Man.—S. H. Butcher.

'I had heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear; but now mine eye seeth Thee, wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.'—Job xlii. 5, 6.

God reminds us of His wisdom, of the mystery of things, and that man is not the measure of His creation. The world is immense, constructed on no plan or theory which the intellect of man can grasp. It is *transcendent* everywhere. This is the burden of every verse, and is the secret, if there be one, of the poem. Sufficient or insufficient, there is nothing more. Job is to hold fast to the law within; that is his candle which is to light his path; but God is infinite. Job, if he is not satisfied, submits. Henceforth he will be mute.—Mark Rutherford.

Job suffers and draws an inference from his suffering. Now, to suffer and draw an inference is to teach; sorrow logically leads to God. Job teaches. He is the first to show that sublime madness of wisdom which, two thousand years later, will be the foolishness of the cross. The dunghill of Job, transfigured, will become the Calvary of Jesus.—Victor Hugo.

We are usually better persuaded by reasons which we have ourselves discovered, than by those which have come into the mind of others.—Pascal.

Job's friends discoursed on life as they thought it was; he, as he knew it and felt it. There is no philosophy of life but the experience of it; there is no knowledge of God, until, in some way, we come completely into His hands. Sin and need and sorrow may drive us there, but only life itself, in all its length and depth and vicissitude and final emptiness, can fully place us there.—T. T. Munger.

In the fourth chapter of *The Grammar of Assent* Newman applies this passage to the sudden recognition, under pressure of some change or crisis, of truths hitherto accepted but not fully understood. 'To the devout and spiritual, the Divine Word speaks of things, not merely of notions. And, again, to the disconsolate, the tempted, the perplexed, the suffering, there comes, by means of their very trials, an enlargement of thought, which enables them to see in it what they never saw before. Henceforth there is to them a reality in its teachings, which they recognize as an argument, and the best of arguments, for its Divine origin. Hence the practice of meditation on the Sacred Text; so highly thought of by Catholics. Reading, as we do, the Gospels from our youth up, we are in danger of becoming so familiar with them as to be dead to their force, and to view them as a mere history. The purpose, then, of meditation is to realize them; to make the facts which they relate stand out before our minds as objects, such as may be appropriated by a faith as living as the imagination which apprehends them.

'It is obvious to refer to the unworthy use made of the more solemn parts of the Sacred Volume by the more popular preacher. His very mode of reading, whether warnings or prayers, is as if he thought them to be little more than fine writing, poetical in sense, musical in sound, and worthy of inspiration. The most awful truths are to him but sublime or beautiful conceptions, and are adduced and used by him, in season and out of season, for his own purposes, for embellishing his style or rounding his periods. But let his heart at length be ploughed by some keen grief or deep anxiety, and Scripture is a new book to him. This is the change which so often takes place in what is called religious conversion, and it is a change so far simply for the better, by whatever infirmity or error it is in the particular case accompanied, and it is strikingly suggested to us, to take a saintly example, in the confession of the patriarch Job, when he contrasts his apprehension of the Almighty before and after his affliction. He says he had indeed a true apprehension of the Divine attributes before as well as after; but with the trial came a great change in the character of that apprehension: "With the hearing of the ear," he says, "I have heard Thee, but now mine eye seeth Thee; therefore I reprehend myself and do penance in dust and ashes!"'

'The central feature of his experience was the conviction that God was addressing him, with a living voice, with the immediacy of a direct appeal. His previous state was really one of indifference, owing to his preoccupation with linguistic studies and philosophical speculations. His idea of the relation of God to the universe and to human souls, was that of a vast Superintendent, not that of a Divine Parent or a ceaselessly appealing Oracle.' Prof. Knight

thus describes the state of Dr. John Duncan's mind, when the great change came over him, adding: 'But as the clouds parted above him, he discerned the light of the Omnipresent and heard the voice of the Revealer. His awakening was the discernment of a truth, to the reality of which he had been oblivious for years, and the response of his heart to the Divine appeal followed naturally.'

It seems to me that it has been the one purpose of all the Divine revelation or education of which we have any record, to waken us up out of this perpetually recurring tendency to fall back into ourselves.—R. H. Hutton.

References.—XLII. 5.—W. Ross Taylor, *Christian World Pulpit*, 1891, p. 181. J. M. Neale, *Sermons Preached in Sackville College Chapel*, vol. iii. p. 434. XLII. 5, 6.—C. W. Furse, *Lenten Sermons*, p. 31. H. Melvill, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 2207. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxxiv. No. 2009.

'Ye have not spoken of me the thing that is right.'—Job xlii. 7.

There is superstition in our prayers, often in our hearing of sermons, bitter contentions, invectives, persecutions, strange conceits, besides diversity of opinions, schisms, factions, etc. But as the Lord said to Eliphaz the Temanite, and his two friends, 'his wrath was kindled against them, for they had not spoken of him things that were right'; so we may say justly of these schismatics and heretics, how wise soever in their own conceits, *non recte loquuntur de Deo*, they speak not, they think not, they write not well of God, and as they ought.—Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy*.

'And the Lord turned the captivity of Job, when he prayed for his friends.'—Job xlii. 10.

At the outset, he prays for his family—a narrow circle; but when he has passed through his mighty lesson, he prays again—for his friends, so called, but no friends. They had come to him as such, but they proved themselves miserable comforters. . . . Job's feeling is the reflection of God's, whose wrath was kindled against these men; but it was a transient feeling, and passed away as he emerged from his trial. When he had come to see God with his eye, and had humbled himself in dust and ashes, there was no place left in him for wrath and reproach. God be thanked that a time comes to all when hatred dies out!—T. T. Munger.

'And the Lord gave Job twice as much as he had before.'

Prosperity, enjoyment, happiness, comfort, peace, whatever be the name by which we designate that state in which life is to our own selves pleasant and delightful, as long as they are sought or prized as things essential, so far have a tendency to disennoble our nature, and are a sign that we are still in servitude to selfishness. Only when they lie outside of us, as ornaments merely to be worn or laid aside as God pleases—only then may such things be possessed with impunity. Job's heart in early times had clung to them more than he knew, but now he was purged clean, and they were restored because he had ceased to need them.—Froude.

References.—XLII. 10.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxi. No. 1262. *Ibid.* vol. vii. No. 404.

'And he had also seven sons and three daughters.'—Job xlii. 13.

'This Mother of George Herbert,' says Izaak Walton, 'was the happy mother of seven sons and three daughters, which she would often say was Job's number and Job's distribution; and as often bless God that they were neither defective in their shapes nor in their reason; and very often reprove them that did not praise God for so great a blessing.'

'And in all the land were no women found so fair as the daughters of Job.'—Job xlii. 15.

'Are you still heretic enough to think that only the manifestations of the devil are alluring? Has God then made nothing fair? Can He show nothing attractive? Is all the loveliness, and joy, and ecstasy in Babylon, and all the ugliness and desolation and pain in the kingdom of God?' 'Oh no; I never meant that. Don't we know that Job, after his trial, was blessed by the Lord, and was given, besides seven sons and an enormous amount of cattle, three daughters? "And in all the land," we are told, "were no women found so fair as the daughters of Job." In some creatures, therefore, beauty is clearly meant to be a blessing.'—John Oliver Hobbes, *The School for Saints*, chap. xxviii.

PSALMS

THE BOOK OF PSALMS

At the age of twenty-two Melanchthon wrote a preface to Luther's commentary on the Psalms (1519). He dwelt on the help and consolation which the Psalms bring to the troubled conscience.

'For what doth it profit thee to know that the world was created by God, as Genesis tells us, if thou dost not adore the mercy and wisdom of the Creator? Again, how would it help thee to know that God is wise and merciful if thou couldst not take to thyself the thought that He is merciful for thee, just for thee, wise for thee? And that is what it means to have truly known God, but Philosophy has not attained that ultimate mode of Divine knowledge; it belongs to Christians alone. The spirit of the Psalms truly distils that sweetness into pious minds, and this is that celestial harmony which is attuned by the Spirit of God.'—*Corpus Reformatorum*, vol. I. p. 73.

THE TREE AND THE CHAFF

'Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful.'—PSALM I. I.

THERE is a law to obey which is life; there is a King, to serve Whom is blessedness, and rebellion against Whom is destruction.

I. Note first the picture of a fair and fruitful life. If you have not learned to shelter your positive goodness behind a barrier of negative abstinence, there will be little vitality and little fruit in the weakling plants that are trying to blossom in the undefended open, swept by every wind. But then note further how in this abstinence there is a certain progress. It is quite clear, I think, that there is an advance in the prominence of association with evil, expressed by the three attitudes, walking, standing, sitting.

II. Then we come to the next step here. Abstinence is useless unless it be for something. There is no virtue in not doing so-and-so unless there be a positive doing something a great deal better. And now to the second part of this picture—how it fares with lovers of God's law. Such a life will be rooted and steadfast, for the word here translated 'planted' is not that ordinarily employed to express that idea, but conveys mainly the notion of fixity and steadfastness. If you want your life to have a basis then you must consciously and intelligently feel and pierce down through all superficial fleeting things, until you grasp the centre and wrap yourselves round that. Such a life shall be vigorous and fruitful. Such a life shall 'prosper'. Now turn to the other dark picture of the rootless, fruitless life. The light and the shadow, the blackness and the glory, are put right against one another and each is heightened by the juxtaposition.

III. There comes next the disappearance of such a life in the winnowing wind as a consequence of its essential nullity. Nothing lasts but obedience to the will of God. That which God knows lasts. That which He does not know perishes. There are two roads before us. The one steep, rough, narrow, hard, but always climbing steadily upwards, and sure to reach its goal; the other broad, easy, flowery, descending, and therefore easier than the first. One is the path of obedience for the love of Christ. In that path there is no death, and those who tread it shall come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads. The other is the path of self-will and self-pleasing, which fails to reach its unworthy goal and brings the man at last to the edge of a black precipice over the verge of which the impetus of his descent will carry his reluctant feet. 'The path of the just is as the shining light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day. The way of the wicked is as darkness; they know not at what they stumble.'—ALEXANDER MACLAREN, *The Freeman*, 6 March, 1891, p. 147.

'Seat of the scornful.'—PSALM I. I.

TENNYSON was very grand on contemptuousness. It was, he said, a sure sign of intellectual littleness. Simply to despise nearly always meant not to understand. Pride and contempt were specially characteristic of barbarians.—WILFRID WARD in *The New Review* (July, 1886).

CONTEMPT is murder committed by the intellect, as hatred is murder committed by the heart. Charity, having life in itself, is the opposite and destroyer of contempt as well as of hatred.—GEORGE MACDONALD, *David Elginbrod* (pt. ii. chap. IX.).

REFERENCES.—I. 1.—A. Mursell, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxvi. p. 269. C. Bosanquet, *Tender Grass for the Lambs*, p. 61. *The International Critical Commentary*, p. 3. E. C. Wickham, *Wellington College Sermons*, p. 203. C. C. Bartholomew, *Sermons Chiefly Practical*, p. 245. I. 1, 2.—A. Maclaren, *Sermons Preached in Manchester* (3rd Series), p. 225. John Thomas, *Myrtle Street Pulpit*, vol. iii. p. 127. W. G. Pearce, *Some Aspects of the Blessed Life*, pp. 1, 17. E. C. Wickham, *Wellington College Sermons*, p. 209. I. 1-3.—M. R. Vincent, *Gates Into the Psalm Country*, p. 3. I. 1-4. John Thomas, *Myrtle Street Pulpit*, vol. iii. p. 127. I. 1-6.—C. Perren, *Revival Sermons*, p. 316.

A TREE PLANTED BY RIVERS OF WATER

'He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.'—PSALM I. 3.

I. THE happy man of this Psalm is none other than the man who presents his body a living sacrifice unto

God, and is not fashioned according to this world's pattern and device, but is transformed by the renewing of his mind through an earnest pondering of God's thoughts, and who thereby proves by a daily experience what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God. Wherein, then, does his happiness consist? Blessed is this man, for 'he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water'. What is it that is contrasted with a tree in this Psalm? Chaff; and the contrast that is presented to us in this Psalm is this, as to whether our lives are to be like a tree or like the chaff. Now a tree viewed in contrast to the chaff provides a noble image of a rich, full, fruitful life. The special force of the image lies in this, that a tree perfectly portrays to us the connexion between thinking and working, between the roots of conduct and the fruits of conduct. A tree derives its nourishment from hidden roots, and all the fruit that grows amid sunshine grows out of the hidden roots that have struck down into the earth, and have been drinking there of the lower streams. And the answering fact in human life is this that the roots of our life and conduct are inward and downward. Strong characters are not uncaused things. Strong characters are produced by strong thinking, by strong teaching. Good deeds are the outgrowth of great thoughts. It is quite true that men sometimes fail to put their best thoughts into action, and why is it? Is it not because their thoughts are not allowed to take full possession of them and of their feelings and minds? And hence men who sometimes have very good thoughts have very bad lives. The remedy for that is to think more. Yes, even though it be painful to think more, to think.

II. Two words here deserve special notice. The word 'planted' is significant in the text. It is equal to our word 'transplanted'. Now of course, a literal tree never chooses its locality, but all emblems drawn from nature in Scripture fail to represent man's power of will and of choice. The tree cannot transplant itself. But that is not so with man. Where God has given the stream of His Word, where God's Word is known, men may choose to strike their roots into its fatness if they will. Then the word 'streams' or 'rivers' is specially significant. The Psalmist does not use the common word for a natural river here, a river which rises among the hills and flows down into the sea. He employs a term which represents those artificial channels which are so extensively used for the purpose of irrigation in the East. By diligence and by courage we are able to conquer barrenness in nature, so that the very wilderness rejoices and blossoms as the rose. In all such labour there is profit: and how foolish we are if our gardens are thirsting when the river of God is flowing down not far from any one of us, and we may make cuttings, we may open communications of God's will and truth to refresh our hearts and fertilize and nourish our lives.—T. Vincent Tymms, *The British Weekly Pulpit*, vol. II. p. 141.

CHRIST IN THE FIRST PSALM

'And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.'—Psalm I. 3.

Every delineation of the righteous is in the end a picture of the Lord Jesus Christ, and of Him alone. God has somewhat against all His saints, against their own righteousness. None of them is righteous completely except in the righteousness of the Redeemer. The application of this principle gives a new life and power and message to the book of the Psalms. We take for an example the first Psalm. It is true in its integrity of one soul at least, and of none but one. Multitudes through grace have come near it. It blessedly recalls them, but for its full meaning we must look at the Name that burns behind the porcelain sheath and see Jesus, and Jesus only.

I. In Christ there was no scorn, no contempt, no insolence, no taunting. He did not despise our world. He did not despise our nature. He did not despise the meanest of His creatures. Nor did He despair of any human soul.

II. His life was nourished on the law. His delight was in the law of the Lord, and on His law did He meditate day and night. It was of Him alone that it could be said that He was utterly obedient.

III. This life, the life of the righteous, was beautiful and fruitful, He lived that life of true peace which is not fugitive but everlasting. His was a life of fruit. Every righteous life must end in fruit. The greenness and the beauty are but a form of promise. The inexorable condition on which life is given is that it should reach forward to fruit-bearing. He bore His fruit—in due season God fixed, and He still fixes the season.—W. Robertson Nicoll, *The Garden of Nuts*, p. 111.

References.—I. 3.—C. Perren, *Revival Sermons*, p. 316. *International Critical Commentary*, p. 3. G. Orme, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lx. p. 334. E. Johnson, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xx. p. 347. G. Matheson, *Moments on the Mount*, pp. 79, 122. H. P. Liddon, *Old Testament Outlines*, p. 100. *Homiletic Magazine*, vol. vii. p. 73. I. 3, 4.—H. Macmillan, *Two Worlds are Ours*, p. 203. A. Blomfield, *Sermons in Town and Country*, p. 313. I. 4.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. lv. No. 280. John Thomas, *Myrtle Street Pulpit*, vol. iii. p. 127. I. 4, 5.—A. G. Brown, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 767. I. 4, 6.—M. R. Vincent, *Gates Into the Palm Country*, p. 21.

MISSIONS: PROMISES AND PROPHECIES

'A vain thing.'—Psalm II.

Diocletian's medal is still existing, on which he had caused to be inscribed that the name of Christians had been extinguished. The Council of Constance in 1414 met to burn Huss, to lay a solemn curse on Wycliffe's memory, and to put an end to schism. James I., after the Hampton Court Conference, said of the Puritans: 'I shall make them conform themselves, or I will harry them out of this land, or else do worse'. Ranavàlona I. undertook to blot out the Christian Church in Madagascar by the help of un-

speakable horrors ending in death: but instead of being obliterated, the Church grew marvellously.

REFERENCES.—II. 1.—W. L. Watkinson, *The Ashes of Roses*, p. 9. II. 7, 9.—John Thomas, *Myrtle Street Pulpit*, vol. iii. p. 127.

THE WORLD FOR CHRIST

'Ask of Me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession.'
—PSALM II. 8.

THIS brief Psalm is not, like most of the Psalms, a lyrical effusion, coming from the experience of an individual soul; but it is, if we may say so, dramatic in its form. In a few condensed sentences the whole history of the world is made to pass before us.

(1) First of all here are the heathen and the kings of the earth. The nations imagining a vain thing. They are met together in council, not as you might suppose, to ask how they can submit themselves to the eternal will of God, not to ask how they can make their government upon earth some slight shadowing of the government of God in heaven, but they are met together to take counsel how they can be rid of God, how they can cast off His restraints and defy His reign. (2) The spirit of this Psalm bids us lift up our eyes from the earth to the heavens, and to Him that sitteth there. (3) Once more the spirit turns our eyes from the heights of heaven down to the earth, to behold the king whom God hath chosen. A king though there is no proclamation of His reign, except the scornful writing over the felon's cross on which He died. This wonderful Psalm may be trusted to deliver its own message and to teach its own lesson to us all.

I. First that God does intend to bring the whole world, the whole rebel world into subjection to His holy will; that notwithstanding these marshalled empires and these conspiring forces of evil, He will not be baffled; they shall all bow before Him, and from this among other reasons—that in the last resort all thrones, dominations, princedoms, virtues, powers that remain unsubjected to His will, must be dashed to pieces under the care of the Divine triumphant power.

II. And the second point is that the mighty end is to be attained by that humble-seeming King, Christ Jesus; that it will be given to Him in answer to prayer; for the Father hath committed all judgment unto the Son, and the Son has come into the world, not to judge the world but to save it. The world shall be brought to God, and brought to God by Jesus Christ and in answer to prayer.—R. F. HORTON, *The Sermon Year Book*, 1891, p. 252.

'Ask of Me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance.'—PSALM II. 8.

ARCHBISHOP TAIT (when Bishop of London) took this as the text of his C.M.S. sermon in 1859, on the day following the national thanksgiving for the final restoration of peace and order in India after the Mutiny.

PSALM II. 10.

THIS verse was the remonstrance addressed to Henry VIII. at Smithfield by John Lambert, who was burned in 1538: 'Now, ye kings, understand O ye which judge the earth, be wise and learned. Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice in Him with trembling.'

Lambert's martyrdom was one of the most cruel of that time, and the often-quoted words came from him as he lifted his fingers flaming with fire, 'None but Christ, none but Christ'.—JOHN KER.

CHRISTIAN REVERENCE

'Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling.'—PSALM II. 11.

IN heaven love will absorb fear, but in this world *fear and love must go together*. No one can love God aright without fearing Him, though many fear Him and yet do not love Him. Self-confident men, who do not know their own hearts, or the reasons they have for being dissatisfied with themselves, do not fear God, and they think this bold freedom is to love Him. Deliberate sinners fear but cannot love Him. But devotion to Him consists in love and fear, as we may understand from our ordinary attachment to each other. No one really loves another who does not feel a certain reverence towards him. When friends transgress this sobriety of affection, they may indeed continue associates for a time, but they have broken the bond of union. It is mutual respect which makes friendship lasting. So again, in the feelings of inferiors towards superiors. Fear must go before love. Till he who has authority shows he has it and can use it, his forbearance will not be valued duly; his kindness will look like weakness. We learn to contemn what we do not fear; and we cannot love what we contemn. So in religion also. We cannot understand Christ's mercies till we understand His power, His glory, His unspeakable holiness, and our demerits; that is, until we first fear Him.—J. H. NEWMAN.

'Kiss the Son.'—PSALM II. 12.

WE are thus told that Christ at His coming will greet us most lovingly. He will not come to destroy the human race, but to save all those who flee to Him, as He says, Come unto Me, all ye that labour. These words are a pleasant salutation and the sweetest kiss that He offers us. Christ does not enter Jerusalem, as Herod did, slaying the people, but offering salvation to all.—MELANCHTHON on the *Psalms*.

REFERENCES.—II. 12.—*Expositor* (3rd Series), vol. v. p. 305. G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 133. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. v. No. 260. I. Williams, *The Psalms Interpreted of Christ*, p. 86. S. Cox, *Expositor* (2nd Series), vol. iii. p. 13. F. W. Macdonald, *Contemporary Pulpit*, vol. iii. p. 81. S. Black, *Contemporary Pulpit*, vol. iv. p. 316. Parker, *The Ark of God*, p. 117. S. A. Brooke, *The Spirit of the Christian Life*, p. 95.

'But thou, O Lord, art a shield for me; my glory and the lifter up of my head. . . . I will not be afraid of ten thousands of people, that have set themselves against me round about.'—PSALM III. 3-6.

DR. JOHN KER reminds us that this was the text from which Bishop Bedell preached to his fellow-prisoners in the time of the Irish rebellion in 1642, when he and the Protestants of the district were shut up in hold and in danger of death at any moment. He was one of the best Bishops who ever lived in Ireland . . . learned the Irish language, had the Bible translated into it, was assiduous in Christian work, and filled with the spirit of meekness and self-sacrifice. The word *bedel* in Hebrew means *tin*, and so deep was his desire of an entire renewal that he took for his motto Isaiah I. 25: 'I will purely purge thy dross, and take away all thy bedel (tin)'. He lived from 1570 to 1642, and the Irish called him 'Ultimus Anglorum'.

PSALM III. was used by the French Protestants during persecution times as a signal for the stationing of sentinels to keep watch against sudden attack; when the danger was over and they could worship in safety, they sang Psalm CXXII.

PSALM IV.

AUGUSTINE quotes this Psalm as of special value, and worthy to be sung aloud before the whole world for an expression of Christian courage, and a testimony of the peace God can give in outward and inward trouble (*Conf.* IX. 4). 'I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep: for Thou, Lord, only makest me dwell in safety'.

James Melville quoted it, among others, when he was dying. 'This being done, he comforteth himself with sundrie speeches out of the Psalms, quhilk he rehearsit in Hebrew; as, namely, ane speech out of Psalm 4th, "Lord, lift up the light of Thy countenance upon me". Psalm 27th, "The Lord is my light and my salvation, quhat can I fear?" Psalm 23rd, "Albeit I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, yet will I fear none evil, because God is with me". The candell being behind back, he desired that it should be brought before him, that he might see to die. By occasioune thereof, he remembered that Scripture, Psalm 18th, "The Lord will lighten my candell; He will enlighten my darkness".'—JOHN KER.

REFERENCES.—III.—*International Critical Commentary*, vol. i. p. 24. IV.—*Ibid.* pp. 24, 29. IV. 4.—R. Hiley, *A Year's Sermons*, vol. i. p. 17. IV. 6.—Archdeacon Sinclair, *Christ and Our Times*, p. 1. R. Flint, *Sermons and Addresses*, p. 82.

SUN OF MY SOUL, THOU SAVIOUR DEAR

'I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep for Thou, Lord, only makest me dwell in safety.'—PSALM IV. 8.

I. To go to sleep is a thing of exceeding solemnity, because, when we close our eyes, we cannot be sure that our waking will be in this world. There is only a step between the present life, which in the daytime seems to be the only real life, and the life to come.

II. It is the height of meanness as well as of folly to lie down without contemplating the goodness of Him who neither slumbereth nor sleepeth, and to Whom alone we are indebted for the safety of our persons and dwellings. In this age of ours, which makes an idol of Action, and which clamours for rapidly gained results, Meditation—and especially that kind of meditation which passes into prayer—has practically become a lost faculty.

III. I can suggest no more effectual remedy for this spiritual atrophy than the reading or singing of an evening hymn before we close our eyes in sleep. I prescribe an evening hymn because there is no season that lends itself like the night to holding converse with the things belonging to the spirit.

There are three great evening hymns in our language, and without awarding the palm to any one of them, it may be observed that 'Sun of my Soul,' Keble's greatest hymn, is the work of the most original and the most popular of English sacred poets, and, according to Julian, 'one of the foremost hymns in the English language'.—W. TAYLOR, *Twelve Favourite Hymns*, p. 115.

REFERENCES.—IV. 8.—J. Keble, *Sermons for Holy Week*, p. 230. C. J. Vaughan, *Voices of the Prophets*, p. 75. S. A. Brooke, *The Spirit of the Christian Life*, p. 277. A. Maclaren, *Life of David*, p. 246. J. Parker, *The Ark of God*, p. 125. I. Williams, *The Psalms Interpreted of Christ*, p. 111. S. Cox, *Expositor* (2nd Series), vol. iii. p. 178. *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. iii. p. 356.

PSALM VI.

THIS Psalm might have a history to itself. It has a wail of pain and sorrow, deepening into anguish, running through it; but comfort dawns at the close, like an angel turning the key of the prison. It is the first of the seven Penitential Psalms, the others being the 32nd, 38th, 51st, 102nd, 130th, 143rd. One of the strangest things, though not the happiest, in its records is, that, along with Psalm CXLII., it was the choice of Catherine de Medici, the Jezebel and Athaliah of the French monarchy. She was irreligious and superstitious, profligate and devoured by ambition; and the fact that she had no children seemed likely to deprive her of the control which she hoped to gain in the counsels of the kingdom. The Psalm was the expression of mere worldly disappointment. She became at last the mother of Francis II. (the first husband of Mary Stuart) and of Charles IX., whose character she corrupted by ministering to his vices, and whom she urged to the massacre of St. Bartholomew. 'Her desire was realized,' says a French historian, 'for the misery of France; and that family, which then took pleasure in the Psalms, put to death thousands of the Reformed for singing them.'

It has a more pleasing association with another princess, allied to the French royal family. Elizabeth Charlotte was niece of Sophia, Electress of Hanover, and granddaughter of Elizabeth Stuart, after whom she was named. She had remarkable abilities, and was carefully educated by her aunt Sophia, under the eye of the great Leibnitz. Her father, the Elector Palatine, constrained her to a marriage with

the Duke of Orleans, brother of Louis XIV., in the hope that the union might save his principality from the aggression of the French king. But it helped Louis to fresh claims; and, when her beautiful native land, beside the Rhine and Neckar, was wasted by the French armies, its towns laid in ashes, the Castle of Heidelberg, the home of her childhood, undermined and shattered, and the people she loved driven out in winter to die houseless and famishing, she could not sleep for the visions of havoc, and for the thought that she had been cruelly sacrificed to a vain policy. Her letters are deeply interesting for the light they throw on the time, and on the Court of France. Her heart went back to her early Protestant faith, and to the old Castle of Osnabruck, where she had spent her happiest days with her aunt. In a letter to her she relates an incident connected with this Psalm. She was walking one day in the orangery at Versailles, and was singing it in the translation of Clement Marot, as an expression of her feelings. A noted artist of the time, warmly attached in heart to the Reformed religion, was engaged in painting the roof, and heard her. 'Scarcely,' she writes, 'had I finished the first verse, when I saw M. Rousseau hasten down the ladder and fall at my feet. I thought he was mad, and said, "Rousseau, Rousseau, what is the matter?" He replied, "Is it possible, madam, that you still recollect our psalms and sing them? May God bless you, and keep you in this good mind." He had tears in his eyes.'

Another woman, of our own time, with trials in a different position, and yet like in kind to those of Elizabeth Charlotte, has put her heart into some of the words. The wife of Thomas Carlyle inserts verses 2-4 in her Journal, 1855, when in sore trouble of body and mind, amid weakness and weariness, sleepless nights, and wounded feelings. 'Oh, dear! I wish this Grange business were well over. It occupies me (the mere preparation for it) to the exclusion of all quiet thought and placid occupation. To have to care for my dress, this time of day, more than I ever did when young and pretty and happy (God bless me, to think I was once all that!), on penalty of being regarded as a blot on the Grange gold and azure, is really too bad. *Ach Gott!* if we had been left in the sphere of life we belong to, how much better it would have been for us in many ways! Ah, the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak as water. To-day I walked with effort one little mile, and thought it a great feat. Sleep has come to look to me the highest virtue and the greatest happiness; that is, good sleep, untroubled, beautiful, like a child's. Ah me! "Have mercy upon me, O Lord; for I am weak: O Lord, heal me; for my bones are vexed. My soul is also sore vexed: but Thou, O Lord, how long?"'

This same verse 3 was the common expression of Calvin when he was in trouble, '*Tu Domine usque quo?*' 'Thou, O Lord, how long?' and parts of the Psalm, with the last verse of Psalm LXX., were among the dying words of Robert Rollock, the first Principal of the University of Edinburgh, a man remarkable for power of administration and deep piety.—JOHN KER.

REFERENCES.—VI. 10.—Bishop Alexander, *The Great Questions*, p. 106. VII. 8.—H. Bushnell, *Christ and His Salvation*, p. 157. VIII. 2.—A. P. Manley, *Sermons for Children*, p. 44.

CONSIDERING

'When I consider.'—PSALM VIII. 3.

'WHEN I consider'—I become a new man, much larger, nobler, saintlier. What does consider mean? It is two words, it is two Latin words; it is *con* or *cum*, with, together *sider*—what is there in the word *sider?* Nothing. Take care! *Sider* comes a long way up the track of language; it was born *sidus*. That is what you say when you write your married name; under it you put *née*, born—another name, your father's name, which you have relinquished in favour of another name. *Sidus* means star; it is the root of sidereal heavens, the starry heavens, the stellar universe, and the like. Con-siderealize—when we star together—put the planets into syllables and words and paragraphs; when I considerealize, make a lesson book of the stars; when I punctuate my discourse with millenniums, then I pray.

'When I consider' I find that things are not so roughly related and antagonized as at first they seemed to be. I was not looking from the right point of view, I did not get far enough away from my subject, I was in the thick of the battle, in the very midst of the storm of dust, I could not see things in their right relation and proportion; but when I climbed the stairway of the stars and looked down upon the earth and time and measurable space, I said, All things work together for good to them that love God.

I. Consideration, properly defined, is a religious duty. In 1 Samuel XII. 24 you have exactly what I mean: 'Consider how great things He hath done for you'. Job says the same thing in his own grand way: 'Stand still, and consider the wondrous works of God' (XXXVII. 14). Put things together; give God time. You are impatient because you are little poor fussy fools; give Him time. When God says from the throne what Christ said from the Cross, 'It is finished,' then let the jury return a verdict, but not until then.

II. Consideration is a great element in wisdom and practical prudence. Sometimes men cannot go to the stars, so God has made some little stars for them to look at. How kind He is and condescending! He says, in effect, The stars are too many for you, you feel a noise in your little heads, and it is not good for you to look at the Milky Way and the Great Bear and the gleaming Orion and the beauteous Venus; so I will make some starlets for you, little living stars, asteroids. Hear His voice through the medium of His prophet: 'Go to the ant, thou sluggard; consider'—the same word, with all its stars and Milky Ways—'consider her ways, and be wise' (Prov. VI. 6). Wherever you are and whatever your circumstances may be, make an orrery of them, a

star-scheme, a method of stellar revolution and interchange and relation; and be religious on a small capital if you cannot traverse the planets and pray in firmaments. You have your chance; be wise, take it, and gather wisdom from the flowers planted in the field of God.

III. Consideration is the only profitable use of history. We find, then, in Isaiah xliii. 18, 'Remember ye not the former things, neither consider the things of old'. That is the reason why you are so poor, and why you are so easily driven about. You might be rich in history, you might be millionaires in retrospect; you might be wealthier than Dives in the gathered store of providences, deliverances, unexpected visions, touchings of the chain at night, which give you liberty and lead you out of prison into freedom.

IV. Consideration is the best use of nature. Consider the lilies how they grow: connect them with the stars, make them part of a great planetary system. Every daisy that grows in the mead requires the whole solar system for its nourishment. If you were to break up the solar system, and return nine-tenths of it, that daisy could not grow. God is one; hear, O Israel, the Lord your God is one.

V. And consideration is the greatest impulse to true piety, as we are taught in Hebrews xii. 3: 'Consider Him that endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself'. You see, we are driven out of our little selves into the greater self which is the star system, or the system of history or the system of example—the great inference-field. Take your little cross and lean it against the great Cross that held the woe of the Son of God, and you will be surprised what a little cross yours is when you set it beside the Cross of Him who was a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.—Joseph Parker, *City Temple Pulpit*, vol. i. p. 228.

THE HEAVENS AND MAN

'When I consider Thy heavens, the work of Thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which Thou hast ordained; What is man, that Thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that Thou visitest him?'—Psalm viii. 3, 4.

The common thought of man is that when he is compared with the measureless heavens he shrinks to a point. The sense of the ever-growing vastness of the universe dwarfs man until the whole story of the Divine book almost ceases to be credible.

I. The Logic of Love.—In that world which is nearest to us, in which we live—in the kingdom of love—mere size does not count, the footrule is an impertinence. In reason's realm, in the realm of science, mere size does not count. Don't allow yourself to be robbed of your faith—in yourself, of that place in the universe that God made you to have. He has made you only a little less than the angels; and He keeps a place for you next to the angels, and if the physical universe seems to convey vastness, remember that in love's arithmetic, in the spiritual world, mere physical size does not count; but you may consider the heavens, the moon and the stars which He has ordained and yet you can say: I am more than they, higher than they, and nearer to God than they.

II. The Divine Artist.—Turn now to another text. It is the answer of the New Testament to the challenge of the Old. The New Testament text is Christ's word, 'Consider the lilies, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin; and yet I say unto you, that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these'. Men tell you that God is so busy amongst His stars He cannot come to you or hear the child's cries. Why He comes below your feet; He comes even to the flower! God's signature is in every flower in your garden, and Christ asks you to stop and consider it. The whole system of matter beneath our feet is poetically wonderful. The wonders in the heights of the heavens are not so great as the wonders at your feet and in yourself. God works wonders in the world, but yet more splendid in man himself.

III. The Temple of the Earth.—This teaching adds point and force to two great lessons. (*a*) For one thing it makes sin an immeasurably more daring, shameful thing than we have ever dreamt of it. The common place of the earth is holy; it is full of God. How dare you take God's clear air, full of His omnipotence, and breathe into it a lie? The whole earth is full of His glory, and to sin in the holy place what a thing it is! (*b*) Surely the teaching of my sermon reinforces a trust in God as our Father. If God has such pains to make the flowers beautiful, will He grudge any pains to make our souls beautiful? Have faith in God and let the flowers whisper of Him, let the blades of grass be a revelation from Him; the stars that burn in the heavens, the flowers beneath our feet bear the testimony that God is near.—W. H. Fitchett.

WHAT IS MAN?

'When I consider Thy heavens, the work of Thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which Thou hast ordained; What is man, that Thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that Thou visitest him? for Thou hast made him a little lower than God, Thou crownest him with glory and honour.'—Psalm viii. 3-5.

I. Man and the Universe.—The contrast between man and the natural world which he inhabits, and which consciously and apparently he transcends, appeals to the religious mind in every age, and certainly never more powerfully than in our own. I hardly need to point out that the paradox which perplexed the Psalmist bears upon the mind of modern thinkers with still more threatening urgency until it seems too strong for faith itself. In a great series as of successive and advancing revelations, the sciences have, one after the other, enlarged the scale of the universe, and emphasized with pitiless insistence the relative pettiness of all things human.

II. The Human Intellect.—If, indeed, man be so petty and contemptible as his physical weakness and the brevity of his life suggest, why attach so much and such fatal importance to the science which he creates? There is, it seems to me, a fatal flaw in the

argument which makes the greatness of the intellectual achievements of mankind the foundation for a depreciation, and even for a denial of his spiritual greatness.

III. The Moral and the Physical.—The progress of science does not involve any change in the deliberate judgment of mankind as to the intrinsic superiority of the moral over the physical. But it is this intrinsic superiority, universally admitted if too commonly forgotten, that forms the basis of all morality, and is the necessary assumption of religion. For what is the grand postulate of Christianity but this, that the most faithful expression of the Ultimate Author of the universe is not that which its vast scale, power, and unvarying law can offer, but that which is shown by man in the perfection of his manhood, sinless and spiritual.

IV. The Supremacy of Christ.—In Jesus Christ the paradox of the universe seemed to find illustration and to receive its explanation. He disdained the aids and recommendations of physical force; He stood simply and solely on His right to the moral allegiance of mankind. In the categories of history He has His place at the head of the exponents of moral force, the prophets, the religion founders, the martyrs. For what was more or less obscured and embarrassed in them was in Him apparent and absolute. Amid the appalling circumstances of secular ruin the Spirit of the Crucified rises sublimely, and utters itself in majestic words of faith and love, the undying echoes of which are the rallying cries of human virtue ever since. Take the Seven Words on which the penitent thought of the Church has pondered for nineteen centuries without sounding their depths of meaning, or wearying of their message, and acknowledge, as you must acknowledge, the supreme greatness of man as man is seen in Christ.—H. Hensley Henson.

References.—VIII. 3-5. — A. W. Momerie, *Defects of Modern Christianity and Other Sermons*, p. 266. P. McAdam Muir, *Modern Substitutes for Christianity*, p. 93. J. B. Lightfoot, *Cambridge Sermons*, p. 229. C. Perren, *Outline Sermons*, p. 219. A. Chandler, *A Lent in London*, p. 193. B. Jowett, *Sermons of Faith and Doctrine*, p 1. *International Critical Commentary*, vol. i. p. 61. VIII. 3-8.—B. Jowett, *Sermons of Faith and Doctrine*, p. 1.

GOD'S GREATNESS AND CONDESCENSION

'What is man, that Thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that Thou visitest him?'—Psalm viii. 4.

How are we to learn whether the ancient faith of our race is an illusion or not? How are we to verify the hope that it is possible for man to have access to God?

I. The sense of our insignificance is strengthened by the permanence of God's material works. It is true, indeed, that the earth itself has had its changes. But yet how firm, how strong, how enduring the great forms of Nature appear when compared with ourselves. Nor, again, is it merely the vastness of the great objects of the material universe by which we are sunk into abysses of humiliation in which we begin to be incredible that God should care for us. The humiliation is deepened by the discovery that our own life is akin to the inferior forms of life around us. And still further, when we consider those imperial laws which govern with steadfast and relentless authority the whole range of material existence with which we are acquainted, what presumption there seems to be in supposing that He, from whom those laws derive all their authority, will think of us and care for us one by one. This is the gospel of science—a gospel harder, sterner, more appalling than the law which came from the thunders and lightnings of Sinai. Is it true, or is it false?

II. The whole world in which we live is a mere speck in the universe, and it is said to be incredible that God should have any special care for it, or for those who inhabit it. No doubt the world is very small, but it does not follow that it contains nothing for which the Great Father of us all can think it worth while to care. The second plea is, that the life of a man is brief and momentary compared with the ages during which the universe has existed. No doubt; but science itself suggests a reply to this argument. If the most recent and most fascinating theories of science are ultimately established, it will appear that all these ages have been necessary in order to render it possible for a creature like man to come into existence. The third plea is, that we are encompassed by laws which take no heed of the personal difference of men, of the varieties of their character, of the vicissitudes of their condition. These laws determine our outward destiny; they control our very frame. The whole history of mankind is the proof of man's consciousness of freedom.

III. Where did the Psalmist, where did the Jewish race discover that heaven is so near to earth, and that God has so keen an interest in the life of man? Whence these traditions came we do not know. But these thoughts concerning God and His relations to the universe and to man lay at the very root of the whole life of the Jewish race. The rest of the sacred story was in harmony with the august beginning. Of a creature having such an origin, God could not but be mindful.

IV. The Incarnation is the central truth of the Christian faith; and is the final answer of God to the natural fear of the human heart that God must be too great and high to have any close and permanent relations to our race.

V. The question at issue is, whether God is a God nigh at hand. The majesty of the Divine throne fills men with awe and dread, and they ask, Who are we that we should venture to draw near to God?

VI. If a Church relies for all moral and spiritual good on the reflex influence upon its moral and spiritual life of its own spiritual acts, it is a Church which has renounced its faith in the living God.—R. W. Dale, *Fellowship with Christ*, p. 116.

WHAT IS MAN?

'What is man, that Thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that Thou visitest him?'—PSALM VIII. 4.

IT is easy to imagine the circumstances of the composition of this Psalm. In thought David was a lad again, keeping his flocks on the plains of Bethlehem. In solitude, face to face with Nature, he feels an overwhelming sense of remorseless power. But it was only for a moment that this feeling of helplessness lasted; he had a great counterbalancing thought—he was not really alone, for God was with him.

I. For him Nature was always full of God. His wonder before the powers of Nature gave way to his wonder at the power of God, to amazement at the insoluble problem of man. There stand out before him the vivid contrast—God so great, man so limited and puny as compared with God, and with the mighty forces round him; and yet God was mindful of him. He must have some secret value, some hidden preciousness.

II. Then we turn to ourselves and ask, 'What is man?' What am I? What is my true, my real self? Tell me, does not the great truth of the Christ come to my relief? I hear His voice proclaiming the order of man's complex nature. In Him I see the explanation why God is mindful of man. Was not the underlying, indwelling purpose of the life begun at Bethlehem to tell the world what God is and what man is. He was perpetually teaching, and always assuming, that man is a body, fearfully and wonderfully made, that he is a mind with extraordinary capacities stored in it, but that he is something more, something indestructible, unchangeable, something so essential as to explain the mystery of Bethlehem, the tragedy of Calvary, the ceaseless Intercession, the grace of the Sacraments, the very existence of the Church—there is only one explanation of all these, one key to the problem invalued in each—man is indestructible, unchangeable, a living soul.

III. If God is mindful of His people, can the Church, dare the Church, be unmindful? Can she leave their souls—the real self in each—uncared for and untrained? What can she give in exchange for their souls? What claim can she put forward which can be compared to the duty of caring for and helping them? The Church must care for the people under any aspect of their many-sided lives, but the care finds its climax in that which concerns itself with the real, the highest self.—BISHOP F. E. RIDGEWAY, *The Church Family Newspaper*, vol. xv. p. 472.

THE REAL AND THE IDEAL MAN

'What is man, that Thou art mindful of him?'—PSALM VIII. 4.

I. Man as God Made Him and Meant Him to be—the Ideal Man.

(*a*) Man is made to hold fellowship with God. It was meant that the intercourse should be close, frequent, and familiar. This is the perfection of the reasonable soul made capable of its consciousness of communion with God, that its surface should be a clear reflection on which the light of God should evermore mirror itself.

(*b*) There naturally follows a series of comparisons between men and other orders of being, as his transient inferiority to the loftiest of spiritual beings. This inferiority lies only in the possession of these fleshly bodies which condition and limit the development of the spirit.

(*c*) Man is crowned with glory and honour. These are received from God, and are His own attributes.

(*d*) Man has dominion over all things.

II. This is not What Men Are.—What an awful contrast. Take human nature as we see it, as we feel it in ourselves. Can we lay our fingers upon one man and say—there, that is an embodied ideal of what God meant men to be? The crown has fallen from our heads, for we have sinned. What then? Is hope dead? Has one word of God's become of none effect?

III. This is What One Man is—Christ.—The historical realization has transcended the Psalmist's utterance.

IV. This is What Many Men have Become.—Christ's manhood is the pattern of His people's. Faith is the means by which they shall attain to His standard. So look at the ideal men as a prophecy of a heavenly state only. Then the dream shall be true.—ALEXANDER MACLAREN.

THE PROSPECT OF HUMANITY

'What is man, that Thou art mindful of him?'—PSALM VIII. 4.

HUMANITY is God's capital. The rest is mere machinery. This much have we learnt from the Gospel, and thus do some of us believe. Yet who does not, in certain of his moods, echo the question of the Psalmist?

I. God is mindful of us, and in a way that He is mindful of naught else. All we know concerning the planets is that on some far day before the dawn of time, the thought of God kindled into those swirling fire-balls we now know as stars. There is no evidence that they have ever needed adjustment or any other form of attention. But with man it has been otherwise. For example, you have only to see that this world seems to have been made as an ideal theatre for man's development. Or think again, and realize how by his accumulated skill, the lightning that once terrified him later becomes his errand boy.

II. Yet so is man formed that he does not recognize his climax in personalities that mark the temporary summits of his conquest of Nature. A Brunel, a Darwin, an Edison deserve and receive his admiration. But in them humanity is obviously ascending rather than ascended. These great men always seem to be preparing the way for some one greater still. It is only when men look upon Jesus Christ that they see a point at which a line of human development seems to be finished. Jesus Christ is not only the climax of humanity. He is also the satisfaction of the deepest needs of men. Science can make no response to the deeper needs of humanity. Let a woman grieving for her dead turn to Brunel and say: 'You built the Great Eastern, you raised the bridge that joins Devon

to Cornwall. Can you build me a bark or make a bridge that will bear me to my beloved across the sullen stream of death?' And Brunel is silent. But grief-stricken souls have turned with a similar request to Jesus Christ, and straightway has come the heartening answer, 'I am the Resurrection and the Life'.

III. Affinities are revelations. By our affinities Christ and we alike are classified. By all that He is to God Christ stands in time for what God the Father is in eternity. Let the world go on debating as to whether man is dust, devil, or deity. By the gleam of the inner light we know, by the witness of the Spirit, we recognize ourselves for what we are. —J. G. Stevenson, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxxiv. p. 251.

References.—VIII. 4.—C. Perren, *Outline Sermons*, p. 219. J. Clarke, *Christian World Pulpit*, 1891, p. 261. A. Chandler, *A Lent in London*, p. 193. B. Jowett, *Sermons of Faith and Doctrine*, p. 1. R. Duckworth, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxvii. p. 193. *International Critical Commentary*, vol. i. p. 61. J. B. Lightfoot, *Cambridge Sermons*, p. 229. H. P. Liddon, *Old Testament Outlines*, p. 101. W. Lindsay Alexander, *Christian Thought and Work*, p. 123. J. S. Bartlett, *Sermons*, p. 1. J. Baldwin Brown, *The Higher Life* pp. 1, 387. R. W. Dale, *Penny Pulpit*, Nos. 992, 993. *Homiletic Magazine*, vol. vii. p. 193. VIII. 4, 5.—R. J. Campbell, *City Temple Sermons*, p. 13. *Ibid. A Faith for To-day*, p. 79. W. J. Knox-Little, *Manchester Sermons*, p. 41. S. A. Brooke, *Christ in Modern Life*, p. 365. J. R. Macduff, *Communion Memories*, p. 51.

BUT LITTLE LOWER THAN GOD

'Thou hast made him but little lower than God.' — Psalm viii. 5.

This is the Bible doctrine of the origin of men, and it takes us to the heights. To be a member of the human race, the Psalmist declares, is to come of a great line. It is to have Jehovah for an hereditary ancestor.

I. We may not expect so startling a statement to go unchallenged. There are two facts whose challenge we may consider, inasmuch as the Bible itself considers them in connexion with the text. The first is the challenge of size. It confronted the Psalmist. It overwhelmed him in the very moment he was declaring that man was sprung from God. The doubt which rises in this challenge we all feel. It makes sceptics.

II. The second challenge is more serious still. It is the challenge of sin. It sires the doubt which comes, not as we look round, but as we look within. This is the awful cloud; this is the real tragedy; not what man was before Adam, but what he is after Adam. What has he achieved? What are his accomplishments?

III. Nature itself answers the challenge of size. That is, size is nothing to God. He is as much in the atom as in the universe. The sinner himself refutes the challenge of sin. After the worst has been said about him, there is something in man that refuses to be explained by a process of nature, something that no cell of protoplasm could ever evolve, and no course of discipline excite. The power of thought proves the text. The stars are wonderful, the atoms amazing; but more wonderful is mind that measures them and explains their process.—J. Vance, *The Homiletic Review*, vol. lv. p. 142.

References.—VIII. 5.—H. Melvill, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 2273. VIII. 6.—E. R. Conder, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xix. p. 161. VIII. 6-8.—T. Sadler, *Sermons for Children*, p. 149. VIII.—F. D. Maurice, *Sermons for Country Churches*, p. 148. A. Maclaren, *Life of David*, p. 28. P. Thomson, *Expositor* (2nd Series), vol. i. p. 173. C. Kingsley, *Sermons for the Times*, p. 148. IX.—*International Critical Commentary*, vol. i. p. 68.

Psalm viii.

Melanchthon describes this Psalm as both a thanksgiving and a prophecy of the deliverance and eternal glory of the Church which has been gathered out of all the human race. It is, in his view, an answer to the saying that the best is never born or perishes very quickly. 'That saying would be true, if man were destined only for this mortal life, which is so full of cares, for far sadder and more terrible evils befall man than any of the other animals.' Still man's lot is better than theirs, because God has revealed Himself to the human race by many great and noble signs, and desires that men should praise Him, and be crowned by Him with everlasting glory. For these benefits the Psalmist returns thanks, and at the same time he prophesies of that marvellous glory.

'Thou hast put all things under his feet.' The writer asks whether the spectators who saw St. John the Baptist put to death by Herod, or St. Paul killed by Nero, could have had any idea that these martyrs were crowned with glory and honour, and that all things were put under their feet. They thought the martyrs far more wretched than the lions whom they beheld in the amphitheatre.

In a later paragraph the writer says that although he interprets this Psalm as referring to the Church as a whole, still he does not disapprove of the exposition which attributes it to Christ, the Church's Head. 'For Christ put aside His glory for a little while, being made a curse for us. Afterwards He was again crowned with glory, and through his merits the Church receives righteousness and everlasting life.'

Readers who remember the strong fascination which astrological studies held through life for the 'Præceptor Germaniæ,' will look with curious interest for his comments on vv. 3, 4.

'When I consider Thy heavens, the work of Thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained.'

He touches the passage very briefly and in the tone of a sentence which occurs in one of his letters, 'Christ rules all things, even the stars'.

'*Videbo coelos tuos*: that means, the eternal kingdom will be established; we shall see the everlasting heavens, in which we shall enjoy the company of God and shall no longer be subject to death and sin, as we are here upon earth.'

All the later verses of the Psalm are interpreted in a Messianic sense.

References.—IX. 1.—Spurgeon, *Morning by Morning*, p. 304. IX. 4.—J. P. Chown, *Contemporary Pulpit*, vol. ii. 63. IX. 6.—Bishop Magee, *The Gospel and the Age*, p. 33.

THE CHARACTER OF GOD

'They that know Thy Name will put their trust in Thee.'—PSALM IX. 10.

THE name of God always means, in the Bible, the nature and character of God. Our religion in its very essence necessarily depends upon our conception of the nature and character of our God. Your idea of God, your belief about what He is in nature and character, is bound to colour all your relations to Him. I might, of course, say a great deal about the conception of God which is given to us in the Christian revelation, but for the many things that might be said I shall just now think about only three. I single them out, not because they are the only things, but because they happen to be things which intelligent people are thinking a great deal about just now, and about which there is apt to be an absence of clear apprehension and consistent idea.

I. God is a Personal Being.—That may seem to you so simple and so certain, perhaps, that it is quite needless to say anything about it. But it is not needless, because there are many people nowadays who are getting very hazy indeed about this cardinal truth of Christianity, the personality of God. The trend of a great deal of the so-called scientific thought of the day is to recognize a great, mysterious, primal force behind the forces of the universe; a great, mysterious life behind all the forms of life; we are led by these scientists to infer that that force is, what theologians have been accustomed to call God, and that that life is what theologians have been used hitherto to call God; but we are not by any means assured that that force is personal, or that that life is personal; rather the natural inference is that it is impersonal, that it has the nature almost of a vast automatic machine, that it is a vast neuter energy. When you come to ask, 'Has this force and this life the attributes of a person? does it, as a person does, think and will and purpose, and above all does it love?' why then the answer given is very hesitating, or there may be no answer at all. The cardinal, primal truth of Christianity is that God is person; you must not let that go whatever you do.

II. God is Immanent, or Indwelling in His Universe.—And here I think you get the truth of which the doctrine which I have just controverted is a perversion. God is omnipresent, and does pervade His universe; God does move and work in the forces of nature; the life which stirs in the most elementary seed or plant, or in the grown tree, or in the germ or microbe, or in the quadruped, or in the human creature, or in angels or archangels, comes from Him, and is in the deepest sense His life. There is a true sense in which it may be said that God is the soul of His universe, and that the universe is, as Origen called it, the Body of God. All force is His force; His is not only the initial power which first set all things going, but His is the sustaining power which keeps all things moving. His infinite and omnipotent mind and will are the spring and the force and energy which consciously, actively maintains the whole vast, complex, moving, living, growing fabric of the universe. If the life of God ceased for one fragment of a second to beat in the pulse of the universe, in that fragment of a second would the whole universe crumble into absolute nothingness. God is immanent in its creation, He is its soul, its life, its energy, is the present, immediate, instant, unceasing, sustaining cause of all its vitality and its development; in Him all things consist; in Him we (and all things) live and move and have our being; outside of Him, if outside of Him anything could be, is nothingness. But that is not Pantheism, for God is not identical with His universe, although He is immanent in it. God is vastly more than His universe; He transcends it; He could exist independently of it if He so willed; and if He is immanent in His universe it is not as a blind and neuter force, an impersonal energy, but rather as a loving, intelligent, knowing, thinking, planning, personal Being, directing and controlling all, working out a purpose; infinitely strong, infinitely wise, infinitely good; a being, a mind, a soul, a will, a heart.

III. God is Love.—The essence of the religion of Jesus lies here: God is Love. That little, simple sentence of three words of one syllable, is something that we have known all our lives. As an infant you were taught by your mother to repeat it with lisping lips to your father as your first text; God is Love. We have known it all our lives; yes, but do we understand it yet? Do we know the length and breadth and depth and height, the fullness of it? No, it will take all eternity to explore it, to know it, and even then we shall never get to the end of it, for it passeth knowledge; the finite heart of man can never wholly compass the infinite heart of the Divine eternal One. 'God only knows the love of God.'

REFERENCES.—IX. 10.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. iv. No. 237. J. M. Neale, *Sermons on the Apocalypse, etc.*, p. 157. IX. 16.—*Congregationalist*, vol. vi. p. 536. IX. 17.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, No. 344. *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. iv. p. 250. G. Bainton, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. x. p. 221. IX. 18.—Spurgeon, *My Sermon Notes—Genesis to Proverbs*, p. 144. IX.—I. Williams, *The Psalms Interpreted of Christ*, p. 189. X.—*International Critical Commentary*, vol. i. p. 68.

ATHEISM

'The ungodly is so proud that he careth not for God; neither is God in all his thoughts.'—PSALM X. 4.

'The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God.'—PSALM XIV. 1.

THE Psalmist's view of the men whom he calls the 'Ungodly' is explained in those two verses.

I. He does not bring against the ungodly any charge of theoretical Atheism. He is dealing with practical as distinct from theoretical Atheism, and therefore it is that his words have an interest for ourselves. The practical Atheist is he who says not in his speech, not in look or pamphlet, but in his heart, 'There is no God,' one of whom may be said in other words of the Psalmist, 'Neither is God in his thoughts'. The great question for us is really not whether we

confess the existence of a God or not, that may matter little to us, still less perhaps to God—but how far our belief in Him plays an active and practical part in our lives. Do we, as a practical creed in our present time, believe more in the power of God or the power of gold? Do we in our political relations believe more in the right cause or brutal force, or do we say—and this, remember, is the most atheistical thing we can say, far more atheistical than denying the creed—that 'God is on the side of the big battalions?'

II. 'The ungodly is so proud that he careth not for God, neither is God in all his thoughts.' The ungodly is so proud. When Holy Scripture paints us the picture of an Atheist, it is not the picture of a person in his study inventing arguments against God's existence but rather that of a severely practical person, with plenty of gods of his own, whose only real faith is in material force. We know how across the stage of history those tremendous and portentous figures—Napoleon's and others—havestridden, setting at defiance all spiritual power; saying in their hearts 'There is no God,' but indeed this practical materialism is not confined to them. It is found in lowly places and among quite ordinary men.

III. And so the real question for us is just this—What is our real practical working religion? What do we believe in most? God or Mammon? fear most, poverty or wrong? What do we love most? Worldly power, comfort, success, or purity, righteousness, truth? It is in some such way as this that we shall find out whether we are Atheists or not.—H. R. Gamble, *Christianity and Common Life Sermons*, p. 146.

References.—X. 4.—*International Critical Commentary*, vol. i. p. 68. *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. iv. p. 57. X. 5.—C. Kingsley, *Sermons on National Subjects*, p. 174. X. 13.—J. Bunting, *Sermons*, vol. i. p. 288. X. 16.—Spurgeon, *Evening by Evening*, p. 118. X. 19, 20.—J. H. Newman, *Sermons on Subjects of the Day*, p. 256. X.—I. Williams, *The Psalms Interpreted of Christ*, p. 212. XI.—*International Critical Commentary*, vol. i. p. 88.

THE LORD IN HIS TEMPLE

'If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do? The Lord is in His holy temple.'—Psalm xi. 3, 4.

I. To the question 'what can the righteous do?' the old reply must be given: 'The Lord is in His holy temple'. This is the great creed. It involves much that does not appear. The first thing that it involves is the personality of our God and Father; and that personality of our God and Father takes up into itself all the attributes that in Revelation are ascribed to Him. There is His omniscience, and therefore, there is nothing that man can discover that is unknown to God. There is His omnipotence; there is nothing that man can do that is outside the power of God. And there is His omnipresence. Wherever man goes the Lord is in His holy temple. He is with His believing child; He is with His struggling society; He is with the Catholicity of His Church; so that when dangers threaten, the cry of His people will be the cry of the Psalmist and the cry of one who knew how to expect deliverance from the mercy of His heavenly Father.

II. **Anti-religious Philosophy.**—I regard the greatest danger which religion has to face in our century as a non-religious philosophy. Call it naturalism, call it monism, call it agnosticism. Those who give us these ideas are in our own land and in other lands. They make short work of all that we hold vital and precious in the Christian faith. They give us instead grim negations of even the strongest and deepest instincts of every human soul. One says everything is by natural means. Another says nature is all-sufficient. A third says there can be no intervening influence from without or beyond nature.

III. The Denial of Personality.—But whether God be openly denied, or whether He be regarded as a stream or tendency or as an eternal energy, or whether His existence and sympathy are to be dismissed in the blank ignorance of the agnostic, 'I do not know,' this is clear; all agree in one thing, and that is, they banish from the world, and they would banish if they dared from the Church, the personality of God. The denial of the personality of God is the overthrow of the responsibility of man; and if you were to ask me, 'what is the danger of England to-day,' I answer, we are in great danger of being affected by an epidemic of irresponsibility. We are making for ourselves the character of a nation that cannot be serious, and this is because of the utter frivolity which is entering into and corroding our moral fibre and, in its best sense, our national virility.

IV. Athirst for God.—The prevailing irresponsibility is to me the outcome of the general apathy to, if not a denial of, the cardinal doctrine of the personality of God. The personality of God corresponds to the personality of the instinct for God. And not all the heaving waves of scepticism or of infidelity can ever hush the cry of the soul, 'My soul is athirst for God. Yea, for the living God.'—W. Lefroy.

References.—XI. 1.—J. Vaughan, *Sermons* (10th Series), p. 109. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xii. No. 691. XI. 5.—Spurgeon, *Evening by Evening*, p. 249. G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 395. XI. 7.—R. Allen, *The Words of Christ*, p. 110.

Psalm xi.

Dr. Ker tells us that when John Welsh and his fellow-captives were summoned from their prison in Blackness, on the Firth of Forth, to appear before the court at Linlithgow, they sang this Psalm as they walked by night under guard to their trial. While they were lying in their dungeon, deep and dark, below the level of the sea, they received a letter from Lady Melville of Culross, bidding them be thankful that they were only 'in the darkness of Blackness, and not in the blackness of darkness'.

They were at length banished 'forth the kingdom,' under the arbitrary government of James VI., who was bent upon the establishment of Episcopacy.

Calderwood says: 'Upon the 6th of Nov. 1606, about the evening, when they were ready to embark, Mr. John Welsh conceived a fervent prayer, on the shore of Leith, and they took good-night of their friends, wives, and acquaintances, and entered in the boat; and after they had waited a good space upon the skipper, because he was not ready, they returned by two hours in the morning, at which time many were present. After prayer, they entered in the boat, with singing the 23rd Psalm. The people were much moved, and prayed heartily for them.'

'For the oppression of the poor, for the sighing of the needy, now will I arise, saith the Lord; I will set him in safety from him that puffeth at him.'—Psalm xii. 5.

This verse was the text of a sermon preached by Dr. Fabricius before Gustavus Adolphus, when he took Augsburg after a severe fight, in which the honour of the day was given by the king to the Scottish Brigade under Colonel Hepburn. A solemn thanksgiving was held in the principal church, and religious liberty was proclaimed in the city of the famous Confession, while the ferocious Tilly, after his defeat, returned breathing out threatenings and slaughter.—John Ker.

REASONS FOR PRAISE

'I will sing unto the Lord, BECAUSE . . .'—Psalm xiii. 6.

There is a reason for singing. The singing that has no reason is really not singing. Why do we sing? what moves the tongue to utterance? Is it because it is time to sing? then the song will be poor and formal. Is it because we are expected to sing? then will the very pith of the song go out of it. Do we sing because we cannot help it? then there may be strong, tender, heaven-seeking music.

'I will sing unto the Lord, because. . . .' What a wonderful misconception there often is about singing! I must hear the words, or the song is lost upon me; I do not know enough about the seven notes and all their interminglings to be able to dispense with distinct articulation on the part of the singer. So to this singing man who comes to-day, who says, 'I will sing unto the Lord,' I say, Why? what are the words? we shall be delighted to hear your song if we understand your sentiment; what are the words? He gives us the words; we can follow this wondrous, sweet-singing man because he pronounces every word without slurring a single syllable. Now let us hear these words and say whether this is an old song, or a new one, or both.

I. 'How long wilt Thou forget me, O Lord?' This is a line of experience worth tracing; this song is true to experience: therefore we wrote it and sang it and own it. We own what we absorb, we own what we appreciate; be it landscape or evening star or the first day of spring, which according to the calendar we have already reached, the bitter east wind notwithstanding: it is still spring, and spring will conquer. Here is a sense of being forgotten. It is a very homely word, but full of tears; it is a black jewel.

Here is a man who has sorrow daily. 'How long shall I take counsel in my soul, having sorrow in my heart daily?' It is that perpetual getting up to sorrow, coming out of sleep to cry still deeper and bitterer rivers of tears. The morning is at hand, the bright vernal morning; rise, O slumberer! And out of the dream-sleep there comes a cry—O how sad!—'To awaken once more only to be reminded that I am God-forgotten and God-forsaken!' That takes the sunlight out of the sky, withers the flowers, and chokes what would have been a song. Yet all the while this man is turning his eyes in the direction of the hills where the great sanctuary is—and still looks up and still hopes.

We contrast the enemy with our weakness and not with God's strength. There are times when I have nothing to do with myself, but look away; remove the hills that I may see further; roll these intercepting mountains into dust and sand, and throw them into the sea, lest they interrupt my view of God. What can a man be or do when he is forgotten of God or imagines so? What can a man do when God's face is hidden? We are the creatures of environment and of circumstance to a very large extent, and a mighty man is he, a giant among the sons of God, who, when the environment is dead against him, can lift up his song or smite his harp with fingers that have music in their very blood.

II. Now the song will alter. The Psalmist says, 'But I have trusted . . .; my heart shall rejoice'. 'Trust'—who can define that term? That is the life of faith; that is the life I want to live. I cannot explain the mysteries, I cannot understand the miracles, I am lost amid gathering clouds of difficulties and inexplicable problems; but one thing I know, that I love the Saviour, and I am waiting for Him; and the moment He comes He will lead and I will tremblingly follow.

III. Now these are the words—what is the ending? 'I will sing unto the Lord, because He hath dealt bountifully with me.' He has turned the darkness into light, mourning into joy, and He has opened the prison doors to my soul when it was bound. Thus we must come back again and again, back to the old grand line of experience. If you can say that all things are shaping themselves into a great temple built for God, you are not far from the Lord's kingdom.—Joseph Parker, *City Temple Pulpit*, vol. v. p. 118.

THE UNBELIEF OF THE FOOL

'The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God.'—Psalm xiv. 1.

I. The fool of the Scripture is a man who has fallen away, little by little, *degree* by *degree*, until he is a *degraded* man. A fool is a vile man, morally degenerate. Here then is the full force of my text—the man who says with an air of laughing and self-satisfied triumph 'There is no God,' is a vile man; at his heart there is moral rottenness; he is a fool! Why does the vile man say 'there is no God'? Because

that is what the vile man wished to believe. The wish was 'father to the thought'. The tendency of sin is to make for unbelief, and much presumptuous scepticism may be traced to the violation of the moral law of God.

II. I do not wish to say that the fool arrives at his savage unbelief in a day. There are intermediate stages in this path of moral and spiritual degradation. Have we ever sufficiently marked that suggestive conjunction in the book of Isaiah where the sins of Israel are named and deplored, and where, after their rebellious acts have been all declared, God says, 'And thou hast been weary of me, O Israel'? One followed as the consequence of the other. A man becomes possessed of this feeling of religious weariness. His prayers are just long yawns. Then he begins to sceptically inquire about the use of prayer. A decision is easily reached that for him at any rate there is no use in prayer. But he cannot stop there. He needs must justify himself, and he finds the amplest and most comfortable justification in the more general statement that all prayer is useless. A man who has lost all belief in prayer to God will speedily pass to the judgment that there is no God to pray to. The man begins by defying God; he ends by denying Him. Uncleanness has worked to spiritual death.—J. H. Jowett, *Apostolic Optimism*, p. 196.

Psalm xiv.

Of all the senseless babble I have ever had occasion to read, the demonstration of these philosophers who undertake to tell us all about the nature of God would be the worst, if they were not surpassed by the still greater absurdities of the philosophers who try to prove that there is no God.—Huxley.

References.—XIV. 1.—G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p 35. J. H. Hitchens, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxvi. p. 424. Canon Henley Henson, *The Value of the Bible*, p. 113. W. Brock, *Midsummer Morning Sermons*, p. 21. *International Critical Commentary*, vol. i. p. 103. XIV.—I. Williams, *The Psalms Interpreted of Christ*, p. 261. XV. 1.—A. P. Stanley, *Canterbury Sermons*, p. 30. E. C. Wickham, *Wellington College Sermons*, p. 116.

Psalm xv.

John Wilson (Christopher North) chooses this Psalm to be sung at the 'elder's death-bed,' for 'it was a custom in Scotland that the ransomed of the Lord returned and came to Zion with songs'.—John Ker.

References.—XV. 2.—T. Sadler, *Sermons for Children*, p. 106. XV.—F. D. Maurice, *Sermons*, vol. ii. p. 69. *International Critical Commentary*, vol. i. p. 112. A. Maclaren, *Life of David*, p. 174. I. Williams, *The Psalms Interpreted of Christ*, p. 272.

ASSURANCE IN GOD

'Preserve me, O God,' etc.—Psalm xvi.

The Psalmist lived in a period when belief in the reality of many gods was still strong, and when a man who would follow the one true God had to prefer to do so against the attractions of other deities, and against the convictions of a great number of his fellow-countrymen that these deities were living and powerful.

I. It is remarkable how, when a man really turns to God, he turns to God's people as well, and how he includes them in the loyalty and in the devotion which he feels toward his Redeemer. His confidence and the sensitiveness of his faith in and toward God become almost an equal confidence and an equal sensitiveness toward his fellow-believers. So it is throughout the Scriptures.

II. In these days such a duty is unfortunately more complicated than with the Psalmist. The line between God's Church and the world is not so clear as it was to him, and the Church is divided into many and often hostile factions. All the more it becomes the test of our religion if our hearts feel and rejoice in the fellowship of God's simpler and more needy and more devoted believers, however unattractive they may otherwise be. This Psalmist's chief and practical help to us men and women to-day is that he became sure of God not because of any miracle or supernatural sign, on his report of which we might be content indolently to rest our faith, but in God's own providence in his life and in God's quiet communion with him through the organs God Himself has created in every one of us. For all time, whether before or after Christ, these are the chief grounds and foundations of faith in God.

III. God's guidance of his life, first of all, produces in a man a great sense of stability. He who has found God so careful of him, he whom God hath regarded as worth speaking to and counselling and disciplining him, will be certain that he shall endure, provided that he is sure of his own loyalty. The life so loved of God, so provided for, and in such close communion with the Eternal is not, cannot be, the creature of the day, and this assurance stands firm in face of even death and the horrible corruption of the body. We are assured of the future life because we have known God, and as we have found Him to be true to us and proved ourselves true to Him.—George Adam Smith, *Homiletic Review*, 1906, vol. lii. p. 458.

Psalm xvi.

This Psalm was the last Scripture read by Hugh M'Kail the evening before his execution in the Grassmarket of Edinburgh. After reading it he said to his father, and those about him: 'If there were anything in this world sadly and unwillingly to be left, it were the reading of the Scriptures. I said: "*I shall not see the Lord, even the Lord, in the land of the living*". But this needs not make us sad; for where we go, the Lamb is the book of Scripture, and the light of that city, and where He is, there is life,—even the river of the water of life, and living springs.'—John Ker.

DEATH THE GATE OF LIFE

'Therefore my heart is glad.'—Psalm xvi. 9-11.

The very sight of the tremendous and irresistible power of death draws one to think of its weakness and limitations. We have here a saint of old who had no such light as ours in the very act of rising by

virtue of his religious experience to the loftiest elevation of triumphant confidence.

I. The Grounds of the Triumphant Confidence.—The realization of Jehovah's presence at his right hand; the blessedness and stability which flowed therefrom; these are the facts which lead the singer to grasp the confidence that he will never die.

(*a*) The capacity to commune with God is surely an indication of something in humanity which is not born for death.

(*b*) The exercise of that capacity makes it for the man himself an absolute impossibility to conceive that such a thing as death should have power over it.

II. The Contents of the Triumphant Confidence.—(*a*) In a very real sense we see here the religious life abolishing death even while it did not see the way in which its confidence was to be fulfilled.

(*b*) The whole course of the devout soul will be in the way of life in the deepest sense. *Mors janua vitæ;* the road to life leads through death. That thought was trembling on the Psalmist's lips.

III. The Fulfilment of the Confidence.—The Psalmist's hopes were not fully realized because his communion was not perfect. But Christ has conquered death for us all, and now with the light of His resurrection we can take the words of the text with deeper meaning.—Alexander Maclaren.

References.—XVI. 8.—M. R. Vincent, *God and Bread*, p. 59. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxii. No. 1305. *Homiletic Magazine*, vol. xii. p. 18. W. F. Shaw, *Sermon-Sketches*, p. 37. XVI. 8-10.—Archbishop Thomson, *Lincoln's Inn Sermons*, p. 62. XVI. 8-11.—A. Maclaren, *Sunday Magazine*, 1881, p. 738. XVI. 9.—A. R. Ashwell, *God in His Work and Nature*, p. 1. XVI. 9, 10.—'Plain Sermons' by contributors to *Tracts for the Times*, vol. ix. p. 120. XVI. 10.—J. Keble, *Sermons for Easter to Ascension Day*, pp. 74, 128. C. Stanford, *From Calvary to Olivet*, p. 24. *Expositor* (3rd Series), vol. v. p. 308. *Ibid.* (2nd Series), vol. vii. p. 40.

EMOTIONS OF A SAINT IN HEAVEN

'In Thy presence is fulness of joy.'—Psalm xvi. 11.

Heaven is the Christian's goal.

I. He has been made the subject of a change that affects everything connected with him save his identity.

II. The unencumbered action of the spirit.

III. The friendships of heaven will be of a higher order than those of earth.

IV. He will stand in the presence of Christ.

This faint view of the joys of the redeemed inspires two reflections:—

(*a*) That excessive grief over the departed is unwarranted.

(*b*) That we should make sure of our inheritance with the saints in light.—A. S. Gardner, *Pulpit and Grave*, p. 251.

References.—XVI. 11.—H. Moffat, *Church Sermons*, vol. i. p. 49. XVI.—*International Critical Commentary*, vol. i. p. 117. W. F. Shaw, *Sermon-Sketches*, p. 37. J. Hammond, *Expositor* (1st Series), vol. iv. p. 341. I. Williams, *The Psalms Interpreted of Christ*, p. 279. XVII. 3.—H. P. Liddon, *Contemporary Pulpit*, vol. ii. p. 193. XVII. 5.—Parker, *City Temple*, vol. i. p. 60. XVII. 7.—Spurgeon, *Morning by Morning*, p. 141. XVII. 8.—F. W. Brown, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. i. p. 190. E. A. Bray, *Sermons*, vol. i. p. 114. G. Bainton, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxxi. p. 244. XVII. 13.—E. Thring, *Uppingham Sermons*, vol. ii. p. 128.

MEN OF THE WORLD

'Men of the world, which have their portion in this life.'—Psalm xvii. 14.

To every young man there comes, sooner or later, the brief but startling message which God addressed to Abraham when he was in Ur of the Chaldees—'Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will show thee'. You cannot always abide in the home of your childhood.

I. Think of the portion which belongs to men of the world. There is not a greater mistake than to imagine that you will be heart-rich as soon as you become purse-rich. Riches do make happy; but it is not the riches of the pocket, but the riches of the mind and heart. The riches of taste, of culture, of affection, and, above all, the riches of God's grace, which impart capacities of deep and intense enjoyment, otherwise unknown. Although every age has had its philosophers and its moralists, proclaiming that money will not bring happiness, it is as little believed to-day as ever it was.

II. The contrast, as suggested by David's words in the next verse—'As for me, I will behold Thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with Thy likeness'.

(*a*) If you study the Bible, you will find that when reference is made to the 'face of God,' there is generally allusion to Jesus Christ, His Son. We are said to behold Him 'in the face of Jesus Christ'. The Psalmist means that he will fix his eye on God, as reconciled to him through the righteousness of the Redeemer. He will enjoy the light of His favour. He will bask in the sunshine of His smile. This, believe me, is the first secret of a happy life. If you want to know the joy of a heart at rest, the first thing you have to do is to get right with God.

(*b*) 'I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with Thy likeness.' Satisfied when? 'When I awake.' This is commonly interpreted as having reference to the morning of resurrection, when, aroused from the long slumber of the tomb, the perfected saint shall arise in the image of his Saviour. And, truly, the moment of resurrection will be the first moment in our history, when, in the fullest, amplest sense of the word, we shall be able to say, 'I am satisfied!' 'I have all that I can desire.'—J. Thain Davidson, *The City Youth*, p. 168.

Reference.—XVII. 14.—*Expositor* (3rd Series), vol. v. p. 308.

THE TWO AWAKINGS

'I shall be satisfied, when I awake with Thy likeness.'—Psalm xvii. 15.

'As a dream when one awaketh; so, O Lord, when Thou awakest, Thou shalt despise their image.'—Psalm lxxiii. 20.

The period to which both David and Asaph look in these two verses is the end of life. The words of

both, taken in combination, open out a series of aspects of that period which carry weighty lessons, and to which we turn now.

I. The first of these is that to all men the end of life is an Awakening. The representation of death most widely diffused among all nations is that it is a sleep. The reason for that emblem is easily found. Men prefer not to name their God or their dread, but find roundabout phrases for the one, and coaxing, flattering titles for the other. But that emblem, true and sweet as it is, is but half the truth. We shall sleep, yes; but we shall wake too. To our true selves and to God we shall wake.

II. The second principle contained in our text is that death is to some men the awakening of God. For the long years of our stay here, God's seeking love lingers round every one of us, yearning over us, besetting us behind and before, courting us with kindness, lavishing on us its treasures, seeking to win our poor love. The judgment sleeps; the loving forbearance, the gracious aid wake. But remember that that predominating, merciful, and long-suffering character of God's present dealings affords no guarantee that there will not come a time when the slumbering judgment will stir to waking. The Bible which is our only source of knowledge on the subject tells us that men who have been compassed with the loving kindness of the Lord, and who die leaving worldly things and keeping worldly hearts, will have to confront 'the terror of the Lord'.

III. Death is the annihilation of the vain show of worldly life. Nothing that is without a man can make him rich or restful. That which we are makes us rich or poor, that which we own is a trifle. Let us see to it that not in utter nakedness do we go hence, but clothed with that immortal robe, and rich in those possessions that cannot be taken away from us, which they have who have lived on earth as heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ.

IV. Finally, death is for some men the annihilation of the vain shows in order to reveal the dread reality. We have here the blessed confidence that when all the baseless fabric of the dream of life has faded from our opening eyes we shall see the face of our ever-loving Lord God. And seeing God we shall be satisfied.—Alexander Maclaren.

'I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with Thy likeness.'—
Psalm xvii. 15.

This text, in its Latin rendering, *Satiabor cum apparuerit gloria tua*, was the passage chosen by Henri Perreyve for his epitaph. 'He had put his whole soul,' says Père Gratry, 'into that cry of faith, hope, and love.'

The mother of Susannah Wesley, passed away exclaiming: 'I will die praising Thee—I shall be satisfied when I awake with Thy likeness—satisfied! satisfied!'

Melanchthon says: 'The true Church is subjected in this life to the cross. But a word of comfort is spoken about the eternal life: *Satiabor cum surget imago tua*, that is to say, when Thou restorest Thy perfect likeness in the resurrection of the dead.'

'AS FOR ME—'

Mr. Pike of Yarmouth. On Sunday, 17 January, 1858, just after giving out his text, which was the last verse of the 17th Psalm, 'As for me, I will behold Thy face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with Thy likeness'; with the words 'as for me' upon his lips, he was smitten with death, and was buried in the chapel-yard on the 22nd of the month.

References.—XVII. 15.—J. Vaughan, *Sermons* (7th Series), p. 127. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. i. No. 25. *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. v. p. 180. T. Binney, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. i. p. 120. G. Matheson, *Moments on the Mount*, p. 39. *Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. iii. p. 277. *Homiletic Magazine*, vol. xiv. p. 233. XVII.—*International Critical Commentary*, vol. i. p. 127. I. Williams, *The Psalms Interpreted of Christ*, p. 296. XVIII. 1.—John Thomas, *Myrtle Street Pulpit*, vol. ii. p. 290. XVIII. 9.—J. E. Vaux, *Sermon Notes* (4th Series) p. 10. XVIII. 16.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxiv. No. 1432.

Psalm xviii. 17-19.

These words were sung upon the scaffold by four sons of the Huguenots:—

'He delivered me from my strong enemy, and from them which hated me: for they were too strong for me.

'They prevented me in the day of my calamity: but the Lord was my stay

'He brought me forth also into a large place; he delivered me because he delighted in me.'

They were sung by the last martyrs of the desert, Francis Rochette, and three brothers of the name of Grenier, who suffered as late as 1762, under the reign of Louis XV.—John Ker.

THE IRONY OF GOD

'Unto the froward Thou wilt show Thyself froward.'—
Psalm xviii. 26.

'The pure thinks God is pure, the froward thinks God is froward.'

I. The froward think that God is froward. Sinners think that God is altogether One such as themselves. Even in the hour of death the most abandoned sinners go to meet God without a tremor. There are others who, while they know that God is angry with them and their sins, yet do not feel that it is with a terrible and alarming anger. Now there are many facts in life which the most honest minds find hard to reconcile with God's holiness. Look at some of those facts. (*a*) How many opportunities for sin there are in the world. (*b*) Again, how often, when men begin to sin, they begin to succeed. (*c*) On the other hand, how often the moment men cease from sinning they begin to fail. (*d*) Again, some of the highest forces in the world are on the side of evil.

II. With the pure God shows Himself to be pure. They see that the froward is the victim of illusions, and, in spite of all appearances, that God is perfect in holiness. They see that all these untoward facts only mean that temptation is an element in life. Tempted purity is the purest, and the fire is intended not to consume, but to purify the gold.

III. But what is the reason of God's creation of this strange law, that what a man is shall determine his thought of God, so that with the froward He shows Himself perverse? The answer is, God uses irony in His dealings with men. One or two instances will illustrate this Divine use of irony. (*a*) Is it not an irony that the kingdom of good often comes in this world by the victory and not the defeat of the kingdom of evil. (*b*) Is it not an irony that men often sin to gain an end, and miss the very end they sin to gain? (*c*) And is not this an irony that men who reject God and His wisdom often in their calculations miss out the only things which are certain to happen?

IV. The reason of God's use of irony in his dealings with men. If we are not open to the conviction that we are sinners, He will convince us that we are fools. And nothing shows the proud their folly so effectually as irony. Behind the Divine laughter there is love. Behind the sarcasm there is yearning; the irony is the hunger of a heart seeking to save.—E. Aldom French, *God's Message through Modern Doubt*, p. 15.

References.—XVIII. 25, 26.—J. Service, *Salvation Here and Hereafter*, p. 156. XVIII.—*International Critical Commentary*, vol. i. p. 137.

LEAD, KINDLY LIGHT

'Thou wilt light my candle: the Lord my God will enlighten my darkness.'—Psalm xviii. 28.

There is in man something to which the Divine taper can be applied. The image and superscription of God imprinted upon him have not been completely effaced. And yet man can shine, as does the man with a light that is borrowed.

I. Only He Who in the beginning said, 'Let there be light,' Who 'is light,' and in Whom 'is no darkness at all,' can light the human lamp: and when a man's lamp is thus lit, he not only finds his own path bright, but, reflecting the Divine rays, he becomes a lamp to others who are groping their way amid the gloom and terror of the night.

II. There is perhaps no single word which is so expressive of everything that is good, and consequently so satisfying to man on every side of his nature as the word 'light'. Darkness is chiefly associated with what is bad, hurtful, dangerous. There are times when, on account of the darkness, we cannot see our way. And then we cry, 'Lead, kindly light'.—W. Taylor, *Twelve Favourite Hymns*, p. 63.

References.—XVIII. 28.—H. P. Liddon, *Contemporary Pulpit*, Extra No. 4, p. 92. XVIII. 30.—J. C. Miller, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 1035. XVIII. 35.—J. Vaughan, *Sermons*, 4th Series, p. 245. W. M. Taylor, *Limitations of Life, and other Sermons*, p. 344. R. C. Trench, *Sermons in Westminster Abbey*, p. 339. C. J. Vaughan, *Voices of the Prophets*, p. 18. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xii. No. 683. H. Bushnell, *Christ and His Salvation*, p. 18. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xii. No. 683. Leach, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. iv. p. 232. Bishop Woodford, *Sermons on Subjects from the Old Testament*, p. 105. XVIII. 50.—H. Bonar, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xv. p. 177. A. Maclaren, *Life of David*, p. 153.

Psalm xviii. 39, 40.

Clovis, the founder of the French monarchy, whose name in the form of Louis has descended to so many kings, was marching southward from Paris, A.D. 507, to meet the formidable Visigoths in battle. Anxious to forecast the result, he sent messengers to consult the shrine of St. Martin of Tours, the oracle of Gaul. They were told to mark the words of the Psalm chanted, when they entered the church. These were verses 39, 40, and encouraged Clovis to the step which proved decisive in French history:—

'I have wounded them that they were not able to rise; they are fallen under my feet.

'For thou hast girded me with strength unto the battle; thou hast subdued under me those that rose up against me.'—John Ker.

THE HONEY OF GOD'S WORD

Psalm xix.

In the superbly sublime nineteenth Psalm David pronounces God's word to be sweeter than honey and the droppings of the honeycomb. In the same passage he declares that 'it is pure, enlightening the eyes'. Again the Psalmist says 'the entrance of Thy word giveth light'. It is not the careless reading or the listless hearing of the book, but its entrance into the soul which produces this inward illumination. The spiritual eyesight must be opened in order that the spiritual beauty and wisdom and glory of the Divine word may be discovered. The growing Christian never outgrows his Bible; in the exhaustless jewel-mine every stroke of the mattock reveals new nuggets of gold and fresh diamonds.

I. Even as a mental discipline there is no Book like God's Book. The humblest labourer who saturates his mind with this celestial schoolbook becomes a superior man to his comrades—not merely a purer man but a clearer-headed man. It was the feeding on this honey dropping from heaven which gave to the Puritans their wonderful sagacity as well as their unconquerable loyalty to the right.

II. As the sunlight was made for all eyes, so this Book was made for all hearts. It is more than light, for it is an enlightener. Not only does it reveal the grandest, the sublimest and most practical truths, but it improves and enlarges the vision. Who of us that have been sorely perplexed about questions of right and wrong, and puzzled as to our duty, have not caught new views and true views as soon as we dipped into this honeycomb? Poor Cowper, harassed and tormented, found in the twenty-fifth verse of the third chapter of Romans the honey which brought light to his over-clouded soul. There is many a one who can testify how precious honey

from heaven brought light and joy to his eyes when dimmed with sorrow. The exceeding rich and infallible promises were not only sweet, they were illuminating. They lighted up the valley of the shadow of death; they showed how crosses can be turned into crowns, and how losses can brighten into glorious gains.

III. Nothing opens the sinner's eyes to see himself and to see the Saviour of sinners like the simple word. The Bible is a book to reveal iniquity in the secret parts. If the sceptic and the scoffer can be induced to taste some of that honey which Christ gave to Nicodemus, he may find hell a tremendous reality to be shunned, and heaven a glorious reality to be gained.—T. L. Cuyler.

References.—XIX. 1.—E. A. Bray, *Sermons*, vol. ii. p. 16. G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 195. XIX. 1-6.—R. S. Candlish, *The Gospel of Forgiveness*, p. 113. XIX. 1-7.—W. Alexander, *Primary Convictions*, p. 163. XIX. 2.—A. Mursell, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xix. p. 147. XIX. 3.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. iv. p. 249. XIX. 3, 4.—V. W. Gregory, *Expositor* (3rd Series), vol. iii. p. 315. XIX. 4.—W. G. Horder, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. vi. p. 398. XIX. 4-6.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xvii. No. 1020. A. P. Stanley, *Sermons in the East*, p. 71. XIX. 5.—J. Keble, *Sermons for Christmas and Epiphany*, p. 12. XIX. 5, 6.—J. C. Hare, *Sermons in Herstmonceux Church*, p. 227. XIX. 7.—Spurgeon, *My Sermon Notes—Genesis to Proverbs*, p. 147. 7, 8.—A. P. Stanley, *Canterbury Sermons*, p. 30. XIX. 7-9.—G. Matheson, *Expositor* (1st Series), vol. xii. p. 89. XIX. 8.—J. H. Hitchens, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xvii. p. 36. XIX. 11.—H. Melvill, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 2625. XIX. 12.—G. H. Morrison, *The Scottish Review*, vol. ii. p. 134. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. vi. No. 299. *Ibid.* vol. iii. No. 116. J. H. Newman, *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, vol. i. p. 41. H. Thompson, *Concionalia—Outlines for Parochial Use* (1st Series), vol. i. p. 111. XIX. 12-14.—T. G. Selby, *The Imperfect Angel*, p. 88. R. S. Candlish, *The Gospel of Forgiveness*, p. 164.

THE SIN OF SELF-CONFIDENCE

'Keep back Thy servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me: then shall I be perfect, and I shall be clear from great transgression.'—Psalm xix. 13.

Our purpose is to point out that life does not admit of negligence, self-confidence, and venturesomeness; and to urge a close and constant supervision of the soul.

I. To Treat Negligently Our Secret Faults is to become guilty of presumptuous sin. Immediately before our text we listen to the deprecation and appeal, 'Who can discern His errors? Clear Thou me from hidden faults.' Now, by these errors and secret faults we understand the Psalmist to indicate the thought, feeling, and bias which lie back of action, and eventually determine action. In the meditation of the heart, the chambers of the brain, the inclination of the will, action takes its rise and colour; and at this initial point, in the count of the sacred writer, we ought specially to be on our guard. Out of the heart are the issues of life; and this fountain ought to be kept under constant observation, as the inhabitants of volcanic areas watch the movement and colour of the water in the wells. According to the reasoning of the text and context, out of hidden faults spring presumptuous sins, out of presumptuous sins dominant sins, out of dominant sins the great transgression of final apostasy. Medical authority teaches that elephantiasis is sometimes occasioned by the bite of a mosquito; and the student of morals well knows that, as the most monstrous physical maladies arise in microscopic life, so the foulest sins originate in obscure errors of the mind, in distempered imaginations, in morbid feeling, in a bias of the will so faint as easily to escape notice. As St. James diagnoses the situation, each man is tempted when drawn away by his irregular desire, and enticed; then, the irregular desire having conceived, beareth sin; and sin, becoming full grown, brings forth death. The point of the Psalmist, then, is this—that so soon as we discern in thought, emotion, or conduct any thing irregular, false, unhealthy, we ought promptly to take ourselves to task.

II. To Despise the Beginnings of Habit is to become chargeable with presumptuous sin. The Psalmist has here in view the terrible power of evil habit. 'Let them not have dominion over me.' St. Paul refers to the same hateful domination: 'Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey the lusts thereof'. The ancients were only too familiar with tyranny, with its humiliations and cruelty; but they knew no despotism that was so terrible as that of a soul mastered by base desire: the tyranny that outrages reason, puts out the eyes of the heart, silences the conscience, fastens fetters on the will, and thrusts human nature in its inmost self into the bitterest bondage and degradation. To acquiesce in the lordship of lust, or to attempt in unavailing revolt to break its fetters, is the deepest depth of subjection and misery we may know. Let us not be guilty of presumptuous sin in yielding to the temerity which trifles with the beginnings of evil. The crease may be barely discernible, but there character will be rent; the scratch may be inappreciable, but here the soul will be shattered, and, perchance, cast with the rubbish to the void! Snap, then, the spider-thread ere it become a cord of vanity, a cart-rope to drag the tyrant's chariot and the executioner's tumbril. Block the track ere the lawless thought establish a right of way. Quench the kindling spark ere you perish in the impure flame of an infernal martyrdom. 'Stand in awe, and sin not: commune with your own heart upon your bed, and be still.'

III. To Expose Ourselves Unnecessarily to Temptation is an egregious form of presumption. We have already spoken of those wanton persons who are never happy except when courting danger in some shape or other; and this folly finds its parallel in the spiritual life. Surely temptation enough arises out of natural, legitimate life, inevitable dangers stand thick through all the ground; and yet we madly multiply peril to the soul, as the hare-brained will graze the grave. How rashly we expose ourselves to sceptical influences! How heedlessly we take on worldly entanglements!

How apt we are to minimize the perils of passion, feeding without fear! To dabble with any forbidden thing in the moral life is inexcusable folly; for it does not, and it cannot, bring any advantage whatever. The wounds received in the service of sin carry no honour; the ventures made at the bidding of vicious caprice yield no profit; the forbidden precipices we climb with bleeding feet only render our folly the more conspicuous and our punishment the more complete. 'What fruit then had ye at that time in the things whereof ye are now ashamed? for the end of those things is death.'

IV. To Encounter the Inevitable Perils of Life Without Due Preparation is a sin of presumption. Nothing in nature is more remarkable than the way in which the creatures are fortified against their enemies; and it is noted that their defensive armour becomes more exquisite and complete as their assailants increase in power and efficiency. Cacti are preserved by formidable spines. Protective mechanics of a most complicated order are found in a number of plants. All kinds of ingenious weapons are developed by flower, insect, and animal; just the armour that best suits them, being finely adjusted to the severity of their environment. Thus God has not left His people without a 'whole armour'; it would be strangely unlike Him if He had. And that armour is found in the intensity and fullness of their spiritual life. The armour of the saint is not something exterior and artificial: it is the protection that springs from the reality, intensity, and healthiness of the life of the soul. It is in the grasp of the truth by the understanding, in the sensibility of the conscience to righteousness, in the warmth of the heart's love, in the clearness of the vision of the eternal, in the strength of our trust in God, and in the completeness of our consecration to Him. Here is the invulnerable panoply of the saints.—W. L. Watkinson, *The Fatal Barter*, pp. 129-43.

References.—XIX. 13.—Spurgeon, *Evening by Evening*, p. 76. XIX. 13.—J. Keble, *Sermons for Lent to Passiontide*, p. 95.

Psalm xx.

The famous physician, Sir James Y. Simpson, was one of a family which had the privilege of a pious mother. She was early left a widow, and had many a perplexing thought and sore struggle in providing bread for her household. When she was hard pressed with thinking and toiling, and could not see her way through, she used to sit down and repeat the 20th Psalm. She rose refreshed, and her children learned to call it 'mother's Psalm'.

Jehovah hear thee in the day
When trouble He doth send:
And let the name of Jacob's God
Thee from all ill defend.

O let Him help send from above,
Out of His sanctuary:
From Sion, His own holy hill,
Let Him give strength to thee.

—John Ker.

References.—XX. 1.—J. Baldwin Brown, *The Sunday Afternoon*, p. 45. J. M. Neale, *Sermons on Passages from the Psalms*, p. 9. XX. 1, 2.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. ii. p. 414. XX. 1-7.—J. Bowstead, *Practical Sermons*, vol. ii. p. 222.

'Remember all thy offerings and accept thy burnt sacrifice.'—Psalm xx. 3.

This text was quoted by Henri Perreyve in the letter he wrote to his friend Charles Perraud from Hyères on 18 December, 1857. Henri Perreyve was at that time a deacon, looking forward to priest's orders. Charles Perraud had just been ordained to the priesthood. The motto of the letter, repeated for each paragraph, is 'the sacramental greeting of the deacon,' 'The Lord be with you'. 'May He be with you in your griefs to comfort you! With you in your joys to sanctify them! With you in your longings to make them fruitful. *Memor sit omnis sacrificii tui et holocaustum tuum pingue fiat.*'

References.—XX. 5.—D. Burns, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xiii. p. 81. J. Bunting, *Sermons*, vol. ii. p. 99. XX. 7.—H. Melvill, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 1593. G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 177. XXI. 2.—M. G. Pearse, *Sunday Magazine*, 1884, p. 605.

PREVENIENT GRACE

'Thou hast given him his heart's desire, and hast not withholden the request of his life. For Thou preventest him with the blessings of goodness.'—Psalm xxi. 2, 3.

This Psalm is a battle song, a thanksgiving after the battle. It is full of the glow of triumph, the exultation of victory.

I. There has been a change of meaning in the word prevent since our English translation; or rather, as so often happens in the history of words, the meaning has taken on a different colour. 'Prevent' means simply to go before, and in the sense of our text meant to go before in order to help, to clear the way of difficulties, to anticipate, and prepare for the person following. There is in theology a term, still used, prevenient grace, meaning the grace which acts on a sinner before repentance inducing him to repent, the grace by which he attains faith and receives power to will the good. But we must not limit God's prevenient grace to the act of repentance, to the steps which lead up to the consciousness of sonship with God. When we do awaken to that consciousness we will, like the Psalmist, look back and see how God has been in the past leading, guiding, guarding, shepherding us, preventing, going before us with the blessings of goodness. We can point to this place and to that in our life's history where we have been kept from wrong by being kept from the opportunity. What we in blindness called hindering has been really helping.

II. Faith is of a piece. It believes about the future what it believes about the past; for God to it is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. We cannot live by faith now, and look forward to the fruition of faith in the days to come, unless we also interpret the past by faith. God's dealings with us are consistent. There is no break in His providence. His grace is not intermittent. It is prevenient, as

well as present. Our future may be obscure; we may not be able to see very far ahead a clear path for our feet; but we know already what it is to walk by faith when sight has failed us. Difficulties may even at this moment loom before us; but there have often been difficulties in our lives which when we went up to them vanished as if some one had gone before us and cleared the way, like the women who went on their loving errand to the sepulchre of their Master very early in the morning, with sinking hearts, saying in despair: 'Who shall roll away the stone from the door of the sepulchre? And when they looked they saw that the stone was rolled away.' We expected to be stopped, as the women did, by some insurmountable obstacle; but when we came up to it we saw our way past, and even when it seemed to block the way utterly we were enabled to make it a stepping-stone to higher things.

III. Even the valley of the shadow of death cannot bring evil. The love which illuminated all the day of life to us shall make our bed in dying, and in the eventide it shall also be light. Prevenient grace will not cease at death. Our faith fails not even here, and tells us that God goes before us with the blessings of goodness. 'I go,' said the Master, 'to prepare a place for you.' The forethought of love can never be exhausted. Our place has ever been prepared for us, and ever shall be. He has prepared our place for us at His Table. The broken bread and the poured out wine are symbols of that love in its culmination, tokens of the deathless love of God in Christ Jesus.—Hugh Black, *Christ's Service of Love*, p. 209.

PREVENIENT GOODNESS

'Thou preventest him with the blessings of goodness.'—Psalm xxi. 3.

The word 'prevent' here is used in a different sense from that which it now bears. It has no suggestion of hindering about it; it means to anticipate or go before. 'Thou preventest him with the blessings of goodness'—thou goest on ahead—thou art in front. When the king reaches such and such an hour, he will discover that it has been prepared for. It is that assurance of a foreseeing power, of a footstep and a figure on ahead, which quieted and cheered the Psalmist's soul, and helped him to be brave against the morrow. The Psalmist knew that Jehovah was behind him, in the subtle interweavings of the past. He knew that God was with him in the present, invisible, yet nearer than his breathing. But he knew also, and there were times for him when the thought was inexpressibly refreshing, that the path he should have to tread to-morrow was being shaped by hands Divine to-day. God is not only with us as we journey. God is on before us as we journey. First, we shall look at the beginning of life; next, at the progress of life; and lastly, at the end of life.

I. Think, then, of the beginnings of life, and of the state of things which then awaited us.

1. And first remember how when we were born we came into a *world* that was prepared. 'Thou hast formed the world to be inhabited' is one of the deep sayings of the prophets. For whatever ends the world has been created, it has been fashioned upon the lines of man. It has been decked in beauty for the human eye; covered with sustenance for the human frame; stored with energies that would have slept unused, but for the large intelligence of man. Nature has been getting ready for millenniums, since she awoke from the primeval chaos; and in her depths, and on her hills of pasturage, has been preparing for this very hour.

2. Again, let us bear this in mind, that we were born into a *society* that was prepared. Life perishes without a right environment, and an environment contains a thousand yesterdays. Thou goest before us with the blessings of goodness. We are all aristocrats and born into a heritage. We struggle through broken efforts into speech, and the speech of a little child is always wonderful. And yet the Celt is in it, and the Saxon, and the pride and chivalry of Norman conquerors, and it has been shaping for a thousand years that it might be ready for the child to-day.

3. And more than that, is it not also true that we were born into a *home* that was prepared? God has not only been busy in the world; God has also been busy in the home. Sometimes there comes a visitor to see us of whose coming we had no anticipation. He has been long abroad and for years we have not seen him, until one day he is standing at our door. But it is not thus that into Christian homes there come the joy and mystery of childhood. The child is born in a prepared place, and love has been very busy with its welcome. Thou goest before us with the blessings of goodness. Thou touchest hearts to fatherhood and motherhood. Thou givest to the little helpless child the sign and seal of sacramental baptism. And the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ is there, and the memory of His love for little ones, and the cleansing of blood that was poured out in ransom, not yesterday, but long centuries ago.

II. In the second place, think of the progress of life as we advance in it from stage to stage. God is not only behind us in our memories, God is also before us in the way.

1. Think, for example, of the surprise of life—its unexpected and unlooked-for element. There is not a life so dull and commonplace but has had ample experience of that. Our joys surprise us like birds upon the wing, flashing upon us suddenly and strangely

2. Or think again of the cravings of our life; those longings that beset us as we journey. Our life is measured not by what we win: our life is measured by the thing we strive for. As a man deepens so his longings deepen, till they reach to the infinite and the eternal. And the strange thing is, that as these cravings alter, and rise from the transient to the enduring, so God is ever there before us, with His prepared answer to our quest.

III. Does not this thought illuminate the close of life? Thou goest before us into the dark valley. 'I

go to prepare a place for you,' said Christ. Whatever hell be, it is not man's environment. It was prepared for the devil and his angels. Whatever heaven be, it is man's native place, prepared for him from the foundation of the world. And then within that kingdom, all made ready, there is to be the individual touch—I go to prepare a *place* for you.—G. H. Morrison, *The Return of the Angels*, p. 143.

THE PREVENIENT GOODNESS OF THE LORD

'Thou preventest him with the blessings of goodness.'—Psalm xxi. 3.

The wonderful way in which God is beforehand with men always.

I. Let us remember how obvious it is with regard to our first appearance in this world at all. Before you put your tender cutting into the ground you are careful to prepare a fitting soil that it may take root readily. And before He plants His children in this world the Heavenly Husbandman is at singular pains to secure that the place they are to occupy be in rich readiness and favourable for their bearing the fruit he looks for from their lives.

(*a*) That at least among ourselves is the rule. It is true there are exceptions—or what must seem to us to be so. There are children born into the world for whom you would say little preparation had been made by any one. Is God beforehand with them with the blessings of goodness. One thing is certain; that He has the strangest ways of blending His mercy even with the most untoward environment.

(*b*) There can hardly, I should think, be any one here but will find upon reflection how wonderfully his place in the world was prepared for him before he came to occupy it. Who is it that says that if you are to give a child a good education you must begin a hundred years before he is born? All down the generations the lot we should in due time stand in has been growing more goodly and favourable. Richly significant as such preparation for their arrival here may be, its influence nevertheless must be largely lost on men but for a further preparation made in the sphere that lies closer about them still. To have first drawn breath then, in a truly Christian home is to have been born to an inheritance which not all the world's wealth could buy.

(*c*) All this prevenient loving-kindness of God was expressed towards us in our baptism. For baptism is the seal of our lineage, and signifies that we come of the elect stock.

II. All through life the same truth holds—how not merely at the beginning but from stage to stage thereafter God is beforehand with men. Take an illustration or two; for example:—

(*a*) The great joys of life. As a rule these are not of a man's own working. They arrive we know not whence or how. And what does this mean but just that the Divine loving-kindness had prepared for us such mercy, and then at the fitting moment laid it bare.

(*b*) The great sorrows and trials of life. If not at the time then later men and women become aware of the Divine purpose that was in their loss and pain. It is not given to all God's children while presently under discipline to recognize the meaning and the mercy of it; but when they have emerged it is.

(*c*) Or, once more, take temptation, that constant element in our lives. But with the temptation there is always a strength available for the bearing of it, which if we seize and are not overborne by it, nothing but good is the issue. It teaches faith. It teaches to pray.

III. Finally observe how the truth we are dealing with, and which is realized so unbrokenly through life, holds good to the end.

(*a*) Life of course does wear to a close, and not all men are able to ignore it. Some are even haunted by the thought. What those who though believers must lay to heart is that their dying also, as well as everything else in their history, has been long ago provided for.

(*b*) As for what they find upon the other side what shall we say of it? It is upon no barren shore that they step forth, but upon a better country, and one where they are looked for. Our Lord says a great word about it when He bids the faithful look to be bidden welcome to a kingdom 'prepared' for them 'from the foundations of the world'.

(*c*) It would seem that a more special provision of His mercy still is made for His children in the world to come, for He Who came from thence and went thither again has gone 'to prepare a place for them'—that is, surely, a place of His own for each. We may believe that whatever our appointed place hereafter may be, it will not be so strange and unfamiliar as we are apt to think.—A. Martin *Winning the Soul*, p. 199.

THE MINISTRY OF SURPRISE

'Thou preventest him with the blessings of goodness.'—Psalm xxi. 3.

The element of surprise in the handiwork of God.

I. In nature. We talk of the uniformity of nature, and it is wonderful with what a steady march the days and seasons keep their appointed course: 'While the earth remaineth, seed-time and harvest, and heat and cold, and summer and winter, shall not fail'. Now you would think it would be a dull dead world where everything was so uniform as that. Well I believe it is that dread monotony that God averts by His strange and beautiful method of surprise. I may have watched the coming of a score of spring-times; but when the next spring comes, with its throat of music and its cloak of green, it is all so fresh and wonderful to me as if there had never been a spring before. The glad surprise of every dawn and May day, in the teeth of iron and inexorable law, speaks better than a hundred arguments, of the presence of an immanent Creator.

II. The element of surprise, too, is found in human character. In our most commonplace neighbour there is something that in a twinkling upsets our calcula-

tions. We thought we knew our neighbour perfectly. But suddenly he is forced by opportunity, or a staggering blow falls, or a great crisis comes, and there flash upon the man such gleams of heroism, such dauntless resource, such noble fortitude, that our old estimates go by the board at once. There were deeps in him that we had never dreamed of.

III. This feature of surprise, again, has a large place in God's providential dealings, so large that we all know the maxim of a shrewd observer: it is the unexpected that happens. We read about the call of David. We read of Samuel in the house of Jesse. And when Eliab came—big, brave, and handsome, Eliab the first-born, every inch a king—Samuel was certain this was Saul's successor. But God was as certain Eliab was not—His king was out on the hills with the sheep that morning. A minister gets home from his pulpit of a night, and sits down and says, 'I have done well to-day,' and in the judgment of heaven it may have all been failure. And another Sabbath his heart is sick: no one is listening: he failed; and souls will bless God to all eternity that they were touched and kindled by that message. It is God's surprise in providential dealing.

IV. But I think it is in the life of Jesus Christ that the method of surprise comes to its Crown. Is there no surprise that the cradle was a manger? Is it not surprising that the King of Life should have been slain by cruel hands upon the Cross? We do not feel the marvel of it, because it is all familiar in our ears as household words. Did it come new to us, and freshly as the dawn, and find us unsophisticated, child-like, we should begin to marvel at it more.—G. H. Morrison, *Flood-Tide*, p. 252.

References.—XXI. 3.—S. Martin, *Westminster Chapel Pulpit* (1st Series), No. 2. J. E. Vaux, *Sermon Notes* (4th Series), p. 62. *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. v. p. 15. XXI.—I. Williams, *The Psalms Interpreted of Christ*, p. 380. XXII. 1.—J. Pulsford, *Our Deathless Hope*, p. 92. Spurgeon, *Morning by Morning*, p. 106. XXII. 1-5.—J. Keble, *Sermons for the Holy Week*, p. 373. XXII. 2.—S. Horne, *The Soul's Awakening*, p. 131. XXII. 6-13.—J. Keble, *Sermons for the Holy Week*, p. 380. XXII. 7.—Spurgeon, *Morning by Morning*, p. 105. XXII. 9, 10.—J. Keble, *Sermons for Christmas and Epiphany*, p. 139. XXII. 11.—H. P. Liddon, *Old Testament Outlines*, p. 104. XXII. 14.—Spurgeon, *Morning by Morning*, p. 103. XXII. 14-18.—J. Keble, *Sermons for the Holy Week*, p. 387. XXII. 15.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. vii. p. 378. XXII. 16.—C. G. Clark-Hunt, *The Refuge of the Sacred Wounds*, p. 35. XXII. 19.—J. Keble, *Sermons for the Holy Week*, p. 394. XXII. 21.—H. Windross, *The Life Victorious*, p. 45. XXII. 22, 23.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xiv. No. 799. XXII. 26.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxii. No. 1312. G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 134.

THE FUTURE OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH

'All the ends of the world shall remember, and turn unto the Lord.'—Psalm xxii. 27.

What is to be the future of the Church of Christ on earth? Is the kingdom of God advancing and still to advance? Often it seems to the faithful that they are in presence of a standstill, or even of a retrogression. They are tried, strained, surprised at the slow victories of faith. It seems as if the Gospel were slighted, put aside, failing of its full effect. Sometimes they have days of glorious triumph, but often the heart sinks before the continued and present power of evil. It is no wonder that this should be so, for the demands and expectations are greater than before, and the difficulties are not less. The work grows heavier, and it does not always seem to grow clearer and more hopeful. So we perplex ourselves. We say, Is the power of Christians at home as great as it used to be? Is that power increasing or diminishing in the vast realms of heathendom? Are we bringing in converts in numbers proportionate to the growth in population? It is not easy for us to judge the truth of things around us, and if we can read the future it can only be by the light of revelation. 'What are your prospects?' was the question put to an intrepid missionary. He answered, and he could never have bettered the reply, 'They are as bright as the promises of God'.

I. There are three theories of the future of Christianity which have been held by Christians.

1. There are those who say that we are never to look for a glorious future to the Church on earth. There is to be no such thing as a universal spread of the Gospel. The Church is not to wax, but wane. The kingdom of heaven has nothing to do with the world but to condemn it.

2. There is another view of which one hears very little in these days, though it was the doctrine of the early Church, and though it may ground itself much more securely on the words of the New Testament—both in the Gospels and in the Epistles. It is that the power of good and the power of evil will alike increase. 'Let *both* grow together until the harvest,' is the word of our Lord. St. Augustine taught that, however the leaven of the Gospel may spread, the power of evil and the malignity of evil will advance. It is all contained in one dread word seldom spoken now—the word antichrist. In that dark time the daily sacrifice would be taken away, words which were interpreted to mean the forcible cessation of all religious worship. St. Augustine doubted whether baptism would be administered during that period. Further, taking the words of our Lord, that the abomination that maketh desolate should be set up in the holy place, it was foretold that some terrible form of blasphemy with rites of devil-worship would be substituted for the service of Christ in the churches. The power seemingly victorious would work miracles, overwhelming the imagination with signs that might deceive the very elect. The spirit of antichrist has never been quite dormant in the world. The Emperor Julian was taken as in a degree typical of the antichrist who was to come. In the French Revolution there were many of the works of antichrist, and we may freely admit that there are powers existing, and not so very far away, which might yet find the work of antichrist congenial. So then, in the view of the early Church, the kingdom of Christ would grow steadily; the kingdom of Satan would also

grow steadily. The two hostile powers would come into conflict in a battle in which the Church would seem to tremble and waver. Then Christ Himself would appear and consume the antichrist by the breath of His mouth, and destroy him by the brightness of His coming.

3. There is, thirdly, the theory of hope, the theory that in manifold ways, some apparent and some hidden, the kingdom of God keeps coming, and will come. There is the faith that the armies of the aliens, in spite of all we see, are being beaten back, and that in the end evil will gradually die out of the living world and be merged in the good. Not that the solemn warnings of Scripture and the stern facts of life are ignored. The words of our Lord, so plain, so unmistakable, are not to be forgotten. 'The enemy that soweth them is the devil.' Our fight is not with flesh and blood, but with principalities and powers, with Satanic hosts on which no impression is made by what is called civilization, or social reform, or intellectual enlightenment. But the promises look to the extension of the Redeemer's kingdom, to the flowing of all nations to the mountain of the Lord's House, to the day when they shall not hurt or destroy in all God's holy mountain, when the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.

II. The promise is notable for its use of the word 'Remember'. 'All the ends of the world shall *remember*, and turn unto the Lord.' I wish you to linger upon that. One great subject of philosophers in these days is the subliminal consciousness, the vast store of ideas and impressions in the mind which are sleeping but not dead, which may spring to life at a touch or a call, which may even energize for themselves when we are ignorant of their action. What is lying dormant in the heart of heathendom? The ends of the world shall remember. It is in memory that all conversion begins. 'How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare!' said the prodigal, as he remembered his father's house. Will the nations one day remember the house of their Father? They tell us that there lingers in the races, however sunken and degraded, the memory of a golden time when God and man were friends. Max Müller tells us that the theory of a primitive revelation is found both among the lowest and among the most highly civilized races. It is a constant saying among African tribes that formerly heaven was nearer to earth than it is now, that the highest God, the Creator Himself, formerly gave lessons of wisdom to human beings, but that afterwards He withdrew Himself from them, and dwells now far from them in heaven. The Hindus say the same. They look back, as in the hymn of the sage Vasishtha: 'Where are those friendships of us two? Let us seek the harmony which we enjoyed of old. I have gone, O self-sustaining Varuna, to thy vast and spacious house with a thousand gates. He who was thy friend, intimate, thine own and beloved, has committed offences against thee.'

What they remember is the existence of one God. Monotheism is the natural religion, and remains in the quiet background, however obscure or overlaid. This is the authentic saying of a Kaffir when the Gospel was first preached: 'We had this word, the name of God, long before the missionaries came; we had God long ago, for a man when dying would utter his last words saying, "I am going home, I am going up on high". For there is a word in a song which says:—

> Guide me, O Hawk!
> That I go heavenward,
> To seek the one-hearted man,
> Away from the double-hearted men
> Who deal with blessing and cursing.'

Then there is the endless sense of sin, of ignorance, of the need of sacrifice. I have no time to adduce examples, but who can be blind to the unbroken witness of the human race, to the immeasurable and mysterious power of sacrifice, and to the truth that the gulf that has opened between God and His erring creatures can only be closed by sacrifice? How wonderful are the stories of Codrus offering himself to die for his people, of Decius volunteering for his army, of the Chinese Emperor Thang devoting himself as a victim for his famine-stricken subjects! 'Let this be my substitute, this my expiation,' is the word spoken over the sin-offering. Nay, the secret of the Cross was almost divined before it was uttered.

III. 'All the ends of the world shall remember, *and turn to the* Lord.' Mark that where Jesus is not preached as Lord, there are no Christian missions. We believe in the Church outside the Churches, in the spreading of the Christian spirit in many places where the name of Christ is denied. But it has been well said that in what may be called extramural Christianity, the Christianity of men like Carlyle and Huxley, there is no zeal even for the application of Christian principles to the heathen races. There are noble exceptions, but the record of Carlyle is among the blackest in this respect. Nor has there been a sustained and energetic propaganda of Christianity among those who take away God manifest in the flesh, and leave us a human example; those who take away a living Saviour and leave us an entombed body; who take away the power of God in human life, and leave us a law, a hero, and a Cross. This Christianity which leaves us a human Christ is a Christianity which is local and temporal. The true Christianity is as universal as the love of God. Christianity is not the climbing of men to heaven by a tower of Babel, but the descent of the new Jerusalem out of heaven from God.—W. Robertson Nicoll, *The Lamp of Sacrifice*, p. 279.

References.—XXII. 27.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xviii. No. 1047. XXII. 28.—H. J. Wilmot-Buxton, *A Year's Plain Sermons*, p. 151. XXII. 29.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxii. No. 1500. XXII.—*International Critical Commentary*, vol. i. p. 188.

THE SHEPHERD-PSALM

Psalm xxiii.

It is with this Psalm in the light of Christian experience that I now wish to concern myself. The

first impression which the reading of the Psalm produces upon the sympathetic soul is that of a wondrous soothing. If you ask, whence came this Psalm, I know of but one adequate reply. It came from a soul God filled; it came from the lips of a man to whom the cardinal reality of life was Jehovah. It presents two thoughts of God; in the first four verses Jehovah is Shepherd of His Sheep; in the last two He is King entertaining a highly favoured subject. About these two ideas we will group what we have to say.

I. 'The Lord is my Shepherd,' not merely a shepherd having a hundred sheep, with an interest only in the flock as a whole, but the Shepherd who cares for me, though I be the solitary wanderer, and His flock scarcely reduced by my absence. From the Divine Shepherd this member of His flock receives three priceless gifts—rest, restoration, guidance.

(*a*) Rest: the thought appeals to us all. Rest from the continuous battle with temptation, peace from the confusions of tempestuous trials, some cessation from the tiring monotony of the daily journey. All these, affirms the Psalmist, he finds in God.

(*b*) The Shepherd is the Restorer. Men forsake God, but they do not escape Him. They desert Him, but He refuses to abandon them. They act mercilessly to themselves; He cares for them with a wiser and stronger love. 'Restoreth;' yes with infinite grace and with infinite wisdom.

(*c*) Guidance is the other great benediction which the Psalmist recognizes as he meditates on his experience. We still lack wisdom, and the counsel and guidance of the Father are still freely available. 'He guideth me in the paths of righteousness.' He is my Teacher and Leader in goodness. Before I pass from the study of the Shepherd let me emphasize one outstanding word. It is 'for His name's sake,' that He guideth me in the paths of righteousness. 'For the sake of His name' God acts thus—that is for the sake of His character. Because He cannot be other than He is—'The Lord gracious and merciful, slow to anger, plenteous in mercy'—He acts as He does.

II. Consider the other picture presented in the closing verses. The singer has changed the figure. No longer does he behold Jehovah the Shepherd, but Jehovah the King. He is not now one of His flock, but one of His subjects, a servant who has striven to be faithful in spite of many enemies, and one to whom His Royal Master is showing singular favour. Even in the presence of jealous foes, helpless before the King, the banquet is set, and the servant honoured with every token of royal approval. How true a picture of Christian experience—triumph even in the presence of the foe. Not transference to new conditions. It is the presence of the enemies, the harassments and temptations, the doubts and hindrances, that makes goodness possible.—J. Rushbrooke, *The Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxxii. p. 21.

References.—XXIII.—T. Sadler, *Sermons for Children*, p. 180. G. H. Hepworth, *American Pulpit of To-day*, vol. i. p. 23. T. Arnold, *The Interpretation of Scripture*, p. 101. J. Burnet, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 1628, p. 73. C. and E. Briggs, *International Critical Commentary*, p. 207. A. Maclaren, *Sermons Preached in Manchester*, p. 341. A. Maclaren, *Life of David*, p. 37. M. R. Vincent, *Gates Into the Psalm Country*, p. 53. I. Williams, *The Psalms Interpreted of Christ*, p. 421. *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. ii. p. 419. XXIII. 1.—J. G. McFadyen, *The City with Foundations*, p. 201.

Psalm xxiii.

When Edward Irving was on his death-bed, he repeated the 23rd Psalm in Hebrew. His last words were, 'In life and in death I am the Lord's'. He had the conviction for a time that he would certainly remain till the coming of Christ; but he realized at length the approach of death.

Ver. 4. 'Thy rod and Thy staff, they comfort me,' were the dying words of the great Scottish philosopher, Sir William Hamilton.

When Dr. Alexander Duff, the Indian missionary, was travelling in the Himalayas, he saw a native shepherd followed by his flock. The man frequently stopped and looked back. If he saw a sheep drawing too near the edge of the precipice, he would go back and apply his crook to one of the hind legs, and gently pull it back till the animal joined the rest. Going up to the shepherd, he noticed that he had a long rod, as tall as himself, and twisted round the lower half a thick bar of iron. The region was infested with wolves and other dangerous animals, which in the night-time prowled about the place where the sheep lay. With his long rod the shepherd could strike the animal such a blow as would make it flee. This brought to the remembrance of the traveller the expression of David the shepherd, 'Thy rod and Thy staff, they comfort me,' and saved it, as he thought, from the charge of tautology, the staff referring to God's hold of the sheep, the rod to his defence against enemies. When he himself lay dying, and apparently unconscious (Feb. 1878), his daughter repeated to him the 23rd Psalm, and he responded at the end of each verse.—John Ker.

IN GREEN PASTURES

'He maketh me to lie down in green pastures.'—Psalm xxiii. 2.

It is only when the Spirit of God has given us spiritual eyesight, has led us to feel and confess our natural blindness, our inability to see light in God's light, has led us, like Bartimaeus, to Christ, the Healer of nations, to cry, 'Lord, that I may receive my sight'; it is only, in short, when we have been brought to, and made to lie down at, the foot of His Cross, that we may reach the new standpoint and can say, 'Thy mercy, O Lord, is' (like a rainbow) 'in the heavens'.

I. Take the words in their literal or natural sense; God has included temporal as well as spiritual blessings in His covenant with His people. The inheritance of His children is not all reserved for the after-life. Godliness has the promise of the life that now is, as well as that of the life to come. But let us 'take heed and beware of covetousness, for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth'. If we have received 'a hundred-

fold more' than we gave up 'in the present time,' it is only that we may dedicate to God a hundred-fold more than we have been doing in the interests of His kingdom, in the service of the poor, and in the cause of the Gospel at home and abroad.

II. Take the words in their figurative and symbolical meaning. The Eastern shepherd leads his sheep into green pastures, not only that they may find food there in greater abundance, but that also of the sweetest and pleasantest quality. And that had been David's experience from his youth upwards. Jehovah had been his Shepherd and had supplied all his need. Jehovah had been his Guide and had led him in the paths of righteousness.

III. Let us take the words in their spiritual significance. It was David's lot to begin his reign in revival times. This 23rd Psalm is a song of the spring-time; it is also a revival hymn of the Church. Nature was rejoicing over her awakening from winter sleep, and David and Israel were rejoicing over Jehovah's return as the Shepherd-King of His people. It was a happy synchronism: the spring-time of the year and the revival of the Church. David's cup was overflowing. The angels of his youth had returned to follow him, and his dwelling-place at last would be in God's House for ever. God had made him to lie down in green pastures.—R. Balgarnie, *The Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxxv. p. 36.

References.—XXIII. 2.—S. Horne, *The Soul's Awakening*, p. 31. J. Vaughan, *Sermons* (10th Series), p. 29. Bishop Thorold, *The Presence of Christ*, p. 39. M. G. Pearse, *Some Aspects of the Blessed Life*, p. 213.

THE SOUL'S MASTER, LEADER, AND RESTORER

'He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: He leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul.'—Psalm xxiii. 2, 3.

Christ, by promising to be the Good Shepherd of our souls, has absorbed all the teaching of this shepherd-Psalm of David into himself, and when we think of David's shepherd we have a vision of Jesus Christ.

I. There is first of all a thought of mastery in our text, 'He maketh me to lie down in green pastures'. The sheep does not lie down where he pleases, but where the shepherd sees fit. The first supreme characteristic of Christianity is this recognition of Christ as the soul's Master. There are those who boast their independence even of Jesus, but it is a lonely and hazardous undertaking.

II. We have also a thought of leadership. 'He leadeth me beside the still waters.' Christ is the only Leader of the human soul who always leads to peace. Life is a tragedy always to a thoughtful man who looks at it without hope in Christ. There is no situation this side of perdition so terrible that a man or a woman under the leadership of Jesus Christ may not find in the midst of all the storms and dangers of life the still waters of heavenly peace.

III. There is a thought of restoration. 'He restoreth my soul.' David knew by personal experience what that meant. I think there must be some deep meaning in the order of our text. First the soul is mastered by the Divine love. Then it is surrendered to the heavenly leadership. Then comes restoration. Mastery, leadership, restoration, that is God's order. But it is only in Jesus Christ that the sinner finds any promise or hope of restoration. The man who closes the Bible has no hope for the sinner.—L. A. Banks, *Sermons Which Have Won Souls*, p. 397.

References.—XXIII. 2, 3.—G. Matheson, *Moments on the Mount*, p. 67. G. Bainton, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xii. p. 5.

GUIDED BY GOD

'He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake.'—Psalm xxiii. 3.

In this world of dimness and disorder we are not wise enough to guide ourselves. The old pagans confessed as much when they watched the stars, if perchance they might spell out some secret of their own destiny, and knelt by the oracles to catch some whisper of Divine purpose which might shape their course.

I. People cling to the faith that there is a Guide. Our popular English Creed has for its chief article the reality of Providence—that power above us who hedges the paths and numbers the years of man. And all Christians believe in One who is in this very nature the Provider, the Father, the Shepherd—the Leader of faithful souls.

II. There are various methods and degrees of guidance. A rider guides his horse with bridle and whip and spur. A shepherd will guide his dog with his voice and his gestures. Signor Marconi can flash wireless messages of guidance to the captain of a ship hundreds of miles away on the sea. Yet when we consider the channels of communication between two personalities, we realize that there must be mutual sympathy between them, before one can effectively guide the other.

III. Clearly the highest guidance implies far more than an exercise of authority. Indeed the true use of human authority is to educate us until we can do without it, because we are become a law unto ourselves. How does a wise father desire to guide his child? At first it may be, perhaps it must be, by his definite directions and commands. But he is not content until these are superseded by the free choice of the child's own nature, which spontaneously reflects and expresses the father's character and will. Even so, God desires to make us not slaves, but sons.

IV. God's inward leaning is not independent of the guidance which comes of the use of our natural faculties. He has granted us all some amount of reason and experience and common sense. We recognize certain practical duties. And we dare not expect any direct illumination of spirit unless we use to the full whatever outward illumination has been vouchsafed to us. We dare not shut an eye, and expect God to keep us from falling into the ditch. The gift of the Holy Ghost comes to supplement, not to supersede, our ordinary, everyday way of learning God's will. These two are not contrary but co-ordinate.

V. Doubtless this doctrine of supernatural guidance involves subtle perils of its own. Some Christians

grow intoxicated with the idea of a private and personal illumination. They lose sight of the New Testament and common sense, and the judgment of their fellow-Christians. They sometimes even imagine that the Divine Guide leads them into the paths of unrighteousness. They pay no heed to anything except inward feelings, which may be just their secret preferences distinguished and canonized. They mistake the murmurs of their own restless self-will for the voice of the authentic will of God. Nevertheless Divine guidance remains the corollary and consequence of Divine communion.—T. H. Darlow, *The Upward Calling*, p. 73.

References.—XXIII. 3. — J. Vaughan, *Sermons* (10th Series), p. 37. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xix. No. 1149. Bishop Thorold, *The Presence of Christ*, p. 83.

ROD AND STAFF

'And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Take the rod.'—Numbers xx. 8.

'Then he (Elisha) said to Gehazi . . . Take my staff.'—2 Kings iv. 29.

'Thy rod and Thy staff.'—Psalm xxiii. 4.

We have always associated the word 'rod' with chastisement. Herein we have deprived ourselves grievously of great comfort. Will the preachers collate the passages in which the word 'rod' occurs? they will find material there for a never-ending course of lectures, full of sap and encouragement and profitable gladness.

I. 'And the Lord said unto Moses, Take the rod.' Even Moses was nothing without the sign; Moses, greatest, strongest of lion-hearts, was only a layman when he had no rod in his hands. God always gives a sign; there is always a Divine mark; whatever it may be, it is of God's choice, and only when we hold that mantle or rod or staff are we mighty with omnipotence. The rod was in a sense the Lord Himself; the mantle was a token of the Divine presence and inspiration. The rod is done away, but the thing signified abides for ever. When Moses is called upon to-day to do any great work, the Lord always says to him, Take My Word, take the Bible, take the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of truth. So even we, the modern and latest descendants of Moses, have our rod, our sign of commission, our seal and pledge of being no laymen in the sense of not being initiated into the mystery of the heart of God. When the Lord calls a man from sheepfold or orchard or harvest-field, He does not send him empty-handed to do His work. He says, Take the rod. Lord, what is the rod? The Book. What book? My Book; the Book of inspiration, the Book that holds in it the germs, the beginnings, of that great tree which is to overshadow the whole earth and form a cathedral of singing delight.

II. 'And Elisha said unto Gehazi, Take my staff.' Could not the man walk without the staff? He could not; there is a sense in which the staff makes the man; there is another sense in which the staff tries the man, pulls his muscle to know if it is aught but gristle. Set a man with the Bible in front of him, and you change his whole relation, you change and you test the man himself. Take away the Bible and leave him to the riot of his own fancy, and he might say many beautiful and graphic things; put before him the Bible which he is called upon to interpret, and he cannot interpret a word of it unless the Spirit be in him, the inner light, that throws its blaze of splendour upon the outward and visible sign. Gehazi took the staff, what became of his doing so? Nothing; he could wake no child from the dead. Why? Because he was a bad man. The good staff in the bad hand means failure the world over.

III. 'And the Lord said unto Moses, Take the rod;' 'And Elisha said unto Gehazi, Take my staff'; and the greatest, sweetest of all the minstrels said, 'Thy rod and Thy staff,' I will take them both, they comfort me, and thus prove that they are the Divine rod and the Divine staff. Still you see the same idea penetrates the whole thought of this discourse—that we must have, so to say, something. You will find the rod and the staff of God everywhere if you look for them with the right eyes and the pure intent. Everything in all nature is the rod or the staff, comforting human souls, and bringing God quite near. Sometimes we cannot see God Himself, but we can see the rod, and we know it to be His rod; we can see the staff, and we know it to be His staff. Rod and staff are written all over with a cipher which the inspired and sanctified heart alone can interpret and apply.

IV. Thy rod, and Thy staff, and Thy promise. We have exceeding great and precious promises at our command; God has placed them at our disposal. There is nothing that can occur in your experience personally, domestically, or otherwise, that is not provided for in the Bible. The promises—you do not know how sweet they are until you need them. They are delightful companions; they take up no room, they make no noise, they never fret or vex the soul by calling attention to their claims. They are never out of the way, yet never in it; they are like the atmosphere, they are like the summer weather; the light fills all space and leaves plenty of room for every little child to sit down in.—Joseph Parker, *City Temple Pulpit*, vol. v. p. 175.

THE TABLE PREPARED IN PRESENCE OF FOES

'Thou preparest a table before me in presence of mine enemies.'—Psalm xxiii. 5.

There are three points of resemblance between the provision made for David and the provision made for us. These are its Divine preparation, its abundance and suitableness, and its being made in the presence of our enemies.

I. The enemies in whose presence our table is prepared—human as well as natural. The harvest will not give us its blessing without a stern struggle with hostile elements.

II. The table prepared before us. This table is wisely adapted to our necessities as human beings.

And what a table is thus spread for us every year! What sacred memories gather round the table thus so richly furnished!

III. The preparation of the table. The harvest is the subject of a Divine covenant engagement. Never once has the pledge given five thousand years ago been violated.

IV. The fruits of the harvest should be used in the work and for the glory of God.—Hugh Macmillan, *Harvest and Thanksgiving Services*, p. 1.

References.—XXIII. 4-6.—S. A. Brooke, *Sermons*, p. 71. J. Vaughan, *Sermons* (6th Series), p. 133. XXIII. 5.—H. Bell, *Sermons on Holy Communion*, p. 77. F. Corbett, *The Preacher's Year*, p. 164. XXIII. 6.—H. Woodcock, *Sermon Outlines*, p. 98. S. A. Tipple, *Sunday Mornings at Norwood*, p. 233. S. Martin, *Comfort in Trouble*, p. 70. H. Melvill, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 1848. Bishop Thorold, *The Presence of Christ*, p. 217.

THE UNEMPLOYED

'The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein.'—Psalm xxiv. 1.

The fundamental law of a well-ordered State is the right of all citizens to earn a living, and unless that right is secured no rights are really valid, because there is some fundamental wrong at the bottom of the social system.

I. What can be done by statute? How can we profess to make the Bible our Book of religion and be blind to one of its most obvious teachings? This Book contains in its opening parts a land system. It gives the idea of what the law of the country should be, and what its relation should be to the people in a Theocracy, where God is ruling. The teaching of this Book is most remarkable. The point of it is that each man has his property, his piece of land, and that the land is inalienable. Every person has the right to the use of enough land to raise subsistence for himself and his family. That is a fundamental right of human beings, sanctioned by the Bible and obviously the result of common sense. Any arrangement, however legal it may be, which deprives a man of this right is not just, it demands revision.

II. Let us take the right which we concede to landlords in England. We give them the right to determine whether the people shall live on their land or not. We give them the right even to refuse the dwellings which the people need, born on the spot. We give them the right, therefore, to dismiss the people from the land to the city or to anywhere. The property belongs to the owner—yes, but before that it belongs to the country. The population must live upon this land, and when property is allowed it should be determined that the property is only owned subject to certain implicit conditions, and the chief condition is that every human being in this island retains a latent right to use enough land to earn his living, to earn his bread on; and when that latent principle is forgotten we produce the monstrous injustice of what are called the Land Laws in England, an injustice so incredible that we can only explain it by looking back into history and understanding how it came to be.

III. Now, in this difficulty of modern industry, there is only one thoroughly satisfactory way of dealing with the problem. It must be laid down as a fundamental principle of all our administrations of Poor Law or industrial law, of Land Law, that when people cannot get employment the means should be given them to earn their living on the land. We need the land to give the man his opportunity of work, to enable him to extract his living out of the soil in the periods of trade depression.—R. F. Horton.

References.—XXIV. 1.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. xiv. p. 84. XXIV. 1, 2.—R. Flint, *Sermons and Addresses*, p. 56. XXIV. 3.—H. J. Wilmot-Buxton, *The Master's Message*, p. 104. J. Vaughan, *Fifty Sermons* (6th Series), p. 233. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. vii. No. 396. XXIV. 3, 4.—J. E. Vaux, *Sermon Notes* (3rd Series), p. 100. H. Thompson, *Concionalia: Outlines for Parochial Use* (2nd Series), p. 242. XXIV. 3-6.—A. Maclaren, *Christian Commonwealth*, 11 December, 1884. XXIV. 4.—Spurgeon, *Evening by Evening*, p. 187. XXIV. 6.—*Expositor* (3rd Series), vol. v. p. 310. XXIV. 7.—A. Watson, *Sermons for Sundays*, etc. (2nd Series), vol. ii. p. 255. XXIV. 7, 8.—R. Hiley, *A Year's Sermons*, vol. i. p. 265. E. M. Goulburn, *Sermons Preached in the Parish Church of Holywell*, p. 353. XXIV. 7-10.—A. Maclaren, *Christian Commonwealth*, 18 December, 1884. J. E. Vaux, *Sermon Notes* (4th Series), p. 50. XXIV. 8.—Spurgeon, *Evening by Evening*, p. 340. XXIV. 9.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xiii. No. 750. XXIV.—*International Critical Commentary*, vol. i. p. 212.

Psalm xxiv.

The father of the celebrated Principal Carstares, the restorer of the Scottish Church at the Revolution, was a man of warm devotional character, and suffered severely in the time of the twenty-eight years' persecution. Woodrow (*Analecta*) tells of him: 'He was doing duty at the Sacrament for a brother minister at Calder. Upon the Sabbath he was wonderfully assisted in his first prayer, and had a strange gale through all the sermon, and there was a remarkable emotion among the hearers. He gave out for singing part of the 24th Psalm:

> He from th' Eternal shall receive
> The blessing him upon,
> And righteousness, ev'n from the God
> Of His salvation.
>
> This is the generation
> That after him enquire,
> O Jacob, who do seek thy face,
> With their whole heart's desire.'

While singing these and the following verses, the narrator says 'he came to the communion tables, and all in the assembly were marvellously affected, glory seeming to fill that house. He served the first table in a kind of rapture, and he called some ministers there to the next, but he was in such a frame that none of them ventured to come and take the work off his hands. He continued at the work with the greatest enlargement and melting, upon himself and all present, that could be, and served fourteen or sixteen tables. A Christian that had been at the table

and obliged to come out of the church, pressing to be in again, stood without the door, and said he was rapt in the thought of the glory that was in that house for near half-an-hour, and got leave scarce to think upon any other thing.'—JOHN KER.

REFERENCES.—XXV. 4, 5.—H. Woodcock, *Sermon Outlines*, p. 12. XXV. 5.—Spurgeon, *Evening by Evening*, p. 191. XXV. 6-11.—F. E. Paget, *Helps and Hindrances to the Christian Life*, vol. ii. p. 53. XXV. 6, 7.—G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 243.

'Remember not the sins of my youth.'—PSALM XXV. 7, etc.

PICO DELLA MIRANDOLA quotes this text in a letter to his nephew in which he advises him with regard to daily prayer. 'When I stir thee up to prayer,' he wrote, 'I stir thee not to the prayer that standeth in many words, but to that prayer which in the secret chamber of the mind, in the privy-closet of the soul, with very affect speaketh unto God, and in the most lightsome darkness of contemplation, not only presenteth the mind to the Father, but also uniteth it with Him by unspeakable ways, which only they know that have assayed. Nor I care not how long nor how short thy prayer be, but how effectual, how ardent. . . . Let no day pass, then, but thou once at the least-wise present thyself to God by prayer, and falling down before Him flat to the ground, with an humble affect of devout mind, not from the extremity of thy lips but out of the inwardness of Thine heart, cry these words of the prophet, "The offences of my youth and mine ignorances, remember not, good Lord, but after Thy goodness remember me".'

REFERENCES.—XXV. 7.—T. G. Selby, *Comradeship and Character*, p. 269. M. R. Vincent, *Gates Into the Psalm Country*, p. 75. XXV. 8, 9.—A. Maclaren, *After the Resurrection*, p. 203. XXV. 9.—E. Bersier, *Sermons*, vol. i. p. 237. *Homiletic Magazine*, vol. lx. p. 257.

MERCY AND TRUTH

'All the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth.'—PSALM XXV. 10.

So it lies for all time, the elementary law of theology. What does it mean?

I. It means of course, first of all that God's nature is mercy, and to this nature He is consistent, true to Himself; but it means also, and more especially, that in His merciful dealings with us He has respect to the truth of our nature. What this truth is we learn on the first page of Genesis: God said, 'Let us make man in our image'. There is at once something more than mercy: there is an ideal set up, a standard, a type for the race. And if you will ponder the history of man since, as the great Hebrews have written it for us in the Bible, you will see that the whole history of its course is but, on the one hand the persistency with which the God of Truth has kept before men's eyes His original creative purpose, has refused to abate one jot of His lofty ideal for mankind.

(*a*) Look at the ideal Christ proposed to mankind. Is it not the old creative promise that man should be conformed to God's image? Christ is Himself the express image of God, and nothing short of that image will satisfy Him in us.

(*b*) Contemplate the miracles of mercy. Merciful indeed He is, but there is a note about Him that seems more than mere compassion. What is this faith He requires? How often were the miracles of healing at the same time miracles of conversion. Here, too, then in the miracles we see that the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ is plainly Divine grace, is mercy and truth, is that love of God which is bent upon creating His own image in us.

(*c*) But again you will recollect that it was this very forgiveness of sins which to the righteous of the time seemed to argue insensibility, as though our Lord were being falsely merciful—ministering mercy at the expense of morality. And the charge is sometimes repeated still. How can we test Christ's mercy to men's souls to see if it be true mercy which considers the next? We must try it by its effect on character. The story of Zaccheus will suffice.

(*d*) Similarly we might make our appeal to Christ's teaching, to His simple parable, or His paradoxical epigrams, and show how their glorious web is woven of the same two strands. For the occasion let that one word suffice in which more than any other He summed up for us His revelation of the Creator—I mean the word Father. No word will so well bring home to us the essential nature of the Divine mercy and truth.

II. It is of supreme importance to the reality of our Christian life that we should refuse to separate between these Divine attributes of Mercy and Truth, that we should not say simply 'God loves us,' without drawing out the implicit truth 'and wishes us to be like Himself'. The true test of our theology is worship.

III. Not only have we to acknowledge God's mercy and truth, we have to display it in relation to our fellows.

(*a*) Consider, for example, those great typical Christian actions of forgiveness and judgment. If we forgive anything, or if we condemn anything, it can only be 'in the person of Christ,' by sharing both His hatred of sin and His love for the sinner.

(*b*) Consider the question of veracity and compliment which, slight as it may appear, fills our social lines. If we are apt to give our criticisms without mercy let us take to heart St. Paul's maxim 'Speaking the truth in love'. If on the other hand we find it only too easy to be gracious, let us remember that other great word of his: 'Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt'.

(*c*) If our mercy to the poor is the true mercy it must never be separated from a consideration of their high welfare.

(*d*) We must bring under the same Divine law our conduct to ourselves.—H. C. BEECHING, *Inns of Court Sermons*, p. 22.

REFERENCES.—XXV. 11.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. iii. p 145. XXV. 13.—J. Keble, *Sermons for the Christian Year*, p. 343. *Ibid. Sermons for Ascension Day to Trinity Sunday*, p. 343.

THE SECRET OF THE LORD

'The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him, and He will shew them His covenant.'—Psalm xxv. 14.

I. The secret of the Lord, that is, His fellowship or friendship, His secret operations on the soul, which waken, comfort and support the believer, are hidden from all others, and are understood only by those who depend upon the influence of the Holy Spirit. Our Lord Himself said, when His disciples asked Him for an explanation of a parable, 'Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the Kingdom of God, but to them that are without all these things are done in parables, that seeing they may see and not perceive, and hearing they may hear and not understand'.

II. These ways of God are not hidden from any of His true people.

(*a*) When a soul is agitated with deep convictions, these convictions being the fruit of the spirit, God will eventually show to such an one His covenant whereby pardon and grace, through Christ, are secured to the self-convicted sinner.

(*b*) Or see that same man in a more advanced state of religious impression, see him softened with godly sorrow and saving repentance. The secret of the Lord is with him.

(*c*) Or if we view the soul of such an one as he advances in grace, and is enabled to estimate with something of a proper value the efficacy of Christ's redeeming sacrifice, he can say to any former companions in sin and folly, as Jesus said to His disciples, 'I have meat to eat that ye know not of'.

III. The secret of the Lord is not only with His people individually but among them that fear Him. This is the ground of that communion of saints, that mutual fellowship of sorrows and joys which binds all true believers together in one, that is in Christ Jesus. And the secret of the Lord is among them collectively, they experience the same feelings, the same trials, the same victories. This communion has never been interrupted, never can be destroyed, but is maintained amidst all the jarring elements of the world, a world which comprehends it not, and whose enmity can neither destroy nor weaken it.—E. J. Brewster, *The Shield of Faith*, p. 56.

'My sins and faults of youth
Do Thou, O Lord, forget:
After Thy mercy think on me,
And for Thy goodness great.'—Psalm xxv.

Touching words in themselves, and surely never more so than when they began the dying-song of Margaret Wilson, while the sea was rising round her at the mouth of the water of Blednoch, by Wigtown. She was twenty years of age, blameless and gentle, but had been in the habit of attending field and house conventicles, and refused to take the test. For these things she was condemned to be drowned along with an elderly woman, named Margaret Lachlan, accused of the same offences. They were tied to stakes within the tide-mark, where the waters of the Solway come up swift and strong into the channel of the Blednoch. The older woman was placed farther from the bank that the sight of her struggles might terrify the younger, and cause her to give way. But she was faithful to the death.—John Ker.

References.—XXV. 14.—G. W. Brameld, *Practical Sermons* (2nd Series), p. 122. C. J. Vaughan, *Memorials of Harrow Sundays*, p. 263. J. J. West, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 1678, p. 463. W. A. Essery, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. i. p. 182. XXV. 18.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xiii. No. 741. *Ibid. Evening by Evening*, p. 102. XXV.—*International Critical Commentary*, vol. i. p. 219. XXVI. 2.—H. Bushnell, *Sermons on Living Subjects*, p. 224. XXVI. 3.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xvi. No. 956. XXVI. 6.—C. G. Finney, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 1668, p. 383. XXVI. 6, 7.—G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 253. XXVI. 8.—A. C. Tait, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. iv. p. 33. J. Baldwin Brown, *The Sunday Afternoon*, pp. 133, 141, 150. XXVI. 9.—C. Perren, *Revival Sermons*, p. 299. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. ix. No. 524. W. T. Hamilton, *American Pulpit*, p. 193. XXVI.—*International Critical Commentary*, vol. i. p. 229. XXVII. 1.—E. B. Pusey, *Sermons Preached Before the University of Oxford*, p. 52. H. P. Liddon, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxviii. p. 2a. J. Baldwin Brown, *The Higher Life*, p. 114. Spurgeon, *Evening by Evening*, p. 168.

Psalm xxvii.

India was still heaving with the ground-swell of the terrible Mutiny of 1857, when the wife of Sir John Lawrence was called home to her children in England, and had to leave her husband, who could not quit his post, surrounded by the smouldering embers which might, at any moment, rekindle into flame, and worn to exhaustion with the anxiety and labour which did so much for the preservation of the Indian Empire.

She thus writes: 'When the last morning of separation, Jan. 6, 1858, arrived, we had our usual Bible reading, and I can never think of the 27th Psalm, which was the portion we then read together, without recalling that sad time'.—John Ker.

MORAL EFFECTS OF COMMUNION WITH GOD

'One thing have I desired of the Lord, which I will require; even that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life to behold the fair beauty of the Lord, and to visit His Temple.'—Psalm xxvii. 4.

If, as it would seem, we must choose between the two, surely the world's friendship may be better parted with than our fellowship with our Lord and Saviour. What indeed have we to do with courting men, whose faces are turned towards God? We know how men feel and act when they come to die; they discharge their worldly affairs from their minds, and try to realize the unseen state. Then this world is nothing to them. It may praise, it may blame; but they feel it not. They are leaving their goods, their deeds, their sayings, their writings, their names, behind them; and they care not for it, for they wait for Christ. To one thing alone they are alive, His coming; they watch against it, if so be they may then be found without shame. Such is the conduct of dying men; and what all but the very hardened do at the last, if their senses fail not and their powers hold, that does the true Christian all life long. He is ever dying while he lives; he is on his bier, and the prayers for the sick are saying over him. He has no work but that of making his

peace with God, and preparing for the judgment. He has no aim but that of being found worthy to escape the things that shall come to pass and to stand before the Son of Man. And therefore day by day he unlearns the love of this world, and the desire of its praise; he can bear to belong to the nameless family of God and to seem to the world strange in it and out of place, for so he is.—J. H. Newman.

Reference.—XXVII. 14.—J. H. Jowett, *From Strength to Strength*, p. 67.

WAR FOR THE SAKE OF PEACE

'The Lord shall give strength unto His people: the Lord shall give His people the blessing of peace.'—Psalm xxix. 11.

I. There are many kinds of suffering and trial and effort that men may have to undergo, and war is only one of them. Now, when instead of fancying war as we guess it might be, we have seen war as it is brought almost under our eyes, we learn a truer notion of what it is. We have seen that victory is not to be won only by daring, by readiness to do some great thing, and strength of purpose in the action of a moment or an hour; it is patience, endurance, long-sightedness, that secures the final victory.

II. Thus when we say that the Christian's life is a life of warfare, we do not contradict what may also be said, that it is a life of patience, a life of trouble. If we ask what the difference is, and why the Christian life is likened so much oftener in the Bible to the dangers and trials of war than to the dangers and trials of a pestilence or a storm (though these figures are used there once or twice), the best answer seems to be this: In a war we have a personal Enemy to deal with; we suffer not from causes that could not be helped, but from his acts and his deliberate intent to hurt us.

III. Thus we understand one part of our warfare: we are soldiers in the war of God against the devil. That the devil is trying to lead us into sin, trying in the same way that we are trying to resist him, viz. by the acts of his will, by deliberate choice seeking to accomplish the desires of his heart—that is intelligible enough. But what do we mean by saying that we are to fight against the world and the flesh? The devil tries to lead us to rebel against God: we try to keep up the faith in God in spite of him. But how is it true that the world, the people we see around us, many of them more or less good Christians, try to lead us to sin, and that we have to resist their influence as we would the devil's? And how is it even possible to say that we ourselves are trying to lead ourselves into sin, and that we must resist ourselves as we would resist the devil? The last difficulty is in seeming the greatest; but it is the easiest to answer, because we can know our own hearts better than we know other people's. There is a desire in the soul—in the regenerate soul—to obey God, or at least to love God; there is also a real desire in the soul to rebel against God; and the soul that will serve God truly must be on its guard against itself, and overcome itself. It is the man himself who is on the devil's side; what is on Christ's side is not the man, but Christ in him. So likewise with the world without. We have to beware of the worldly influences of the good quite as much as of the solicitations of the wicked to what we know is sin. Thus we are at war with the world, the flesh and the devil; and it is good for us so to be. For what is war for? For Peace.—W. H. Simcox, *The Cessation of Prophecy*, p. 37.

References.—XXIX. 10.—R. Scott, *Contemporary Pulpit*, vol. iii. p. 303. C. F. Aked, *The Courage of the Coward*, p. 83. XXIX. 11.—Parker, *Pulpit Analyst*, vol. ii. p. 121. W. M. Punshon, *Sermons*, p. 219. G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 96. H. Melvill, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 1755. XXIX. —*International Critical Commentary*, vol. i. p. 251. XXX. —*International Critical Commentary*, vol. i. p. 257. XXX. 5.—R. E. Hutton, *The Crown of Christ*, p. 547. Spurgeon, *Morning by Morning*, p. 134. R. Winterbotham, *Sermons*, p. 214. J. E. Vaux, *Sermon Notes* (1st Series), p. 66. XXX. 5, 6.—C. W. Furse, *Lenten Sermons*, p. 44. XXX. 6.—Spurgeon, *Morning by Morning*, p. 70. XXX. 6-8.—T. Arnold, *Sermons*, vol. v. p. 250. Archbishop Thomson, *Lincoln's Inn Sermons*, p. 310. T. Arnold, *Sermons*, vol. iii. p. 250. XXX. 9-12.—S. Baring-Gould, *Village Preaching for a Year* (1st Series), vol. i. p. 289.

Psalm xxx.

Bishop Hannington's last entry in his Journal contains the words: 'I can hear no news, but was held up by the 30th Psalm, which came with great power. A hyena howled near me last night. Smelling a sick man, but I hope it is not to have me yet.'

References.—XXXI. 5.—C. F. Aked, *The Courage of the Coward*, p. 83. Parker, *City Temple*, vol. ii. p. 14. Spurgeon, *Evening by Evening*, p. 242. XXXI. 7.—F. D. Maurice, *Sermons*, vol. vi. p. 221.

THE LARGE ROOM

'Thou hast set my feet in a large room.'—Psalm xxxi. 8.

To many people these seem strange words to come from the lips of age and experience. It is youth and inexperience that find the world a large room.

The writer of those words had left his childhood far behind him. He had entered into manhood's inheritance of duty and responsibility. He had been many a time over-caught in the coil of adverse circumstance; he had sorrowed and suffered and sinned; he had faced temptation and found bitter proof of his own weakness; he had faced the many-sided and intricate problem of existence; he knew something of the inevitable and the unalterable,—and yet, calmly mindful of all this, his verdict upon existence was this: 'Thou hast set my feet in a large room'.

I. After having seen the sordidness and meanness and littleness of things, David still held that life is a grand, free, glorious gift—that it is liberty and opportunity and hope. What was the secret of his wide and worthy view of life? How had he escaped these narrower and meaner thoughts that crowd into men's minds and belittle their lives? He had laid hold upon God. He looked at life through the Divine purpose. He found the high and noble meaning of the dusty parable that men call the day's

work. When he talks of life as a large room, it is really his way of saying, 'Thy service is perfect freedom'. If life is lived to God, then it is wider than any man can measure.

II. 'Thou hast set my feet in a large room.' Sin, more than anything else, seems to take the meaning out of these words. There is the inherited weakness and the encircling contagion. Within us, the evil tendency; without us, the unhallowed opportunity. Sometimes a man accepts the pressing solicitation of evil, or yields to the hot-handed grip of the world's desire; and then with a demeaned dignity and lowered self-respect, he measures life and finds he has but a few square feet in which to stand and call himself a fool.

III. 'Thou hast set my feet in a large room.' Those are the words of a man who has felt the force of his own immortality. He has found that on one side of this room of life there is no wall to limit and fold us. Life goes out into God's eternity. That is where God has fashioned it to go.—P. Ainsworth, *The Pilgrim Church*, p. 201.

References.—XXXI. 15.—Bishop M. Simpson, *Sermons*, p. 39. H. J. Wilmot-Buxton, *Bible Object Lessons*, p. 71. XXXI. 19.—M. R. Vincent, *Gates Into the Psalm Country*, p. 91. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xiii. No. 773.

THE CONSUMMATION OF LOVE AND PEACE

'Thou shalt hide them in the secret of Thy presence.'—Psalm xxxi. 20.

The 'they' of the golden oracle are all those who fear Him, all those who trust in Him.

I. The Christian life is on the one hand meant to know no rest nor holiday from obedience to the law of duty, from hourly serving our generation in the will of God; yet, on the other hand, at the very heart of this life there is always to be this mysterious stillness, this secret place of peace. There is a peace of God, able indeed to keep, to safeguard, the weakest and the most treacherous heart. There is a Presence that makes at life's centre a stillness, pregnant with positive and active blessing. The Christian is needed to be ever seeking, ever aspiring upward, 'not as though he had already attained'. He is to avoid as his most deadly poison that subtle spiritual Pharisaism which plumes itself upon a supposed advanced experience, and presumes to compare itself with others, and hesitates, if but for a moment, to prostrate itself in confession and penitence before the awful, the blessed, holiness of God. But none the less the Christian is called to a great rest as well as to a great aspiration.

II. Conditions there are indeed to that great peace; so we have remembered. But they are conditions, each of them in its nature a heavenly blessing. There is the condition of godly fear. There is the condition of humble trust. There is the condition of trusting thus 'before the sons of men'; let not that be forgotten. There is the condition of coming direct to Jesus Christ, to take the yoke of His word and will. There is the condition of looking unto Him. There is the condition of watching and of prayer. But are these things a complicated and grievous burthen, a bundle of arbitrary exactions? They are only so many forms of that one great condition to our finding what is laid up in our Lord: the condition of coming into directest contact with Himself, and there abiding.—H. C. G. Moule, *Cambridge Sermons*, p. 132.

Illustration.—It is a wonderful thing to be permitted to watch a life which you have reason to know is hid in the Secret of the Presence of the Lord. Some few years ago I met a good man, humble and gentle, a missionary to Eastern Africa. He abode in the Presence; I could not but see it. I heard him tell, with the eloquence of entire simplicity, how in the tropical wilderness, in the deep night, he had waited for and shot the raging lion which had long been the unresisted terror of a village clan. It could not be the will of God, he reasoned, that this beast should lord it over men; and so, as it were in the way of Christian business, he went forth and put it to death. And then I watched that man, a guest in my own house, under the very different test of the inconvenience of disappointed plans; and the Secret of the Presence was as surely with him then as when he had lain quietly down to sleep in his tent on the lonely field, to be roused only by the sound of the lion's paw, as it rent the earth at the open door.—H. C. G. Moule.

Psalm xxxi.

On 6 July, 1415, the anniversary of his birth, John Huss was burned to death in a field near the ancient city of Constance. He had come there from Bohemia, under a warrant of safety from the hand of the Emperor Sigismund, for the violation of which the Pope granted absolution, pressing it on the reluctant monarch. . . . A brass tablet let into the floor of the cathedral marks the spot where Huss stood, while seven bishops removed his priestly dress piece by piece, and placed on his head a paper crown painted with demons. They addressed him, 'We deliver thy soul to Satan'. 'But I,' he said, 'commend it into Thy hands, Lord Jesus Christ, Who hast redeemed me.' When taken to the place of execution he fell on his knees, and repeated in prayer some of the Psalms, especially the 51st and 53rd. He was heard to repeat frequently the words, 'Into Thy hands I commit my spirit: Thou hast redeemed me, Lord God of truth'. When he arose, he said, 'Lord Jesus Christ, stand by me, that, by Thy and Thy Father's help, I may endure this painful and shameful death which I suffer for Thy word'. When the fire was kindled he cried three times, 'Jesus, Thou Son of God, have mercy on me'. At the third time his voice was stifled by the smoke, but they saw his lips still moving.—John Ker.

References.—XXXI.—*International Critical Commentary*, vol. i. p. 263. XXXI. 20.—J. T. Stannard, *The Divine Humanity*, p. 141. P. Brooks, *Sermons*, p. 78. XXXI. 22.—J. M. Neale, *Passages of the Psalms*, p. 67. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xix. No. 1146. XXXI. 23.—J. Bowstead,

Practical Sermons, vol. ii. p. 1. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. vi. No. 325. J. E. Vaux, *Sermon Notes* (3rd Series) p. 38. XXXII.—*International Critical Commentary*, vol. i. p. 276. XXXII. 1.—J. Keble, *Sermons from Lent to Passiontide*, p. 260. XXXII. 1, 2.—R. S. Candlish, *The Gospel of Forgiveness*, p. 182. XXXII. 1-7.—C. Kingsley, *Town and Country Sermons*, No. 29.

'For, while I held my tongue my bones consumed away through my daily complaining. For Thy hand is heavy upon me day and night; and my moisture is like the drought in summer.'—PSALM XXXII. 3, 4.

WE all of us know that repentance of our sins is necessary for us, if we hope to be saved in the next world. True repentance is the path, the only path, of forgiveness, of restoration to God's favour, of becoming good and holy. But—

I. What is Repentance? It is the breaking off with our sins. It is not merely being sorry for them; not merely looking them in the face, and admitting the truth, when conscience convinces us that we have done wrong. All this is very necessary; confession of sin is part of repentance, it is the beginning, and without it there can be no true repentance; but it is not the whole; sorrow and self-reproach, the broken and humbled heart, is a part of repentance, but it may stop short of repentance itself. Only when we break off from our sin is repentance fulfilled in earnest. There are several points which we might consider in connexion with repentance; there is the benefit of repentance; its necessity. Here we will consider only—

II. Its comfort. Besides all the other good things there are in repentance, there is great and solid comfort. There is a comfort in the feeling sorry for our sins, however deep and sharp the pain may be which goes with it; but this sort of comfort by itself is not abiding, and will not profit us much. There is a better and truer comfort, in being able honestly to confess our sins. As long as the Psalmist tried to hide from himself that he was doing wrong he was miserable; as long as he tried to shelter himself under vain excuses, as long as he was too proud to own his sin, there was a load on his heart. 'For while I held my tongue my bones consumed away through my daily complaining. For Thy hand is heavy upon me day and night: and my moisture is like the drought in summer.' Then he resolved to be bold and honest to own his sin: 'I will acknowledge my sin unto Thee, and mine unrighteousness have I not hid. I said, I will confess my sins unto the Lord.' And then came comfort, the comfortable sense of being at peace with the Father, Who forgives the sins of His children when they own their sin, 'And so Thou forgavest the wickedness of my sin'; the comfort of feeling that there was no longer a war between him and the mercy and righteousness of God; that, having confessed all, he had nothing more to make him ashamed, and he could venture to think of God's nearness and power. 'For this shall every one that is godly make his prayer unto Thee in a time when Thou mayest be found; but in the great water-floods they shall not come nigh Him.' Then did comfort come to the sinner, who without flinching and making excuses, dared to look his sins in the face, gave up hiding them, and laid them before the eyes of God. But this comfort is not to be depended upon, and will not last unless something more follow. People can confess their wrongdoings, and yet make no real attempt to put an end to them. If we rest on the comfort of confession alone, it may become a very dangerous delusion. Seeing, feeling, owning, confessing, all this will not of itself mend our condition or relieve our conscience. There is only one way—breaking off for good what is wrong. Repentance is, after we have seen and felt and confessed and bewailed our misdeeds, really giving them up. This will not only bring us safety, forgiveness, the favour of God, the hope of everlasting rest; it will bring us, besides this, comfort. We can bear much when we are at peace within. Repentance, with its trials, its sacrifices, its self-denials, has also comfort, which outweighs them all—the comfort of being at peace not only with God, but with our own hearts. That which gives a sting to our difficulties, and makes trouble so dreadful and hard to bear, is the secret knowledge that we are unfaithful to our duty and to Christ, that we have not yet made our honest choice between right and wrong, that we are attempting a double service. Let us break the yoke. Let us not only be sorry for our sin, but seek God's grace to have done with it for ever. Let us turn our backs on it, not looking behind, but with undivided heart giving it up for ever. The wrench, however painful, will soon be forgotten. The sacrifice, whatever it may be, will soon be made up for an hundredfold. But the consolation will come and go on increasing for ever to the end. The beginning of repentance may be with clouds and storms, with perplexity and distress of heart; but let it be in earnest, the honest breaking off from what is evil, and the clouds will soon give way to calm and sunshine, and it will be to us the path leading us, through peace and contentment here, to the rest of glory in God's kingdom in heaven.

REFERENCE.—XXXII. 6.—S. Baring-Gould, *Village Preaching for a Year* (2nd Series), vol. i. p. 174.

SINS OF SCRIPTURE SAINTS

'I acknowledge my sin unto Thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord; and Thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin.'—PSALM XXXII. 5.

DAVID was far from being a character of spotless purity. So greatly indeed was his life disgraced by bloodshed and by sin, that the same God who chose him to reign over Israel, refused to receive from his hands the dedication of his intended Temple.

I. It is not our duty to attempt to excuse or palliate crimes like those of David, or of any other person mentioned in Holy Writ. We should confess that there is scarcely a Scripture character without a stain—nor need we be at any pains to excuse this fact. We should, indeed, give the same justice

to them that we do to others, but there is nothing in the Bible requiring us to regard sin differently or as less aggravated — whether seen in a Prophet, Minister, Christian, or Infidel.

II. Suppose that the believers mentioned in Scripture had all been represented as faultless, would the Bible have been any more credible? Here in the world we see, as a rule, good men overcoming their sins. At times, however, they may have been overcome by them—and if we turn to the Bible we find just such characters drawn there. Every one must feel that the Scriptures are, therefore, much more credible when they describe believers as but imperfectly sanctified, than they would have been had they represented them as perfect.

III. Admitting the guilt of those Scripture Saints, we should observe the severity of God's justice against them. In the ordinary course of things their crimes would have been in a great measure concealed had not God displayed them. Does not this show God's confidence in truth? Nor let it be supposed that those sins were passed over without punishment. So far was it otherwise that, in David's case, even when the pardon of his soul was pronounced, yet heavy were the inflictions laid upon him. Let none then make the example of illustrious men of old, as mentioned in Scripture, encouragements or excuses to sin, when we see, as in David's case, how severely these sins were punished. — E. J. Brewster, *Scripture Characters*, p. 193.

References.—XXXII. 8.—J. Baldwin Brown, *The Sunday Afternoon*, p. 278. C. Kingsley, *The Good News of God*, p. 137.—XXXII. 9, 10.—F. J. Hort, *Village Sermons* (2nd Series), p. 194.—XXXII. 10.—G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 178.—A. Watson, *Sermons for Sundays*, etc. (1st Series), p. 53.

Psalm xxxii.

'Blessed is the man whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.' This was the favourite Psalm of Augustine. With reference to it he says, *Intelligentia prima est ut te nôris peccatorem.* 'The beginning of understanding is to know thyself a sinner.'

When Luther was asked which were the best Psalms, he replied, *Psalmi Paulini*, 'The Pauline Psalms'; and being asked to name them, he gave the 32nd, 51st, 130th, and 143rd. These all belong, it will be observed, to the penitential Psalms.

Verse 2 contains the spiritual ideal which quaint old Izaak Walton set up for the model of his life. In closing his biography of Bishop Sanderson, he says: 'Tis now too late to wish that my life may be like his, for I am in the eighty-fifth year of my age; but I humbly beseech Almighty God that my death may be, and I earnestly beg of every reader to say, Amen. 'Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and *in whose spirit there is no guile.*'

This Psalm was also a favourite with Alexander Peden. One little incident of his life in connexion with this Psalm helps us to come close to him. 'On one occasion,' says the narrative, 'when the service was ended, he and others that were with him lay down in the sheep-house and got some sleep. He rose early, and went up by the burnside and stayed long. When he came in to them, he did sing the 32nd Psalm from the 7th verse to the end.

Thou art my hiding-place, thou shalt
From trouble keep me free:
Thou with songs of deliverance
About shalt compass me.

. . . . . .

Ye righteous, in the Lord be glad,
In him do ye rejoice:
All ye that upright are in heart,
For joy lift up your voice.'

When he had ended, he repeated the 7th verse again, and said, 'These and what follow are sweet lines which I got at the burnside this morning, and I will get more to-morrow, and so we shall have daily provision.'—John Ker.

References. XXXIII.—*International Critical Commentary*, vol. i. p. 284. XXXIII. 1.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. iii. p. 355. XXXIII. 2, 3.—J. M. Neale, *Occasional Sermons*, p. 108. XXXIII. 5.—G. Bainton, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xviii. p. 378. XXXIII. 6.—J. Keble, *Sermons from Ascension Day to Trinity*, p. 384.

GOD'S BOUNTY

'He gathereth the waters of the sea together as an heap: He layeth up the deeps in storehouses.'—Psalm xxxiii. 7 (R.V.).

I. When we speak of the harvest, we are accustomed to think only of the corn harvest; but the word has a far wider significance. Our granaries contain not a tithe of His gifts. Nor is the Creator's bounty limited to the products of each passing year. The cycle of God's harvests is measured by ages rather than by seasons.

II. The lesson of trust. In days of a youthful and somewhat arrogant science, in our fancied knowledge of second causes, it is possible for our trust in God to be shaken. There is truth in the old Bible promise, that 'while the earth remains' our harvests shall not fail. We may yet believe that Christ is the King of all the earth, and not substitute for our creed the bare negations of a cold and cheerless agnosticism.

III. The lesson of contentment. The great struggle between labour and capital, industrial and agricultural depression, God punishing us for our distrust and ingratitude.

IV. Liberality. In all our varied gains, whether from an influx of better trade, or a rise in the share market, we should remember that the first-fruits belong to God, and the gleanings to the poor.—Vivian R. Lennard, *Harvest-tide*, p. 3.

References.—XXXIII. 13.—Spurgeon, *Morning by Morning*, p. 272.

THE COMFORT OF PHYSICAL INFERIORITY

'There is no King saved by the multitude of an host; a mighty man is not delivered by much strength.'—Psalm xxxiii. 16.

I. The doctrine of modern life is the survival of the fittest. Is the Psalmist in opposition to this view?

No. He is quite willing to admit that the fittest survive; what he says is that their fitness does not lie in the physical. He says that even where the physical strength exists it is not the deepest ground of success. And is he not right? Take the simile in his own mind—the sway of a kingdom. The greatest kingdoms of this world have been swayed by spiritual forces. Look at the Papacy of early days. It was the rule of one frail man—without arms, without territories, without embattled walls, without military followers, without a right to draw the sword. What was the secret of the Pope's power? Why did kings hold his stirrup and emperors court his favour and armies melt at his command and rude barbarians bow to his desire? It was because men believed in his holiness—because they held him to possess the Spirit of God. Or, take our own Indian Empire, that to me is the miracle of history—a small army holding in leash the millions of a conquered land. What is the power by which a little island has bound a chain round an enormous continent? Is it holiness? Alas, no, but it is none the less a power of the spirit. These millions could overwhelm us if they were mentally strong. Theirs is the homage of matter to mind. Is it not written of the forces of animal nature, 'A little child shall lead them'.

II. In the presence of the great forest of India, Britain is physically but a child; yet the myriad denizens of the forest bend beneath her sway. They could crush her at a blow; to what do they bend? To that which as yet is to them a mystery—the power of mind. The gigantic river has been arrested by one pebble; the sweep of the blast has been diverted by the single leaf of a tree. There is no power on earth so secularly strong as that which sleeps within a human soul. Remember this, thou mother with the delicate babe. Remember this, when thou bendest with sorrow over that cradle which seems to enshrine a physical failure. Eve christened her son by the name of Abel—a vapour. The child seemed so fragile as to be but a breath; and the mother viewed his future with dismay. Was she right? No; that little pigmy in the primitive cradle was the most surviving man of all the race—'he yet speaketh'. Remember that, when thou lookest upon the physical feebleness of thy babe. It may survive its strong brother Cain in the work of the world. The cry may be faint; but its cry is not its crown. O thou that holdest in thine arms a feeble form, remember that the frail casket may enclose a King.—G. Matheson, *Messages of Hope*, p. 252.

References.—XXXIII. 20.—W. L. Alexander, *Christian Thought and Work*, p. 155. XXXIII. 21.—Spurgeon, *Morning by Morning*, p. 184. XXXIII. 22.—J. Keble, *Sermons from Septuagesima to Ash Wednesday*, p. 432. XXXIV.—*International Critical Commentary*, vol. i. p. 294. XXXIV. 1.—J. M. Neale, *Passages of the Psalms*, p. 77. XXXIV. 1-8.—W. H. Aitken, *Mission Sermons* (1st Series), p. 310.

DAILY PRAYER

Psalm xxxiv. 1-22.

'As it is the special work of a shoemaker to make shoes,' said Luther, 'and of a tailor to make coats, so it is the special work of a Christian to pray.' The true artist is an artist everywhere. His work in his studio is only a part of his artist life. So must the pious soul be devoted to prayer; his prayers will be only a part of his praying life. The servants of Madame de Chantal used to say of their mistress: 'Madame's first Director made her pray three times a day, and everybody was upset. The new Director makes her pray all day, and nobody suffers for it.'

References.—XXXIV. 3-8.—A. Mursell, *Lights and Landmarks*, p. 165.

'They looked unto Him and were lightened: and their faces were not ashamed.'—Psalm xxxiv. 5.

I. The meaning of the Look. There is many a metaphor which is more instructive than a treatise, and this one is worth cart-loads of metaphysical analysis. What is meant by it? No man hath seen God at any time, and yet there is an action of the spirit which is fitly paralleled as sight. We are accustomed to say seeing is believing; the converse is quite as true. Believing is seeing. The Spirit has its eye as the body—that inward eye which is the bliss and the glory of man. In briefest words—the look that enlightens is the look of faith. The main elements are plain enough. (*a*) There is what I may call the intellectual, the occupation of the understanding with the thought of God. (*b*) There is desire in the look, wistful, longing. (*c*) There is sense of need. (*d*) There is confident expectancy.

II. The power of the Look. Note how the enlightenment is set forth as immediate and certain. There will be no appreciable interval of time, but at once when a man turns his face to God his face will blaze. In this highest region of life to ask is to receive, to wish is to possess, to turn to the light is to be flooded, bathed, in the light, and that at once and without a doubt.

III. The Look has, properly speaking, no power at all, i.e., it is the blaze of the sunlight which makes the face glow. It is the objective faith, God's own face which makes the brightness and so the true limits of the worth of faith. Not the act of belief but the thing believed—not the faith but the Gospel—not very faith as a more refined form of work but my faith as the mere inlet through which His grace enters.

(*a*) Put in its fullest power—and it is this—the look is the medium of healing or Salvation. This is the true enlightening—the real deliverance from the power of darkness. To entertain the belief and this great love in Christ is to pass into the light.

(*b*) The look works joy. The outward deliverance is implied, but even where that does not come we may have the joy of His face, and plain evermore is that the look, i.e. occupation of mind and heart with the thought of God, is sure to make a man glad.

Go and stand in the sunshine. That is what we all need to have said to us over and over again. That is the secret of all light, of knowledge, purity, and blessedness.—A. Maclaren.

References.—XXXIV. 5.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. iv. No. 195. XXXIV. 6.—G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 225.

THE MINISTRY OF ANGELS

'The Angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear Him, and delivereth them.'—PSALM XXXIV. 7.

I. THERE is something, I think, very touching in the first recorded message of an Angel of God, and to our ears it may sound strangely. When Hagar fled from the face of Sarai, the Angel of the Lord found her in the wilderness and said 'Return to thy mistress, and subdue thyself under her hands': Patience and self-control, such are the earliest precepts which the messenger of heaven brings to a suffering woman; but with them is combined a blessing, for He said, 'I will multiply thy seed exceedingly, that it shall not be numbered for multitude'. From this beginning the record of Divine providence flows on with even current through the age of patriarchs. At Sodom, at Moriah, at Hebron, at Mahanaim, at Bethel, and in Egypt, the patriarchs acknowledged the personal care of their God in the service of His messengers.

II. The history of the family was a prelude to the history of the nation. In times of rebellion and division, in times of despair and oppression, in times of sinful confidence and of trustful self-abasement, the Angel of the Lord wrought among Israel the issues of repentance and faith, of chastisement and victory, in the field of Bochim, and by the brook Kishon, appearing to Gideon as he threshed wheat by stealth, and to the wife of Manoah in her loneliness, stretching the destroying sword over the city of David and sweeping with a pestilence through the camp of the Assyrians. Meanwhile the prophets were unfolding wider views of the ancient faith. The God of Israel appeared under the more glorious title of the Lord of Hosts. The scene of His Majesty was transferred, as it were, from earth to heaven. The angels were seen ministering to His glory or declaring His perfections. The way was prepared for a spiritual kingdom; and Daniel was allowed to record the ministry of spiritual power in Persia and Greece that all the nations of the world might work together for the final establishment of the reign of Christ.

III. The age of prophets passed away, and with it the outward miracles of the first dispensation. A people tried by prosperity and purified by suffering was left to trace in the chequered course of life the Divine Presence which was before sensibly revealed to them. In part they were strengthened to deeds of heroic valour by the remembrance of past deliverance; in part they defaced the simplicity of the Scriptural teaching by the admixture of Eastern superstition; but the belief still lived, and in the fullness of time an angel announced to men the advent of the Saviour. Angels foretold the birth of his forerunner. Angels proclaimed the nativity to the shepherds. Angels were sent to minister to the Infant Jesus. And when the work of Christ began angels still attended Him. At His Temptation, at His Agony, at His Resurrection, at His Ascension, angels ministered to Him.

IV. I have said enough to show that the doctrine of a secondary spiritual agency is inwrought into the whole fabric of our faith; that it is not only consistent with the Omnipresence of God, but in some degree explanatory of it; that it was active when the creation was first completed; that it shall be active when Christ comes again to judgment: that it extends to the great mysteries of the Gospel and the passing needs of the least of Christ's little ones.—B. F. WESTCOTT, *Village Sermons*, p. 240.

REFERENCES.—XXXIV. 7.—A. Maclaren, *Weekday Evening Addresses*, p. 29. H. Melvill, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 2901. H. J. Wilmot-Buxton, *The Children's Bread*, p. 126. J. E. Vaux, *Sermon Notes* (4th Series), p. 94. XXXIV. 8.—J. H. Newman, *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, vol. vii. p. 192. J. Vaughan, *Children's Sermons*, 1875, p. 57. S. Cox, *Expositor* (2nd Series), vol. iv. p. 411. G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 115. XXXIV. 8, 9.—T. Arnold, *Christian Life: Its Hopes*, p. 163. XXXIV. 10.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. ii. No. 65. XXXIV. 11-15.—J. Pulsford, *Our Deathless Hope*, p. 50. XXXIV. 15, 16.—G. Moberley, *Sermons in Winchester College* (2nd Series), p. 1. XXXIV. 16.—J. Baldwin Brown, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. ix. p. 200.

'The young lions do lack, and suffer hunger: but they that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing.'—PSALM XXXIV.

THESE were the last words written by Columba after he had spent a long life of incessant Christian labour. He died in Iona on 9 June, A.D. 597.

The narrative Adamnan gives of his closing hours, of his farewell words with his sorrow-stricken disciples, of his parting with his faithful old horse, which put its head on its master's breast as if aware of the event, reveals the deep tenderness and humanity of his nature.

When the biographer has lingered lovingly on the little incidents that preceded the death, he continues: 'After these words he descended the hill, and, having returned to the monastery, sat in his hut transcribing the Psalter; and coming to that verse of the 34th Psalm, where it is written, "They that seek the Lord shall want no manner of thing that is good," "Here," said he, "at the end of the page I must stop, and what follows let Baithen write". The last verse he had written was very applicable to the saint who was about to depart, and to whom eternal good shall never be wanting; while the one that followeth is equally applicable to the father who succeeded him, the instructor of his spiritual children, "Come, ye children, and hearken unto me: I will teach you the fear of the Lord".'—JOHN KER.

THE MYSTERY OF SUFFERING

(For Holy Week)

'Thy judgments are a great deep.'—PSALM XXXVI. 6.

I HAVE thought that it may lead up to that climax of all endurance—which we shall soon be called upon to measure—if, on the days of this Holy Week, we consider 'Suffering' under five aspects: 'The Mystery of Suffering,' 'The Consecration of Suffering,' 'The Uses of Suffering,' 'The Joy of Suffering,' and 'The Dignity of Suffering'.

I. Mystery is:—

(*a*) *A necessity.* So long as the finite has to do with the Infinite, there must be mystery.

(*b*) *A boon.* It cultivates the two high graces of patience and faith.

(*c*) *Joy in everything.* Half the happiness of the world would be gone if we had not always to do with something beyond it.

II. What a Mystery the Present State of our World is.

(*a*) *Take a walk through the hospitals.*

(*b*) *See some poor creature,* in her wretched hovel, ill and without a friend.

(*c*) *See that man ready for heaven,* yet left there, apparently useless, lying in his agony for years at the gate, before God lets him cross the threshold!

III. But Let us Take the Matter out of its Generalities and Deal with it more Personally.

(*a*) *There is not one who has not known,* or who probably does not know at this moment, some dreadful trouble; or, if he has not any, he knows that he shall have some.

(*b*) *Now, when suffering of mind or body comes, perhaps the first cry of nature is*—'Why? Why all this for me? Am I worse than others?'

(*c*) *Mystery answers mystery.* It is mystery, in great part, for this very end, that you may say—'Why?' and have no answer, no answer but—'Sovereignty! God's own absolute, rightful sovereignty!' 'What I do, thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter.'

IV. In all your Home-suffering, Leave and Love the Mystery which gives you concord with Jesus, and all His saints. Do not wish to see all. Do not wish to explain all. It will not be half so useful, nor half so good for you, if you ask questions. Take it in the simplicity of its own magnificence. It is so grand to see only God—to be lost in God!

GOD'S GOODNESS TO MAN

(*A Harvest Sermon*)

'How excellent is Thy loving kindness, O God! Therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of Thy wings.'—PSALM XXXVI. 7.

WE are here to celebrate our Harvest Festival.

I. First, let us think of the propriety of a Harvest Thanksgiving. Can it be that there are some who need to be reminded that these fruits of the earth, around us, of whatever kind, are emblems of the love and might of God; that they tell of God's loving provision for the children of men? These things speak to us of the mysteries of growth. They tell us of the wonders of rain and sunshine, and air and soil. They testify to God's majesty and beneficence.

II. Let us see what God's Word says as to the celebration of a Harvest Thanksgiving. In plain and unmistakable terms we find there God's direct command for keeping the Feast of Harvest. Not the least interesting fact in connexion with this feast is the fact that our Lord Himself we find present upon one occasion at the celebration as it was carried on in His day. The Bible plainly shows us, at all events, that Harvest rejoicings and the duty of giving thanks to God for the earth's produce are as old as man's sojourn in the world.

III. And what should be the tone of our rejoicings? If we present ourselves at services such as this in the same spirit as that in which we might attend a secular concert, or a secular show, merely to be interested and entertained, it is time that we left the Harvest Festival alone altogether. But if the effect is to lift our hearts in real thankfulness to God for His beneficence, or if the Festival is a true expression of our thanks, then we do well to be present.

IV. The harvest and the field offer an immense sphere for the preacher. There is not a phase of life which they, one or other of them, cannot be taken to illustrate. Our Lord frequently and plentifully drew lessons from both, and, as we have seen, drew out from the harvest rejoicings, two of the mightiest object-lessons that ever the world has listened to. All creation speaks of God's goodness. If we receive God's mercies and His bounty in the right spirit, we shall look to Him with loving thankfulness, and a rich sense of safety and security.

THE UNLIGHTED LUSTRE

'In Thy light shall we see light.'—PSALM XXXVI. 9.

IN the life of Sir Walter Scott by Lockhart, there occurs a remark made by Sir Walter that has often come back to me in quiet moments. A reverend gentleman—a Principal from St. Andrews—was lamenting that he had never seen Byron, and Scott fell to talk on the beauty of Byron's face. 'Doctor,' he said, 'the prints give you no idea of it; the lustre is there, but it is not lighted up.' I confess that I have been haunted by that sentence, The lustre is there, but it is not lighted up.

I. Think to begin with of this world we dwell in, with all its beauty of hill and stream and sea. From the lights and shadows of the highland moor down to the droop of the birch-tree at the door, there is such a lustre of glory on the world that to some hearts it is a joy for ever. But for centuries men had no eyes for that, the ancient world had little feeling for it all. Again I think of the Bible. It is the same book in every hand and home. Yet to one man the Bible is the Bible, a book of infinite comfort and power and healing, and to another it is just so many printed pages within two covers that are rarely opened. The lustre is there, but it is not lighted up.

II. So much then for the unlighted lustre, and now a few words on how the lustre is kindled; and here I shall confine myself to human life, for that practically embraces all the rest. (*a*) First then, that is one great gain of responsibility: it is one of God's ways of lighting up the lustre. Responsibility develops a man's power, and rouses him into the enthusiasm of activity; it is like the sunlight falling on the seed and making it quicken into leaf and flower. There is a great deal more in you than you give yourself

credit for, and this is God's way of lighting up the lustre. (*b*) Then again this is one of the chief offices of love. A love that is base may set a man afire, but a love that is heavenly sets a man ashining. Dante tells us that but for his love of Beatrice, and the illuminating of his whole nature which it brought him, he would never have been moved to write these poems which are the wonder and the warning of the ages. That then, is one of the great offices of love. It comes like a torch to light the lustre up. (*c*) And then this is one of the meanings of conversion—that old and noble mismanaged word. Conversion is the lighting up of our lustre with the spark of God's Holy Spirit out of heaven.—G. H. Morrison, *The Unlighted Lustre*, p. 30.

References.—XXXVI. 9.—J. Vaughan, *Fifty Sermons* (10th Series), p. 28. P. Brooks, *Sermons Preached in an English Church*, p. 89. Archbishop Benson, *Boy Life*, p. 32. Spurgeon, *Evening by Evening*, pp. 292, 311. S. Macnaughton, *Real Religion and Real Life*, p. 97. XXXVII.—*International Critical Commentary*, vol. i. p. 322. XXXVII. 1.—Bishop Temple, *Rugby Sermons* (2nd Series), p. 267. XXXVII. 1, 2.—H. Windross, *The Life Victorious*, p. 255. Parker, *The Cavendish Pulpit*, p. 193. XXXVII. 3.—J. Thomas, *Myrtle Street Pulpit*, vol. iii. p. 257. J. Baldwin Brown, *The Sunday Afternoon*, p. 344. H. Alford, *Sermons*, p. 213. XXXVII. 3-8.—H. W. Beecher, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxvii. p. 93.

REMEDIES FOR DESPONDENCY

'Trust in the Lord, and do good: dwell in the land, and follow after faithfulness.'—Psalm xxxvii. 3 (R.V.).

One of the many dangers that we have to guard against in the spiritual life is the danger of despondency. We look out into the world around us and it would seem that those people who live their lives without any thought of God are getting on just as well as, and perhaps better than, we ourselves. This depression of soul is no new thing in the history of man. We find it in Holy Scripture. In this 37th Psalm the Psalmist tells us that he himself has seen the ungodly in great power, and moreover flourishing like a green bay-tree. And you will remember that even so strong a character as the prophet Elijah, just because he was threatened by an angry woman, throws himself down under a juniper-tree and requests that he may die. To the devout Jew this problem of the prosperity of the ungodly was one of the unsolved difficulties of life, and of course the problem was all the more difficult for him because there was no revelation of a future state of rewards and punishments. But for us the future life is no longer a dream. We know that God will in His own good time, if not here, at any rate hereafter, see that all wrongs are righted and all injustices redressed.

I. Faith.—Surely we can 'trust in the Lord'. In the old Catechism, which most of us probably learnt once and may have forgotten since, we are reminded that our duty towards God is to put our *whole* trust in Him. That surely means to stake everything upon Him; not merely to trust Him when all our life seems to be bathed in sunshine, not to trust Him merely when everything we do seems to turn out successfully, but also in those dark and gloomy days when the horizon becomes clouded and the sky is black with failure or sorrow.

II. Patience.—And this means that great demands will be made upon our patience. Because we cannot do what we want to do at once, we give up through impatience. We sympathize with the servants in the parable who wanted to pull up the tares at once. We are all too apt to lose sight of the fact that evil has a place in this world and in some mysterious way a work to do.

III. Works.—But not only does the Psalmist tell us that we are to trust in the Lord, but he says also that we are to do good. Go out into the pathway of duty and do that which lies right to thy hand—and do it with all thy might. Surely it is exactly what God told Elijah to do. 'Return on thy way'—it is no use hiding under a juniper-tree and bemoaning your failure. Is it not true that many of us regard our religion as something almost entirely negative? We think that if we can abstain from the grosser forms of sin we are doing all that can be expected of us. We are content if we can go through the world without, as we say, 'doing any harm'. But we are not put in this world simply not to do harm. We are put into this world to do good. Is anyone in this world a little better for our having been here? It is very interesting to know that our Lord summed up all the commandments in a form no longer negative, but strictly positive—'Thou shalt love'.

IV. Leave Results to God.—Then to come to the closing words of the text. God is not asking from us anything in the nature of success; only faithfulness. 'Be ye faithful unto death,' not 'be successful'. God in His great mercy is asking from His children something that is within grasp of all. Do not let us get into the habit of thinking that God is a hard taskmaster. He is just asking of us that each in his position in life will do his best. There is nothing that appeals to us like success, but that is not what God wants. God looks deeper than that. He looks into the heart. He does not trouble Himself about the outward result; He scrutinizes the motives. He marks the efforts, even though they are crowned with failure again and again. Is there any text more full of comfort, more stimulating to effort, than this, spoken of a poor simple woman at whom the world pointed the finger of scorn, 'Let her alone; she hath done what she could'? If you and I do what we can, never mind the failure; we can leave results in God's hands.

No sermons, nor books, nor arguments can strengthen the doubting heart so deeply as just to come into touch with a soul that is founded upon a rock, and has proved the truth of that plain religion whose highest philosophy is 'Trust in the Lord, and do good?'—Henry van Dyke, *Little Rivers*, p. 107.

THE SECRET OF TRANQUILLITY

'Delight thyself also in the Lord; and He shall give thee the desire of thine heart. Commit thy way unto the Lord. Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him.'—PSALM XXXVII. 4, 5, 7.

I. HERE is the secret of tranquillity in freedom from eager, earthly desire—'Delight thyself in the Lord, and He shall give thee the desire of thine heart'.

The great reason why life is troubled and restless lies not without, but within. It is not our changing circumstances, but our unregulated desires, that rob us of peace. Unbridled and varying wishes are the worst enemies of our repose. And still further they destroy tranquillity by putting us at the mercy of externals. Whatsoever we make necessary for contentment, we make lord of our happiness. By our eager desires we give perishable things supreme power over us, and so intertwine our being with theirs that the blow which destroys them lets out our life-blood. If then our desires are, in their very exercise, a disturbance, and in their very fruition prophesy disappointment, and if their certain disappointment is irrevocable and crushing when it comes, what shall we do for rest? There is but one answer—'Delight thyself in the Lord'. This glad longing for God is the cure for all the feverish unrest of desires unfulfilled, as well as for the ague of fear, of loss and sorrow.

II. But this is not all, the secret of tranquillity is found, secondly, in freedom from the perplexity of choosing our path. What does it prescribe? First the subordination—not the extinction—of our own inclinations. Our will is to be master of our passions, and desires, and whims, and habits, but to be the servant of God. Then the counsel of our text prescribes the submission of our judgment to God, in the confidence that His wisdom will guide us: The law is: you do your best to find out your duty; you suppress inclinations, and desire to do God's will, and He will certainly tell you what it is. Only let the eye be fixed on Him, and He will guide us in the way.

III. One more step. The secret of tranquillity is found, thirdly, in freedom from the anxiety of an unknown future. 'Rest in the Lord and wait patiently for Him.' Such an addition to these previous is needful, if all the sources of our disquiet are to be dealt with. We are sure that in the future are losses, and sorrows, and death; thank God we are sure, too, that He is in it. That certainty alone, and what comes of it, makes it possible for a thoughtful man to face to-morrow without fear or tumult. The only rest from apprehensions which are but too reasonable is 'rest in the Lord'. If we are sure that He will be there, and if we delight in Him, then we can afford to say, 'As for all the rest, let it be as He wills, it will be well'.—A. MACLAREN.

REFERENCE.—XXXVII. 5.—J. E. Vaux, *Sermon Notes* (1st Series), p. 18.

PSALM XXXVII. 5.

THIS verse was the frequent promise with which David Livingstone, the African missionary and traveller, encouraged himself in the midst of his wanderings and perils.

PSALM XXXVII.

THIS Psalm was the basis of the hymn of Paul Gerhardt, *Befiehl du deine Wege*, which has taken national rank in Germany, next to Luther's *Ein' feste Burg*. It has become well known in the English language through John Wesley's translation:—

Commit thou all thy griefs
And ways into His hands,
To His sure truth and tender care,
Who heaven and earth commands.

The story told of its origin is well known. When Paul Gerhardt was banished from Berlin by the Elector of Brandenburg, because he conscientiously refused some conditions attached to his ministry, he turned in with wife and children to a small wayside hostelry, not knowing where to betake himself. Seeing his wife deeply depressed, he quoted to her Psalm XXXVII. 5: 'Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in Him, and He shall bring it to pass'; and then went out into the garden. There, sitting under an apple-tree, he composed the hymn, and read it to his wife for her comfort. That same evening two messengers arrived from Duke Christian of Merseburg to offer him an honourable place in his dominions. When the first Lutheran Church was opened in Philadelphia in 1743 it was with Gerhardt's song.—JOHN KER.

'BE STILL, MY SOUL'

'Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him.'—PSALM XXXVII. 7.

A FAVOURITE subject with the Psalmist is the seeming injustice of God's dealings with men as witnessed in the frequent prosperity of the wicked, and the as frequent adversity of the righteous.

I. The assurance that all is not in reality well with the wicked is valuable in so far as it saves us from unbelief and despair. Sorrow in some shape or other, in greater or less measure, is the common lot; danger is the common lot; and death comes at last to all. There is no exemption in favour of youth, or beauty, or blood.

II. God often delays, and for this reason, that He is eternal. It is oftentimes more difficult patiently to wait than to be actively engaged in some enterprise. And yet God rewards us for the fidelity with which we serve Him, and for that alone.

III. 'For Him.' The addition of these two words makes the nature of true resignation quite clear. Our Heavenly Father demands more of us than mere passive submission to His will. We must hope on, unfaltering in faith, unswerving in purpose, faithful to God even unto death.

IV. The sweet and invigorating consolation which flows from patiently awaiting God's time is the subject of Catharina von Schlegel's fine hymn, familiar to us all in Jane Borthwick's admirable translation, 'Be still, my soul: the Lord is on thy side'.—W. TAYLOR, *Twelve Favourite Hymns*, p. 153.

REFERENCES.—XXXVII. 7.—J. Vaughan, *Fifty Sermons* (10th Series), p. 174. D. Moore, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 2998. A. W. Momerie, *Defects of Modern Christianity*, p. 242. E. S. Gange, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 1009. M. R. Vincent, *Gates Into*

the Psalm Country, p. 127. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxiii. No. 1333. S. Wilberforce, *Sermons*, p. 225. J. Martineau, *Hours of Thought*, vol. i. p. 329. XXXVII. 11.—H. Melvill, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 2257. XXXVII. 21.—J. M. Neale, *Passages of the Psalms*, p. 89. XXXVII. 23, 24.—M. R. Vincent, *God and Bread*, p. 97. XXXVII. 25.—J. Thomas, *Myrtle Street Pulpit*, vol. ii. p. 247.

OBEDIENCE THE REMEDY FOR RELIGIOUS PERPLEXITY

'Wait on the Lord, and keep His way, and He shall exalt thee to inherit the land.'—PSALM XXXVII. 34.

LET every beginner make up his mind to suffer disquiet and perplexity. He cannot complain that it should be so; and though he should be deeply ashamed of himself that it is so (for had he followed God from a child, his condition would have been far different, though even then perhaps, not without some perplexities), still he has no cause to be surprised or discouraged. The more he makes up his mind manfully to bear doubt, struggle against it, and meekly to do God's will all through it, the sooner this unsettled state of mind will cease, and order will rise out of confusion. 'Wait on the Lord,' this is the rule; 'keep His way,' this is the manner of waiting. Go about your duty; mind little things as well as great. Do not pause, and say, 'I am as I was; day after day passes, and still no light'; go on.—J. H. NEWMAN.

REFERENCES.—XXXVII. 34.—J. H. Newman, *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, vol. i. p. 228. XXXVII. 37.—G. W. Brameld, *Practical Sermons*, p. 414. J. Baldwin Brown, *Aids to the Development of the Divine Life*, vol. i. p. 111. XXXVII. 38.—C. J. Vaughan, *Harrow Sermons* (2nd Series), p. 384. XXXVII. 39.—Spurgeon, *My Sermon Notes*, p. 151. XXXVIII.—*International Critical Commentary*, vol. i. p. 335. XXXVIII. 1.—J. J. Blunt, *Plain Sermons*, p. i. XXXVIII. 2.—Bishop Goodwin, *Parish Sermons* (4th Series), p. 162. XXXVIII. 9.—J. Baldwin Brown, *The Sunday Afternoon*, p. 114. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxvi. No. 1564.

REPENTANCE

'I will declare mine iniquity; I will be sorry for my sin.'—PSALM XXXVIII. 18.

THERE can be no real repentance, and, therefore, no blessed forgiveness, unless we attain to two things: a knowledge of what sin is—how serious, how full of peril, how displeasing to God, how exceeding sinful; and a knowledge of what we are ourselves—a recognition in the full light of consciousness of our own lives and our own deeds. But a yet further step is necessary, which is to weld together these two convictions, and to see that our own lives, our deeds, our thoughts, make us sinners before God, without subterfuge and without excuse. It is true of millions—may it not be true of us?—that, while we hate sin in the abstract, while we confess, in a vague collective way, that 'we have offended against God's holy laws,' yet we do not condemn ourselves (see Rom. II. 17-24).

I. How is it, then, that men do not connect together their intimate knowledge of themselves and their theoretical hatred of sin? There are various ways in which men try to escape their own detection. There is:—

(*a*) The sorcery of words. Men call sins, which they see others commit, by their true names; they call their own sins by false and simple names. What is pride in others is in themselves proper spirit; what is slander in others is in themselves moral indignation; what is cheating in others is in themselves legitimate profit; what is in others an immoral acquiescence is in themselves a practical common sense; what is in others licence is in themselves Christian liberty.

(*b*) Men will hardly ever look at their own actual deeds in connexion with their own true motives. They live two lives. One is their habitual round of conduct, which is often base, mean, and unworthy. The other is their traditional homage to righteousness, which is upright and respectable. That imaginative life they choose to take for their true life. Their lives are like a stately temple front, its entablature enriched with a pious inscription. Alas! Enter beyond the vestibule, and in some inmost shrine, there, as they sit shrouded, and almost incognito, each man to himself, there, in dark, secret chambers, all the bad, impure, and dishonourable work of their lives is done!

(*c*) The freely condemning every other sin but the one to which they are themselves addicted. A man may be a libertine in heart and life, and yet, corrupt as he is or has been, he walks with head erect, and is very proud of himself, because he is such 'a man of honour'. Or, it may be, a man is earning his living as a professional liar, and living in an envenomed atmosphere of gossip; and yet he may go regularly to church, and take himself for a Christian, because, perhaps, he feels a contempt for avarice. Or he may be earning his bread by means dishonest and immoral; by trades that ruin men, body and soul; by houses in which the poor are huddled together like swine; and yet he may speak of sensuality with the fiercest denunciation. It is thus a matter of primary importance, by self-examination, to see that there are no personal sins for which we make an exception; no Commandments which, for ourselves only, we strike out of the Decalogue.

II. What should be our protection against these specious thoughts of our own hearts and our own counsel? God has not left you unshielded. He has assigned the soul of man to the special guardianship of those two pure and strong Archangels of our being: Duty, that angel so stern and yet so beautiful, and Conscience, that aboriginal vicar of Christ, with a voice now like the blast of a trumpet, now thrilling, and still, and small. A man who, from his youth upward, has, by the grace of God, committed himself to the care of these two, such a man is safe.

III. If we should receive the grace of Christ, we must come as true penitents; if otherwise, we shall not be forgiven. We must not only see that sin is hateful; we must not only confess, 'Thus and thus have I done,' but we must see that we individually and specifically are sinners, and that without excuse. It is only to the helpless who feel themselves to be helpless that Christ comes. To the blind, who say,

'We see'; to the lepers, who cry, 'We are clean'; to the sinners, who say, 'We have no sin' (and therefore their sin remaineth), Christ comes not.

PSALM XXXIX. 9.

DURING the suffering of his last illness Calvin was heard repeating the words of Hezekiah: 'I did mourn as a dove; mine eyes fail with looking upward,' followed by those of this Psalm; 'I was dumb; I opened not my mouth, because Thou didst it.'—JOHN KER.

PSALM XXXIX. 13.

THERE is no mistaking the reality which prayer, in the sense of communion with God, was to him. When he heard of his appointment as Master he was staying in a friend's house. 'He leant his head against the mantelpiece and *prayed aloud*, "Oh spare me a little that I may recover my strength, before I go hence and be no more seen".'—LIFE OF BENJAMIN JOWETT.

REFERENCES.—XXXIX.—*International Critical Commentary*, vol. i. p. 344. XXXIX. 1.—R. C. Trench, *Sermons in Westminster Abbey*, p. 114. XXXIX. 1, 2.—C. Vince, *The Unchanging Saviour*, p. 21. J. B. Mozley, *University Sermons*, p. 223. XXXIX. 4.—J. Budgen, *Parochial Sermons*, vol. i. p. 157. XXXIX. 4, 5.—Bishop Bethell, *Sermons*, vol. i. p. 154. XXXIX. 12.—J. Budgen, *Parochial Sermons*, vol. i. p. 166. XL.—*International Critical Commentary*, vol. i. p. 350. XL. 3.—J. Stalker, *The New Song*, p. 9. XL. 5.—W. L. Alexander, *Sermons*, p. 191. XL. 7.—H. Scott Holland, *Logic and Life*, p. 110. XL. 7, 8.—Bishop Bethell, *Sermons*, vol. i. p. 478.

THE MESSIANIC WATCHWORD

'I delight to do Thy will, O my God: yea, Thy law is within my heart.'—PSALM XL. 8.

THESE words are quoted by the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews as a Messianic prophecy; and are used at the same time to indicate the supreme element of value in the sacrifice which redeems mankind. The words were indited in some sweet thrilling springtime of the singer's history, possibly at his anointing for the kingship, or when the Lord had given him rest from his enemies; but he fell short, and generations afterwards the ideal was fulfilled by another. A superficial glance at this Psalm may perhaps suggest to us that the writer, whether David or some other inspired man, was thinking of himself from beginning to end, and not consciously speaking in the name of a descendant. But we must not unduly narrow our views. Two or three considerations may serve to show how, without doing violence to the thought of the man who first used the words, they may pass into a watchword of the Messianic work and mission.

I. A vague Messianic hope was widely diffused among men from the beginnings of history; and this hope tended to centre itself in the kings of primitive peoples, perhaps because of the priestly functions they exercised. In the days of the first Kings of Israel, men were looking for the fulfilment of the Divine promises in the person of a providential ruler. Notwithstanding the separation of a special family to the work of the priesthood, the king still represented his people before God, and often performed the act of sacrifices. The promise made to Abraham and renewed from time to time to his descendants was put in trust with the house of David, and the believing expectation concentrated itself in his line. Such hopes contained the germinating forces of genuine Messianic prophecy. The joyful unspotted career of righteousness and piety after which David longed when he came to the throne and by which he hoped to establish the kingdom of God upon earth was, alas! imperfectly realized. The Messianic dream failed once more, and failed through the moral incompetence of the dreamer. The failure of David was redeemed in his matchless descendant. The fulfilment came in One who adopted the watchword, and after a life in which there was no need to confess a shortcoming, died upon the Cross with the shout 'It is finished'. The new programme of sacrifice—the sacrifice of ungrudging, spontaneous, all-comprehending obedience which was dawning in the mind of the Psalmist—became the prophecy of a new dispensation.

II. There is a sense in which the outlook towards lofty and unselfish progress has in it a diffused and unfocussed light of prophecy. Whenever we see perfection from afar, and set our hearts upon it, we join hands with Moses, David, Isaiah, and all the righteous men who waited for redemption in Israel. This ideal of joyful obedience to the redeeming counsels of the Most High corresponds with a new view of the Divine character which was dawning on the horizon of the Jewish thought. We speak of a God, who whilst still zealous for the righteousness which has been the staple of past revelations, wishes to be known by a love which accepts only the service of congenial minds. In his prevision of a joyful and perfect obedience, rendered to an inscrutable law of spiritual sacrifice, the Psalmist anticipates in faint outline that revelation of the Divine character which the work of Jesus Christ put into intense light. He who sent His Son into the world to be man's atoning Mediator and example, must needs be served in tasks of supreme difficulty and pain, with cheerful and uncomplaining loyalty. Jesus, Who knew all the depths of the Divine heart, fulfilled the will of the Father in its most mysterious and distressing demands, with complete consecration of spirit, and an invincible sense of blessedness in His high vocation. The spirit of our Lord's surrender to the Divine will foreshadowed the free obedience He hoped to create in His redeemed people. The setting up of the Cross was a call to the future ages for a moral and spiritual service, free and winsome as the genius of life itself. It was the beginning of a new heaven and earth, the abodes of inward righteousness.—T. G. SELBY, *The Strenuous Gospel*, p. 78.

REFERENCES.—XL. 8.—W. G. Blaikie, *Glimpses of the Inner Life of our Lord*, p. 29. XL. 8, 9.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons on Passages of the Psalms*, p. 100. XL. 9, 10.—E. B. Pusey, *Sermons Preached Before the University of Oxford*, p. 437. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xvii. No. 977. XL. 10.—Canon

Beeching, *Inns of Court Sermons*, p. 22. H. Bushnell, *The New Life*, p. 361. Alexander Maclaren, *After the Resurrection*, p. 258.

PSALM XL. 17.

Deus meus, ne tardaveris, 'Make no tarrying, O my God,'—words which were repeatedly in the mouth of Robert Rollock, the first Principal of the University of Edinburgh, during his last illness. Under long and painful suffering he had interviews with friends, colleagues, ministers, and magistrates of the city, exhorting them to faithfulness in their duty. His biographer says that, as he came near his end, he kept silence during the night till the Sabbath dawn, when he broke out with the words, 'Come, Lord, make no delay; come, Lord Jesus, tarry not. I am wearied with my loathing of day and night. Come, Lord Jesus, that I may come to Thee.' It was early spring, 1599, when he died; and at his funeral a tempest of rain and wind was sweeping the streets of Edinburgh; but multitudes of every class followed him to his grave, and made great lamentation over him.

REFERENCES.—XL. 17.—W. L. Alexander, *Sermons*, p. 191. XLI. 1.—F. W. Farrar, *Contemporary Pulpit*, Extra No. 2, 1887. J. Baldwin Brown, *The Sunday Afternoon*, p. 394. XLI.—*International Critical Commentary*, vol. i. p. 360. XLII. 1.—R. J. Campbell, *A Faith for To-day*, p. 3. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xiv. No. 822. G. Matheson, *Moments on the Mount*, p. 151. XLII. 1, 2.—F. J. A. Hort, *Village Sermons* (2nd Series), p. 109. XLII. 1-3.—Bishop Temple, *Rugby Sermons*, p. 254. Bishop Harvey Goodwin, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. i. p. 117.

THE THIRST FOR THE LIVING GOD

'My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God.'—PSALM XLII. 2.

THERE is scarcely a phase of philosophy about us, or a really profound experience which we observe, which does not illustrate the increasing thirst of the human soul for the living God.

I. Take, in the first place, the philosophy of the time, and consider the outcome of those forms of philosophy which, to the religious mind, are most unpromising and repelling. For the last twenty years philosophical unbelief has been taking shape among English-speaking people under two types. One we call positivism, the other agnosticism. Now, whatever these two types of thought had to debate about, they seemed to have this one point of agreement—that each of them expressly withheld the thoughts of men from any sense of a living God. Yet, strangely enough, nothing which the history of the times presents seems to illustrate so strongly as do these very schools of thought the increasing thirst of philosophy for a genuine religious life.

II. This ferment of the philosophers is but a suggestion of the spiritual restlessness which possesses multitudes about us, whether they study philosophy or not. It is this eager, receptive, waiting mood, found in every community, which gives the chief human impulse to the life of a modern minister. It fills the preacher's work with a new exhilaration, for he is not dealing with a controversy against other forms of faith, but with a positively constructive work. It does not much matter for this end precisely wherein the confidence of his faith may lie. Let him believe anything concerning the ways of God supremely and announce his faith rationally and he is satisfying the thirst of many souls.

III. This is the natural basis of the authority of Jesus. To come in the course of one's experiences upon one towering personality to whom the sense of God is meat and drink, and in whom duty becomes grace through this illuminating of his way, to be taken out of one's solitude and feel this life touching one's own through all its experiences, yet sustained and disciplined throughout by this transfiguring faith—that is a recognition of authority which is healthful and scientific and invigorating and humbling all at once. The more one is set free from false and external authority the more he needs the authority of a master soul. The more the problem of the time is seen to be the preaching of a living God, the more unlikely shall we be to outgrow the mediating force of Christian loyalty.—FRANCIS G. PEABODY, *Homiletic Review*, 1906, vol. LII. p. 301.

REFERENCES.—XLII. 2.—Bishop Maclagan, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 731. F. D. Maurice, *Sermons*, vol. iii. p. 129. W. J. Knox-Little, *Anglican Pulpit of To-day*, p. 267. G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 36. A. Maclaren, *Sermons Preached in Manchester*, p. 135. S. Macnaughton, *Real Religion and Real Life*, p. 13. XLII. 4.—W. M. Punshon, *Sermons*, p. 101.

TO THE DISHEARTENED

'Why art thou cast down, O my soul?'—PSALM XLII. 5.

I. THE common causes for disheartening.

(*a*) The long and monotonous stretches of our life. It is a dreary business walking in the country when the dusty road without a turn or a bend stretches ahead of you for miles. It is the sameness that disheartens us.

(*b*) Bitter disappointment.

(*c*) The apparent uselessness of all we do. It is the partial failure, it is the lack of progress, it is the fact that I strive and never seem to attain, that lies at the root of spiritual despondency. I am disheartened because I am something better than a beast, and have been made to crave, to strive, to yearn, to hope, unsatisfied, till the day break and the shadows flee away.

II. Counsels against disheartenment.

(*a*) Disheartenment can often be dispelled by action.

(*b*) Remember what others have to suffer. When you are quite despondent, says Mr. Keble, 'the best way is to go out and do something kind to somebody'.

(*c*) In your hours of disheartening just ask if there was ever a man on earth who had such cause to be disheartened as our Lord.—G. H. MORRISON, *Flood-Tide*, p. 43.

PSALM XLII. 5.

WHY art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted in me?' The narrative of the death of the Bohemian martyrs, who suffered at Prague in 1621, says, 'John Schultis was the next, who on the

scaffold said, "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? hope thou in God; for I shall yet praise Him". "The righteous seem in the eyes of men to die, but indeed they go to their rest." Then kneeling down, he said, "Come, come, Lord Jesus, and do not tarry"; and so he was beheaded.'—JOHN KER.

REFERENCES.—XLII. 5.—H. P. Wright, *Preacher's Magazine*, vol. xix. p. 515. A. Rowland, *Sermons by Welshmen*, p. 135. XLII. 6.—R. Roberts, *My Jewels*, p. 22. J. Baldwin Brown, *The Sunday Afternoon*, p. 237.

THE CORRESPONDENCE OF THE DEEPS

'Deep calleth unto deep at the noise of Thy waterspouts.'—PSALM XLII. 7.

IT is very probable that this Psalm was written by some one who was with David when he fled from Absalom. The title says it was for the sons of Korah: it would be better to read it, *by* the sons of Korah. These sons of Korah were doorkeepers of the sanctuary; they had also some charge of sanctuary music; and when David fled from his rebellious son, these loyal servants would accompany him. It was one of these, I think, who wrote this Psalm, with its passionate yearning for the house of God. It is filled with the imagery of that mountain region where the king had gone in peril of his life. And the writer, true poet that he was, finds in the scenery the picture of his mood; reads in the face of universal nature the anguish that was gnawing at his heart. Deep calleth unto deep at the noise of Thy waterspouts. He could hear the cataracts as he lay sleepless. Now they were thunderous, now they were faint, as the breeze rose and fell among the hills. And as he listened to them in their varying tones, now loud and clamorous, now dying away again, it seemed to him as if the mountain torrents were calling to one another through the night. Had the man been a Celt he would have said, 'It is the spirit of the waters that is crying'. Being a Jew, those echoings and answerings were the broken syllables of the one God. But being a poet, whether Celt or Jew, this reached him as the message of that midnight, that between deep and solemn and majestic voices there is a certain call and correspondence. On that then shall we dwell for a few moments?—on the call and correspondence of deep things? I shall run rapidly over some tracts of life, and use this text for their illumination.

I. I find a suggestion here of the influence of scenery on character. That is a thought which has been largely worked at in late years, how nations are moulded by the scenes among which they dwell.

II. Our text helps us to understand what I might call the appeal of personality. You can never explain on any shallow grounds the way in which the deepest ties are formed. The ways of God are not the ways of man, and friendships, like marriages, are made in heaven, and we flash into recognition of each other just because deep is calling unto deep. I do believe with the American poet that the friends I seek are seeking me. I do believe they are always drawing nearer, led by a hand that knows the way we take. Out of the depths I cried to God. Yes, that is true, and we have found it so. But it seems to me that this is also true: out of the depths I cried —unto my friend.

III. Then once again I think our text applies to the responses that we make to our great hours. It applies to those times of national awaking when peril is imminent and all is dark. You can never tell what a nation can achieve till it is faced by one of these decisive seasons. You can never judge the fibre of a people when things are easy and prosperous and peaceful. It takes a time of danger to show that; a time when our blood-bought freedom is in peril; just as it takes the onset of the storm to show the finest features of the ship. There are always people in a time of peace who will tell you that Britain is going to the dogs. They bewail the dying out of heroism; the love of pleasure; the lack of high ideal. God knows it is all true enough, if you take the average of any great community, but I say that a man is a traitor to his country if he really believes that that is all. Let another Napoleon show himself in France, and you shall have another Wellington in England. There is always a Lord Nelson getting ready for the great hour that calls for a Lord Nelson. Not only so, but let the day arrive when the charter of our freedom is imperilled, and you shall have such a spirit in the people as will recall the joy of the heroic time. That is the meaning of the fine enthusiasm which kindles a people in the day of trial. That is the secret of the swift response which follows the appeal to the heroic. There is much that is slumbering in the nation's heart, and so long as the sunshine lasts it will not stir; but it *will* waken, with triumph in its eyes, when deep is calling unto deep.—G. H. MORRISON, *The Return of the Angels*, p. 56.

REFERENCES.—XLII. 7.—J. Baldwin Brown, *The Sunday Afternoon*, p. 252. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xv. No. 865.

THE SONG AND THE PRAYER

'Yet the Lord will command His lovingkindness in the daytime, and in the night His song shall be with me, and my prayer unto the God of my life.'—PSALM XLII. 8.

I. To each soul its own prayer. First of all, let me say that every soul has its own prayer—'My prayer unto the God of my life'. No man can ever take the place of my soul, and feel its sins, and its sorrows, and its wants. And as he can never breathe my prayer no man can ever drink my cup, or taste either its sweetness or its bitterness; I must drink it myself. No man can see my visions. They may be poor, they may be limited, circumscribed and never peer where the vision of others has gone; but no man can see my vision, no man can see your vision—no man can breathe your prayer any more than he can breathe mine. Prayer springs from different causes; it is uttered in different circumstances and conditions; it is expressed in different words—and must be. The learned and refined man will express his prayer to God in refined and beautiful language. But the unlearned, as Paul calls them, and the unrefined men

will express their prayer in quite another way. But the one man can never express the prayer of the other man, whether it be learned or unlearned.

II. Every true prayer is to 'The God of my life'. He is the God of all the mysteries as well as of all the things that are palpable. The things that you and I cannot explain, for which we find no reason, He is still 'The God of my life'. Some people seem to revel in mysteries, and to breathe the atmosphere of mysteries. But to me here are the mysteries of life, and with those I am familiar. Why that poor mother, just when her children most needed her love, why 'The God of my life,' should call her to lie down and die? Why that father, who is the bread-winner for a wife and several children, at the most critical time in the family's life should be smitten down to death? That is a mystery to me. There is no answer that I know of, but 'He is the God of my life'. He is the God of an infinite love, of an infinite salvation, that streams from the precious blood of Jesus Christ, and comes to bless us in every change through which we pass.—W. Cuff.

References.—XLII. 8.—Spurgeon, *Evening by Evening*, p. 204. J. Ker, *Sermons*, p. 213. XLII. 10.—W. Page-Roberts, *Law and God*, p. 1. XLII. 11.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxi. p. 1226. J. Vaughan, *Fifty Sermons* (4th Series), p. 21.

LIGHT AND TRUTH

(Suitable for Missions)

'O send out Thy light and Thy truth: let them lead me.'—Psalm xliii. 3.

We all need a guide. No one would question this. Very often we choose a wrong guide, and one that leads us astray. Light and truth are two great factors in our everyday life. Without either or both of them, we should drag on a most miserable existence. Light is the world's first and greatest necessity, hence it was first created before the inhabitants of the earth. We cannot do without light which brings life. It promotes healthy growth, it produces happiness.

As there is need for light in the natural world, so there is need of light in the spiritual world. 'The whole world,' said St. John, 'lieth in wickedness,' and consequently it needs light and truth. The Word of God was given to supply this great need of man, for it is light and truth. 'Thy Word,' says the Psalmist, 'is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.'

And our Lord Jesus Christ, in that remarkable prayer of His on behalf of His loved ones, says 'Sanctify them through Thy truth: Thy Word is truth'. These two passages show clearly that God's Word is light and truth, so that we may well regard our text as a command to those who have received the Word to pass it on to others.

I. Responsibility.—When our Lord stood on the Mount He said to His disciples, 'Ye are the light of the world'. That is a responsibility. It means that every one who has received the light of the Gospel from Him Who is the light of the World, is responsible for taking an active part in the work of disseminating that light, and spreading it to others. We are morally bound to spread far and wide the Word of light and truth which we have received. It is a great risk to any nation or any individual to neglect this.

II. England's Responsibility.—Of all peoples who have received the light and truth of God's Word, we have received the fullest measure, and have been granted the greatest facilities and possibilities of transmitting it to others. God has placed in our hands perfect freedom as to the use of His Word, as to the free discussion and defence of truth, as to devising ways and means by which that truth may be disseminated and communicated. We are a nation highly favoured beyond others with breadth of empire. We have connexion with and free access to the uttermost parts of the earth. We have wealth at our disposal to send out the light and truth.

III. Individual Responsibility.—Have you ever realized your responsibility as a steward? Yours is a strict and solemn account, which you must stand one day and give at the bar of Jesus, Who is no respecter of persons, when every opportunity of good given to us will be called in question as to how we have disposed of it. God expects from you that you should shine out in the darkness of the world, which as yet knows Him not, by sending out the light and truth by your liberality and generosity, or even by going out yourselves to the foreign field. Remember there is no happiness like the happiness of giving, more especially when we give something we value. God has given His most precious possession, His only dear Son. Jesus Christ gave us His own life, for we are redeemed by His most precious blood. We need to give the utmost we are able in order to carry the tidings of His love to others. Go forward and tell this good news.

ASPIRATIONS

'O send out Thy light and Thy truth, that they may lead me; and bring me unto Thy holy hill and to Thy dwelling.'—Psalm xliii. 3.

This 43rd Psalm, and the Psalm that goes before it, were composed by David under circumstances of great trouble. Taken together, they give us an insight into the very heart of the Psalmist. David there appears as the man whose affections were set upon God, and in all the changes and chances and dangers of a chequered life looked upward.

I. We need to have this teaching, and this example in this life of weary toil, we need to have our spirits lifted up, not to be always earthward bound.

II. Observe how entirely Christian the prayer is. We ask for God's light, and for His truth—and what is this but to ask for Christ to dwell in our hearts?

III. We live in times when aspirations are sadly damped and discouraged. If a man look upward he is told that he is neglecting closer duties, that his work lies at his feet. Hold fast the blessed hope of a life to come promised and open to all who have faith in Jesus Christ.

IV. God is present in all places, at all times—but

is present according to His true promise, wheresoever two or three are gathered together in His name.—R. D. B. Rawnsley, *Village Sermons* (3rd Series), p. 158.

Psalm xliii. 3.

After the ministers and elders of the Free Church of Scotland, at the Disruption, had reached Tanfield Hall in their first step of emancipation, 18 May, 1843, Dr. Chalmers took the chair as Moderator, and rose to give out the opening Psalm. Dr. Buchanan, the historian of the *Ten Years' Conflict*, says: 'A heavy thunder-cloud had for some time darkened the heavens, and, as the eye ranged at that particular moment over the dense mass of human beings who covered the immense area of the low-roofed hall, individual forms had almost ceased to be distinguishable through the sombre shade. The Psalm which Dr. Chalmers had chosen was the 43rd. He began at that touching and beautiful line—

O send Thy light forth and Thy truth,

and as the words sounded through the hall, the sun, escaping from behind his cloudy covering, and darting his brilliant beams through the windows which pierced the roof, turned on the instant the preceding darkness into day. It was one of those incidents which only superstition could misunderstand, but which, at the same time, is entitled to its own place among the traits of the picturesque which belonged to the scenes we are describing.'—John Ker.

References.—XLIII. 3.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons on Passages of the Psalms*, pp. 162, 170. XLIII. 3, 4. *Ibid.* pp. 108, 120. XLIII. 4.—H. Scott Holland, *Logic and Life*, p. 99. E. Paxton Hood, *Dark Sayings on a Harp*, p. 101. J. P. Gledstone, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxvi. p. 364.

THE PSALMIST'S REMONSTRANCE WITH HIS SOUL

'Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? hope in God: for I shall yet praise Him, the health of my countenance, and my God.'—Psalm xliii. 5.

Three times does the Psalmist take himself to task and question himself as to the reasonableness of the emotions that are surging in his soul, and checks these by higher considerations.

I. Moods and emotions should be examined and governed by a higher self. It is necessary to keep a very tight hand upon *all* our feelings, whether they be the natural desires of the sensuous part of our nature, or whether they be the sentiments of sadness and doubt, or anxiety or perplexity which are the natural results of outward circumstances of trial; or whether, on the contrary they be the bright and buoyant ones which come, like angels, along with prosperous hours.

II. There are two ways of looking at causes of dejection and disquiet. 'My soul' has been talking two whole Psalms to explain why it is cast down. After all these have been said again and again the Psalmist says to himself, 'Come now, let us hear it all once more, *Why* art thou cast down?' There is a court of appeal in each man which tests and tries his reasons for his moods; and these which look very sufficient to the flesh, turn out to be very insufficient when investigated and tested by the higher spirit or self. We should 'appeal from Philip drunk to Philip sober'.

III. No reasons for being cast down are so strong as those for elation and calm hope. Try to realize what God is to yourselves—'My God,' and 'the health of my countenance'. That will stimulate sluggish feeling; that will calm disturbed emotion.

IV. The effort to lay hold on the truth which calms is to be repeated in spite of failures. A moment of tranquillity interrupts the agitation of the Psalmist's soul, but is soon followed by the recurrence of 'the horrible storm' that 'begins afresh'. But the guiding self keeps the hand firm on the tiller, notwithstanding the wash of the water and the rolling of the ship, and the dominant will conquers at last.—A. Maclaren, *Christ's Musts*, p. 210.

Reference.—XLIII. 5.—H. P. Liddon, *Old Testament Outlines*, p. 111.

Psalm xliii.

This Psalm was chanted in the church at Milan, A.D. 387, when Augustine was baptized by Ambrose.—John Ker.

GOD'S DOINGS IN THE TIME OF OLD

'We have heard with our ears, O God, our fathers have told us, what Thou hast done in the time of old.'—Psalm xliv. 1.

What God has been to us men we know from history. We know then from history what He will be to us. Now to apply this there are three departments of human life in which this recurrence to the past is of great religious value.

I. First there is the family, resting on God's own ordinance, springing out of the most intimate and sacred ties that can unite human beings. Every family has its traditions of the past—has its encouragements and its warnings, its splendid memories of devotion and virtue, and too often its skeletons in the cupboard, and all this is part of the providential teaching intended for each member of the family.

II. And then there is our country. And here we have to remember what we too often forget, that God shapes the destinies of every nation just as truly as he did that of Judah and Israel. The Hebrews felt God's presence in their history much more vividly than we do. They saw and adored His power, where we fix our gaze exclusively on the history and material agencies which He employs. Nevertheless, history is not less in England than in Palestine a revelation of the ways of God; there have been times in our English history when this has been felt, in the agony of hope or of fear which a great national danger will produce. Such a time was the threatened invasion of the Spanish Armada. Such, again, was the crisis of the struggle with the first Napoleon which preceded Trafalgar. We who live in these quiet times can scarcely understand how our forefathers were then thrown back in very deed upon the

protecting arm of God—how they felt that, if any was to save them, He must, and how this belief in His presence and aid nerved them at the crisis of the struggle against faintheartedness and indecision and bound their hearts together with a sacred strength in love to their country and to Him, their God. It should be part of every young Englishman's education to trace God's hand in the annals of his country—to see, amid its dangers and its triumphs, in its temporary failures, in its consistent advance, in the gradual development of its institutions, and the extensions of equal rights and advantages to all classes of people, without the revolutionary shocks which have desolated other lands, His hand who of old led His people through the wilderness like a flock, and brought them out safely that they should not fear, and overwhelmed their enemies at sea.

III. And then there is the great and sacred home of souls—the Church of Jesus Christ. Church history is a vast treasure-house of sacred experience, well fitted to encourage the desponding, to determine the wavering, to put down with a firm hand the suggestions of selfish doubt, to kindle up in many a soul great enthusiasms for truth and goodness. They lose much who know little or nothing of it—who know not what it is to stand in spirit at the side of martyrs like Ignatius and Polycarp—to follow the mental anguish of Augustine which preceded his conversion, to do justice to the sanctified intellect, to the dauntless courage, of Athanasius when he is struggling with an apostatizing world. We catch from these great souls something of their devotion to our adorable Master—something of their fervour, of their grace, as we exclaim, with deep reverence, 'O God, we have heard with our ears, and our fathers have told us, what thou hast done in the time of old'.—H. P. Liddon, *The Penny Pulpit*, vol. xiii. p. 189.

References.—XLIV. 1.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. v. No. 263. H. M. Butler, *Harrow School Sermon* (2nd Series), p. 157. Parker, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxiii. p. 216. J. W. Burgon, *Ninety-one Short Sermons*, No. 90. XLIV. 3.—S. Martin, *Westminster Chapel Pulpit* (3rd Series), No. 13. XLIV. 21.—R. C. Trench, *Sermons in Westminster Abbey*, p. 261. XLIV.—*International Critical Commentary*, vol. i. p. 374. XLV. 5.—Spurgeon, *Morning by Morning*, p. 173. S. Martin, *Westminster Chapel Pulpit* (4th Series), No. 12. G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 80.

THE PATTERN OF HUMAN GLADNESS

'Thou hast loved righteousness and hated iniquity. God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows.'—Psalm xlv. 7.

We are not accustomed to think of Christ as the pattern of human gladness, but He was so.

I. The earthly life of Christ, even in its sorrows, was a life of unparalleled joy. What were the leading characteristics of the life of our Lord in their bearing in this connexion?

(*a*) The consciousness of constant Divine communion. Communion with God is gladness.

(*b*) Obedience to the will of God is joy. The habit of recognizing the Divine will in all things has a power to make us glad.

(*c*) Purity is joy. Freedom from an accusing conscience, freedom from unbridled desires is happiness.

(*d*) Love is joy. The oblivion of self, the act of self-sacrifice is joy.

II. The heavenly life is a life of joy, perfected by sorrows past. The gladness of the heavenly manhood of the Lord lies in the continuous extension of the benefits of His death, and in all the glory and triumph which His human soul there possesses.

III. The joy of the Lord on earth and in heaven is granted through His sorrow to sorrowing men. For earth we may receive communion with God, forgiveness, and holiness; for heaven the share in His triumph. Our earthly life can never be pure and uninterrupted gladness, but its gladness may be most real and deep.—A. Maclaren.

References.—XLV. 7.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxii. No. 1273. XLV. 8.—Spurgeon, *Evening by Evening*, p. 46. XLV. 9.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons on Passages of the Psalms*, p. 129. XLV. 11.—J. Vaughan, *Fifty Sermons* (9th Series), p. 55. XLV. 13.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons on Passages of the Psalms*, p. 140. XLV. 13-15.—J. A. Aston, *Early Witness to Gospel Truth*, pp. 76, 94.

FATHERS AND CHILDREN

'Instead of thy fathers shall be thy children, whom thou mayest make princes in all the earth.'—Psalm xlv. 16.

I. The message contains a very obvious, but sometimes overlooked fact, viz. that within the compass of a few brief years our places as parents, as citizens, as business men, will be occupied by others. For us the struggle and discipline and activity will be over; we shall have played our part for good or ill on the stage of human action. There will be a new County Council, a new Parliament, a new England; new merchants, manufacturers, tradesmen, labourers; new missionaries, pastors, teachers, church officers; a new set of men and women for God to rule and Christ to save. Those of us who are now over thirty and live fifty years longer will see all this.

II. And the part of that fact which is supremely important to us is, that the men and women of the future are with us. They are not going to swoop down upon us from some other clime, and drive us out when we are feeble and old. We have them now under our influence in our homes and schools; we are handling and shaping to-day the material for the future.

III. This, however, is only on the surface, and the next important lesson conveyed by the text is its assurance of an unbroken line of godly men and women. The workers of yesterday are gone; they grew weary, and God gathered them into His rest. The workers of to-day will follow them, but there will be workers to-morrow—a new strong race, vigorous in piety, clear in faith, eager in philanthropy, wise in method, spiritual in temper and aim. God lives, and He is still making men in His own image and likeness, and still calling them with an effectual calling to Himself.

IV. The coming generations of Christian people will be more than equal to the present or past gene-

ration. God will not only have a people of His own in the days to come, but a people more truly His own, nobler, purer, more like Himself than any preceding generation has ever been.

It is recorded in classic story that once when the Spartans were defeated, and the king demanded fifty of their children as hostages, they replied, 'We would rather give you one hundred of our most distinguished men.' It was an answer that indicated their unbounded faith in the future generation. They had been defeated, but they looked to their children to conquer. They had done their best, but they believed their children would do better. They had such profound faith in the future that it seemed to them that fifty children were of more value than a hundred fathers. It seems perhaps a strange preference, but do you not think it is true to the universal instincts of men? are we not always looking to, and building upon, the coming generation?—C. Brown, *Light and Life*, p. 121.

References.—XLV. 16.—J. Edmond, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. ii. p. 161. XLV. 17.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons on Passages of the Psalms*, p. 149. XLV. 19.—G. H. Morrison, *The Scottish Review*, vol. i. p. 338. XLV.—*International Critical Commentary*, vol. i. p. 383.

GOD A REFUGE

'God is our refuge and strength.'—Psalm xlvi. 1.

The Psalmist who wrote these words knew the happiness of their meaning, for the life into which God does not enter cannot be, in the deepest sense, happy. Yet the very name of religion has grown distasteful to many. Why is this?

'If I were to become what is called religious,' say some, 'I should be expected to give up my innocent enjoyments, to subscribe much out of my limited means which I cannot afford, to surrender to some extent my masculine freedom of action and my individual liberty of thought, to attend continually at services or meetings where what is said has but little real bearing on my actual daily life, and for which I have not the time, or if I have, I am too tired to wish for anything but rest. I look round on many of the churches, and I find that while claim is made of interest in my spiritual welfare, few show any desire to sacrifice the slightest personal comfort in order to help me in little things. I want less of the moralist and more of the man, less of theology and more true, broad-minded sympathy, less of the claim that religion is ancient, and more evidence that religion is modern, worth its salt to-day, and in living touch with present needs. Most of my daily experience has shown me that some who profess to be religious can be selfish, self-satisfied, fault-finding, and disagreeable. No, to speak plainly, if to be religious involves all this, I would much rather not be so.'

I. Here it is that the mistake is made. To think thus is like judging a noble portrait by a caricature. Do not let us look at the poor, human faulty copies, let us turn away from man to God. Open the New Testament, read there in those pages of the Gospels the life of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. There you will see for yourself what true religion is, in that wonderful, perfect life of the Master. He went about doing good. True religion is not a mere profession, an assent or feeling. It is a love. True religion is to do the Will of God, to believe Him, and to follow Jesus Christ, to be tender-hearted, kind, forgiving, gentle, easy to be entreated, in thought to put ourselves in others' places, and to treat them as we ourselves would be treated. We are not asked to attempt the impracticable, or what the conditions of our life make impossible. True religion does not lay an additional burden on lives already taxed to the full. True religion only asks us to give up what is bad, bad in itself, bad in making us unhappy. There is intemperance. Yes, it must be given up; if not, there must be ruined health, lost peace, misery to others, and a premature grave. There is bad language. This, too, must go. Put down that in principle, once for all, and rein yourself in when the old habit crops up again and tries to be too strong. Betting and gambling, again, always in the end ruin those who follow them. Where in fighting such foes as these shall we find help but in God, in the personal experience of the sweet, strong words, 'God is our refuge and strength?'

II. Our Refuge. Probably the experience of some is in union with those who are surrounded by lack of sympathy and lack of appreciation. It is a blessed thing to know Jesus Christ, the Friend who sticketh closer than a brother. God is our refuge from isolation and from human misunderstanding. Again, it is a hard, but it is a Divine, lesson to be calm and restrained under wrongful blame, a difficult, but a splendid victory. God is our refuge from provocation. Again, everything around us changes. The world itself is but for a time. We ourselves grow old and change, but Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and to-day, yea, and for ever, and he that doeth the Will of God abideth for ever. God is our refuge from change. Then there is that terrible thing called sin, the remembrance of good left undone and of evil done. Christ died, that, believing on Him, sin might be put away. The forgiveness of sins is offered to us in Jesus Christ our Saviour. God is our refuge from sin. And when sickness comes, when the wife or the child is taken, when work is slack and expenses go on and the income is but small, if we can but look up to the face of our Father, without Whom not a sparrow falls to the ground, and say, 'Thou, O God, art my Refuge in the day of trouble,' God is then our refuge from sorrow. And God is our refuge from uncertainty. The agnostic and the materialist may excel in what is called destructive criticism, in declaring what is not; but when pressed to say what is, they are generally silent. By looking in the wrong way, the wise have never found, and, what is more, they never will find out God, because He reveals Himself to the childlike in heart, and His revelation addresses itself to the whole of our nature and not to one part, to the warm, loving heart, as well as to the cold, scoffing intellect. To the Greeks and Romans, as to the modern sceptic, everything was uncertain; but to the humblest believer light is sprung

up in the darkness, for God is our refuge from doubt and from uncertainty.

References.—XLVI. 1.—J. Thomas, *Myrtle Street Pulpit*, vol. iii. p. 94. C. Kingsley, *All Saints' Day and other Sermons*, p. 200. H. J. Wilmot-Buxton, *A Year's Plain Sermons*, p. 406. Spurgeon, *Evening by Evening*, p. 124. XLVI. 1, 2.—H. Jones, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxv. p. 314. C. Kingsley, *The Water of Life*, p. 228.

THE RIVER OF GOD

'There is a river, the streams whereof make glad the city of God.'—Psalm xlvi. 4.

The River and the City hold such a place in Scripture that they cannot pass as mere casual illustrations. We read how in Paradise the streams of a river watered the garden. But what shall we specially associate with this river? We may be helped to find our way here if we take along with us a figure used to set forth the position and character of the children of God. They are compared to trees, trees from which fruit was expected and was found.

I. It is to be feared that some of us have no faith practically in the doctrine of the river. There is no true spiritual life that does not include a thirst for living water; there is no true faith that does not include an earnest belief that the river flows full of quickening and comfort; there is no true Christian progress that is not progress in understanding that there is a river, and that the streams of it make glad the city of God.

II. Some may be discouraged because they know so little of this blessing, because they seem to fail in any actual enjoyment of it. And you would not help them much by suggesting that they themselves may be to blame for wilfulness or unwatchfulness which have undone their peace. Think of the blessedness which this is designed to carry into the hearts and lives of men, which should be yours if you could, as it were, reach it, and then lay hold of this, that 'there is a river' and in that faith wait on God from Whom it flows.

III. If this river of God flows for us why should we be so weak as many of us are? How we fail to believe in earnest what we do in some sense believe. When He sets before our eyes more distinctly sins that must be mortified, duties that must be faced, and when we feel something in the heart stir, as commonly it will, to resist that call—we say to ourselves 'this is not pleasant, this is not like the river of God, this promises toil and the dust of battle'—whereas, indeed, that to which God calls us is the only road to the fuller experience of what the river of God can be, and can do for us.

References.—XLVI. 4.—T. Sadler, *Sunday Thoughts*, p. 65. D. Jones, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xviii. p. 276. XLVI.—A. Maclaren, *Sermons Preached at Manchester* (3rd Series), p. 45. XLVI. 6.—F. W. Farrar, *Silence and the Voices of God*, p. 51. XLVI. 8, 9.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. iv. No. 190. XLVI. 10.—J. Keble, *Miscellaneous Sermons*, p. 363. J. Owen, *Christian World Pulpit*, 1891, p. 285. F. D. Maurice, *Sermons*, vol. iii. p. 239. J. C. M. Bellew, *Sermons*, vol. ii. p. 362. J. Vaughan, *Fifty Sermons* (7th Series), p. 46. R. Hiley, *A Year's Sermons*, vol. i. p. 17.

THE LORD OF HOSTS, THE GOD OF JACOB

'The Lord of Hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge.'—Psalm xlvi. 11.

There is in these words a significant duplication of idea, both in regard of the names which are given to God, and of that which He is conceived as being to us; and I desire now simply to try to bring out the force of the consolation and strength which lie in these two epithets of His and in the double wonder of His relation to us men.

I. First, then, look at the twin thoughts of God that are here. 'The Lord of Hosts—The God of Jacob'. What 'hosts' are they of which God is the Lord? I think that by that title the prophets and Psalmists meant to express the universal dominion of God over the whole universe in all its battalions and sections, which they conceived of as one ranked army, obedient to the voice of the great General and Ruler of them all. Next we turn from the wide sweep of that mighty name to the other 'The God of Jacob'. Whilst the one speaks to us of infinite power, of absolute supremacy, the other speaks to us of gentle and loving specific care, and holds out the hope that between man and God there may be a bond of friendship and a mutual possession so sweet and sacred that nothing else can compare with it.

II. Note, secondly, the double wonder of our relation to the great God. 'The Lord of Hosts is with us.' What does that say? It proclaims that wondrous truth that no gulf between the mighty Ruler of all and us has any power of separating us from Him. Through all the ages Christ Himself is with every soul that loves Him; and He will dwell beside us and bless us and keep us. And then the second wonder that is here set forth in regard to our relations to Him is, 'The God of Jacob is our Refuge'. The story of the past is the prophecy of the future. What God has been to any man He will be to every man, if the man will let Him. He will not suffer sin upon us; He will pass us through the fire and the water; and do anything with us short of destroying us in order to destroy the sin that is in us. He smites with judgment and sends us sorrows for our profit that we should be partakers of His holiness. We may write this as the explanation over most of our griefs—'The God of Jacob is our Refuge' and He is disciplining us.—A. Maclaren, *The God of the Amen*, p. 226.

Reference.—XLVI. 11.—J. Vaughan, *Fifty Sermons* (7th Series), p. 129.

Psalm xlvi.

Before the battle of Leipsic, 17 September, 1631, Gustavus Adolphus asked his whole army to sing Luther's hymn, and after the victory he thanked God that the word was made good, 'The field He will maintain it'.

Heine called Luther's hymn the Marseillaise of the Reformation.

References.—XLVI.—*International Critical Commentary*, vol. i. p. 393. XLVII. 4.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. i. No. 33. E. Paxton Hood, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxiii. p.

349. XLVII. 7.—H. M. Butler, *Harrow School Sermons* (2nd Series), p. 142. W. G. Horder, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxvi. p. 309. XLVII.—*International Critical Commentary*, vol. i. p. 397. XLVIII. 3.—W. Arnot, *The Anchor of the Soul*, p. 138. XLVIII. 8.—J. Keble, *Sermons from Ascension Day to Trinity*, p. 151.

THE SUBJECT OF MEDITATION

(A Communion Sermon)

'We have thought on Thy loving-kindness, O God, in the midst of Thy Temple.'—PSALM XLVIII. 9.

THIS Psalm is a song of triumph, when Jerusalem was saved from some impending danger. The theme is that God is the safety of Zion, the impregnable city, made such by the loving care of God.

I. Into the temple the joyful people surge to give vent to their feelings of gratitude and triumph. Where else can they go with such fitness but to the sanctuary which stands to them as the very heart of their religion? And what is more fitting than that they should before all else give thanks to God? Such deliverance drives the pious heart to God, to think sweetly of His loving-kindness. They go up to the temple to think of it, lovingly, gratefully, humbly, prayerfully. Shallow souls let even great events pass without real thought, without notice, without making them an occasion for going deeper into life, deeper into the mystery and wonder of God's providence, and deeper into their own hearts. They do not consider the true inward significance of what yet strikes them as marvellous.

II. Here in this Psalm, after the great deliverance, the Psalmist feels that the first thing to do, the first thing to think, is praise, grateful thanksgiving. And what fitter theme could there be for us as we come to take in our hands the symbols of God's love in Christ Jesus? Let us make our Communion season one grateful meditation on this grandest of all themes. There can be no better preparation beforehand, and no more appropriate frame of mind during the act than this. We come to meditate on God's loving kindness. That sums up everything, all we would like to do, all we would like to feel. In the light of the deathless love which shines through the simple form of this memorial rite, should not complete trust fill our hearts now and confidence for the future illumine our path?

III. Whether we look back or forward, within or without, is not thanksgiving our appropriate state? What can we think of in the presence of the tokens of love but of Him and His loving-kindness? Let the breaking of the bread and the pouring out of the wine stand to us as they should for all that Christ has brought us, the forgiveness of sins, peace with God, reconciliation, hope of glory, all the rich and glorious elements of Divine love. When we come to the table, we will think of Thy loving-kindness, O God, in the midst of Thy temple. From the burning heart of love, shown to us there, we see love everywhere. We see that life is surrounded by God, that we are engirded, enswathed, encompassed by the love of God, beset behind and before. On that love we will meditate: on it we will feed: we will seek to get from it comfort and peace and hope and strength for new obedience. We have but one thought, in the midst of the temple, amid the sacred mysteries of the temple: namely, His loving-kindness.—HUGH BLACK, *Christ's Service of Love*, p. 254.

TOWERS OF ZION

'Walk about Zion, and go round about her: tell the towers thereof.'—PSALM XLVIII. 12.

THIS is a Psalm full of the most joyful spirit and expressed in the very best way. We do not know what great deliverance was thus splendidly celebrated; it may have been the deliverance in the days of Jehoshaphat, which was very signal and very marked; it may have been that in the days of Hezekiah, which was more signal and more marked still. The two points are that God is a sure refuge to His people when they seek His grace and power; and that it is more distinctly connected with Jerusalem, the central city of the kingdom and the people.

'Let Mount Zion rejoice,' sings the Psalmist, 'let the daughters of Judah be glad, because of Thy judgments'. And so, he continues, 'let us walk about Zion, let us go round about her, let us tell the towers thereof'.

But to come to our own times. What are the towers of our own Zion, of our own Church? What are the bulwarks of our religion? There is a great deal, of course, that is common to the whole Church of God throughout the world.

I. There is the Presence of God Himself.—The Lord is there. It is His presence which makes it His Church; it is His presence which makes it His holy Church.

II. There is the Faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, clearly understood and fully grasped and held. A very important matter. It may not always be expressed in exactly the same words, but it has the same life, the same power, and the same salvation.

III. There are the Holy Scriptures.—Whatever may be said now of the form and manner in which they were delivered and have come down to us, they are the fount of knowledge of God. It is from these words, blessed and illumined by the Holy Spirit, that we gain the further knowledge of salvation and grace and hope. There are parts of the Holy Scriptures of which we may read verse after verse which seem to convey very little to us, and then suddenly there is one illuminated with the grace and power of God, which seems to strike the very inward conscience and experience of the heart.

IV. There are the Means of Grace.—How very important it is to us that we should really use them not merely as Christian duties to be performed, but that we should use them as an approach unto the very presence of God, from which we are to learn and by which we are to be strengthened.

V. There are the Examples of Christian People.—How very delightful they are. We see what men and women may be who are of like passions with

ourselves; we see their self-denial, their devotion, their unworldliness, their unselfishness; we see their readiness to think and plan what shall be for the best advantage of others, and what shall most conduce to the glory of God. How delightful it is that we have this long stream of saints and Christians behind us, not merely painted in windows or standing before us as statues, as memorials of the past, but those whom we ourselves know, perhaps in the ordinary and humble walks of life. There is no walk of life in which the grace of God is more clearly seen than when persons of little education and little position are truly inspired with the love and the grace of our Blessed Lord; it makes them often shame those who have more privileges and who perhaps have a clearer understanding of the theories and the facts of redemption.

LISTENING TO GOD

'I will incline my ear to a parable.'—Psalm xlix. 4.

In this Psalm the subject is the great and dark problem of Divine providence. The Psalmist tells us in his introduction that he will open the dark saying, the riddle on the harp. He pierces through the surface of things to declare the utter vanity of life without God. He tells us frankly that it is not by argument he arrives at this certitude but by inspiration. He has listened to the wisdom that is from above, and so has truth to declare. This is the attitude of a true Teacher, that he is a Learner: opens his ear morning by morning to receive the right impressions. A great preacher used to say that in preaching the thing of least importance was the sermon. I suppose what he meant was that it is not what he says but himself that counts most—the spiritual atmosphere he creates, the indefinable impression of earnestness and seriousness and conviction. In all prophetic speech there is a subtle spirit which communicates itself to disciples, and which the teacher himself will lose if he forgets his true attitude. It is not what we say, but the spirit of our saying it, and this is true in the final judgment not only of speech but of all life.

I. In the higher reaches of all truth a moment of insight is of more worth than a year of laborious learning. Certainly in religion no door is opened except to those who bend, who wait, who incline their ear. That is why the child is the type of the kingdom of heaven, the mind that is open to the daily lesson, that morning by morning receives its portion, that sweetly accepts the teaching of the Master. The secret of wisdom and power and knowledge is humility. The secret of influence is simplicity. We learn to speak the high language of the soul as a child learns.

II. There is a moment which came to the prophets and to men called to exceptional work, a moment when the world has dissolved, when the earth has faded, and heaven has opened and reveals the eternal, a moment when in all the universe there seems nothing but God and the human soul. That moment altered the perspective of everything afterwards: they read everything in the light of that moment, and when in the future they were brought up against seemingly impassable difficulties and things that seemed irreconcilable with their faith they simply fell back on God. It is the old story, you say; a plea for faith. Yes, a plea for faith. But be sure you know what faith is before you dismiss it contemptuously. It is to have the ear of a learner, the heart of a child, to listen to the Father's voice.

III. The highest truths are not reached by analysis. The deepest appeal is not made to logic but to imagination; not to intellect, but to heart. This is true not only in religion, but in everything. To know and love flowers is a simpler and higher thing than to understand the botany of flowers. And to know and love Christ is a simpler and higher thing than to understand Christology. Let us not kill the poet in us for the lack of listening and looking; the poet that dies so young in most of us. We do not find the deep truths of life, they find us. This is how the contemplative life breeds in men a richer wisdom, mellower, sweeter than all worldly activities however varied can achieve. Surrender is the first word and the last word in this process. That surrender is faith.—Hugh Black.

References.—XLIX. 4.—E. Paxton Hood, *Dark Sayings on a Harp*, p. 1. XLIX. 7.—T. K. Cheyne, *Expositor* (3rd Series), vol. ii. p. 400. XLIX. 8.—Bishop Bickersteth, *Sermons*, p. 1. G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 22. XLIX. 11, 12.—Bishop Bethell, *Sermons*, vol. ii. p. 102. XLIX. 17.—R. C. Trench, *Sermons in Westminster Abbey*, p. 364.

SUCCESS

'For while he lived he counted himself a happy man: and so long as thou doest well unto thyself, men will speak good of thee.'—Psalm xlix. 18.

'Nothing succeeds like success' is a proverb invented by a famous man of the world, and the truth of it from the world's point of view there is no denying. It seems indeed to find something of sanction in some words of our Lord, applied not only to the secular but to the spiritual life, when He said, 'To him that hath shall be given, and from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath'. The truth of this saying our Lord vindicated, as we know, by His parable of the talents, in which we are reminded that one who makes use of his gifts, spiritually or mentally, develops in exact ratio to the merits of that use; whereas one who spurns them eventually forfeits them. This is the Divine law of failure and success, and it rests on a just sequence of cause and effect. The world does not trouble about just sequences of cause and effect, it simply looks at results, and usually it does not trouble to inquire too closely into the honesty of those results. And so we see, as a matter of fact, how essentially different is Christ's saying, 'To him that hath shall be given'.

I. The Uncertainty of Success.—In our text we have first the fact and secondly the motive of that success which is of the earth earthy. Its motive is selfishness, doing well to oneself, looking after one's own interests, and making them the supreme con-

sideration. Then again its nature is to be satisfied with present temporal conditions, not to trouble about any higher life than that of the time and sense. The most striking feature about this 49th Psalm is the author's firm conviction that in a future state the scale of fortune will be readjusted. Nowhere else do we find the Jewish writer contentedly permitting the final issue of the adjustment of the things of this world to the life beyond the grave. What we find asserted here so strongly is the unreality of the success which is not achieved on the eternal principles of righteousness. How true to life and experience is that expression, 'He counted himself a happy man'. How it brings out the situation of contented enjoyment, which is assumed in place of the genuine thing; the affectation of interest for the sake of mere appearance; the hypocritical sentiments mouthed out in order that the world may exclaim, 'What a noble fellow is here!' And yet there is always the haunting, ever-present consciousness of secret failure, the knowledge that nothing is quite what it seems.

II. The Intrinsic Worth of Success.—We can only say, then, that failure and success in this world are too often but uncertain and capricious things. The all-important question for each is that which concerns the intrinsic worth of success in life. 'For while he lived he counted himself a happy man.' The inference is, I suppose, that when he died he found out his mistake. The answer that follows is full of irony: 'So long as thou doest well unto thyself, men will speak good of thee'; of course they will. All the world cares about is that you should keep up appearances. Look at the ideal man on the Exchange! He just took care of himself and feathered his own nest. Or again the ideal of society! Is he a man of honour and moral worth? Is he a pure and chivalrous gentleman? not a bit. He may be a toady who toadies openly but tactfully: his sole merit is that he knows how to make the most of himself, that he can persuade people to take him at his own valuation—he can flatter people so successfully that they suspect nothing. It is his success that compels their homage. And the same vaunting world is not slow to extend its appreciation to success achieved by its own methods even in the very presence of Christ. There is the religious partisan who prays for every one but himself, and to whom no conscience is sacred but his own. The world rewards him with its votes.

III. The Right Side to Success.—Nevertheless there is a right and wholesome side to the world's worship of success, for surely we were not sent here to court failure. There is a depreciation of success that is nothing but unreasoning affectation. It boasts of the so-called failure of the Cross, forgetting that our Lord's ministry on earth ended not with the Cross but with the resurrection and the ascension. Christ never speaks of failure, but looks forward to the restoration of all things. What the Christian should deprecate is not success, but sham, false success—the success which does not last, that which is of the earth earthy. We know that the ancient Laodiceans had this in common with modern England, that they were given over to those temporal pleasures of which we have been speaking. Yet what does the Spirit say to the Church and to us: 'Be zealous therefore, and repent. Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear My voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me.'

REFERENCES.—XLIX.—*International Critical Commentary*, vol. i. p. 405. L. 3.—T. J. Madden, *Addresses to All Sorts and Conditions of Men*, p. 58. L. 5.—J. Keble, *Village Sermons on the Baptismal Service*, p. 135. L. 11.—H. J. Wilmot-Buxton, *Children's Bread*, p. 95. L. 12.—D. G. Watt, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxvii. p. 292. L. 14, 15.—J. L. Richardson, *Sermons for Harvest*, p. 62. L. 15.—C. Bradley, *The Christian Life*, p. 113. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxv. No. 1505 and vol. xxxi. No. 1876. L. 21.—T. J. Madden, *Addresses to All Sorts and Conditions of Men*, p. 58. C. J. Vaughan, *Harrow School Sermons* (2nd Series), p. 321. G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 137. J. C. Miller, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 771.

THE SACRIFICE OF THANKSGIVING

'Whoso offereth the sacrifice of thanksgiving glorifieth Me: and to him that ordereth his conversation aright I will shew the salvation of God.'—PSALM L. 23.

I. 'WHAT is it to glorify God?' 'When and how do we glorify God?' This question is constantly rising before us, for we know this is our business as disciples of Jesus Christ. 'Whoso offereth praise, whoso offereth thanksgiving, glorifies God.' That is the Divine answer. Then we ask, What is the sacrifice of praise? Praise has a thousand voices. The songful lip expresses itself in myriad ways; but the essence of every sacrifice is the adoring, grateful, and joyous offering of ourselves on the altar of God, our exceeding joy in glad acceptance of all His holy will; it is a joyful welcome to that will, not a hesitating submission to it, as right in itself and as carrying all who receive it towards righteousness and thus towards blessedness.

II. The Religion of the whole Psalter. Look at these songs. They are sacrifices of thanksgiving. The tremendous burden of living is never ignored, the attacks of bitter enemies are admitted, but there is over all and through all a glad recognition of God's sovereignty of life, and a deep delight in His redeeming sway. The religion of the Psalms is the religion of thanksgiving of triumphant joy in God; and the book itself is, excepting one, the best commentary upon the words, 'Whoso offereth praise glorifieth God'. That other and better exposition is the New Testament. It takes the songs of the prophet poets and sets them in a new key. It is the fruit, no doubt, of the principles which Christianity takes up out of the Old Testament; but it is expressed with greater clearness and force in the concrete example of Jesus Christ Himself, and demonstrated in a great series of historic facts of which He is the centre and the source. Gauge the severity of the persecutions

which they had to endure, and which Paul himself admitted were such as almost to 'unnerve them,' yet to them he said, 'Be always joyful'. 'In everything give thanks, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.'

III. The Gospel brings Life to Light. There are four principles in Christianity, which, being recognized, make it possible, I will not say easy, for us to take this attitude, for nothing that is worth having is obtained with ease.

(*a*) 'The Gospel brings Light to Life,' shows it as it really is, and what it is meant for; even our spiritual emancipation, education, perfection, and that all the things that go to make it are intended for the refining of our character and fashioning it after the pattern which is given to us in Christ Jesus.

(*b*) The second thing that Christianity tells us is that God is in this life right through it; that His redemptive purpose on Calvary underlies it, runs through it, mounts to the top of it; that the whole significance of life is redemptive, that God is getting rid of the sin and the evil of the world.

(*c*) Thirdly, Christianity inspires a man to make the fullest use of his life. Life according to Christ is opportunity for service, a chance of being and doing something that shall issue in the advancement of mankind.

(*d*) Still further does it go. It sustains in bearing life's burdens, in carrying life's crosses, and in fighting life's battles. It gives us the true perspective, places us where we can best learn the supreme truths that count, and construct the true interpretation of facts. —J. Clifford, *Baptist Times and Freeman*, 1905, p. 351.

References.—L. 23.—H. Melvill, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 1495, p. 97. S. Cox, *Expositions* (3rd Series), p. 152. L. *International Critical Commentary*, vol. i. p. 414. LI. 1.—G. Forbes, *The Voice of God in the Psalms*, p. 173.

THE NATURE AND POSSIBILITY OF FORGIVENESS

'Have mercy upon me, O God, after Thy great goodness: according to the multitude of Thy mercies do away mine offences. Wash me thoroughly from my wickedness: and cleanse me from my sin.'—Psalm li. 1, 2.

I. The Forgiveness of Sins is an article of the Creed. It has its place in the short summary of great truths in which we profess as Christians to believe. Note the significance of this fact. We do not express our belief in what is obvious: the things we believe are truths which God has made known to us, that men did not and could not find out for themselves.

II. Now this consideration does not at all fit in, you will recognize, with the way in which a great many people speak and think about the Forgiveness of Sins. This they regard as the most obvious thing in the world, it is to their mind perfectly natural and easy, something to be taken for granted rather than treated as a subject of Christian revelation and belief. What we call moral evil may after all only be a step, in many cases a necessary step, upward to goodness. We must have some experience of evil before we can choose goodness, so they argue.

III. Now against any such light view of sin as this, however plausibly it may be urged, a healthy conscience protests as fallacious. We recognize sin to be something more than a mistake in the sphere of morals. A mistake indeed it is, egregious folly, missing the true end of our life, supposing that to be valuable which is really worthless or hurtful, but it is a mistake for which we are, in part at least, responsible. It is by our own great fault that we have sinned.

IV. It is well worth while to note that there is a great deal in modern thought to confirm these protests of conscience, a great deal that is utterly opposed to the popular and easy regard of sin. Note two points:—

(*a*) We are learning to recognize increasingly the reign of law. Things are as they are, not by chance, but as the expression of unfailing laws. This applies to the sphere of morals as well as to the material universe. God's commandments are not arbitrarily laid down.

(*b*) There is the law of habit as well as the law of retribution. There are those who would say, any restoration is impossible. Heredity, environment, and habit are too strong.

V. Here comes in the Christian religion declaring that these things are possible, however difficult. And the Christian Church points to instances of men and women, individuals and communities in whose experience this promise has been realized. The forgiveness of sins, then, though difficult, has been made possible.

VI. From what has been said you will recognize that

(*a*) While forgiveness is not the easy thing that popular religion often represents it,

(*b*) It is at the same time something far grander, much more worthy of God to bestow, of man to seek. Forgiveness contains two elements. It is no mere letting off of punishments or remitting of debt. It is restoration as well as acquittal.

References.—LI. 1, 2.—A. Maclaren, *Sermons Preached in Manchester* (2nd Series), p. 95. LI. 3.—J. Vaughan, *Fifty Sermons* (2nd Series), p. 310. J. E. Vaux, *Sermon Notes* (1st Series), p. 42. Bishop Alexander, *Bampton Lectures*, 1876, p. 71. A. C. Tait, *Lessons for School Life*, p. 249. LI. 3, etc. —A. B. Davidson, *Waiting Upon God*, p. 55. LI. 3.—J. H. Jellett, *The Elder Son*, p. 254. J. Keble, *Sermons for Sundays after Trinity*, part i. p. 188.

SIN AGAINST GOD

'Against Thee, Thee only, have I sinned, and done that which is evil in Thy sight, that Thou mayest be justified when Thou speakest, and be clear when Thou judgest.'—Psalm li. 4.

This fifty-first Psalm reveals a human soul in its agony, convicted of sin, and flinging itself on the eternal mercy of God. It belongs to all the centuries,

and as long as men struggle with temptation and fall beneath the burden of sin will it voice their need of pardon and their hope in God.

I. The truth on which this Psalmist laid hold was the fact that sin is a breach of the Divine order, a transgression of the Divine law, and that whatever may be said or thought about its effects in the sphere of human relations, it is essentially rebellion against that holy will which rules over all. We sin against God in every act of evil, because it is His law we break and His will we oppose.

II. This truth that sin is against God does not move us as it ought to do, largely, I think, for two reasons.

(*a*) We feel the insignificance of our lives compared to the life of God. When we think of God we are overwhelmed by his infinitude. And though perhaps we dare not give expression to the thought, we feel in our hearts that our sin cannot be of much importance to one so great. And sometimes there comes the half-suppressed thought that He Who cannot fall, and who knows nothing of weakness or sin, ought not to judge mortals like ourselves.

(*b*) We do feel that our sins, if they hurt anyone, injure ourselves and our fellows. We feel and many say that in the past men have said too much about sin against God, and have overlooked the fact that it is man who is hurt.

III. We are no longer moved by the thought of 'Moral Governor of the universe' as men were once. We do not deny that God is that. But for the reasons I have given it does not exert the same influence on us as in the past. And, after all, it is not the deepest truth about God. We must come to the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ before we can say from our hearts, knowing and realizing to the full, all the social consequences of our wrongdoing. The cross of Jesus means many things, but it means this above all, that God is in the world, and that our sin touches Him, that it wounds Him and that He suffers.

THE PSALM OF THE PENITENT

'Against Thee only have I sinned, and done this evil in Thy sight.'—PSALM LI. 4.

THERE is nothing surprising about David's sin: there is something very wonderful in his penitence.

I. There is the simple confession, 'I have sinned'. It is comparatively seldom that a man makes this confession without qualification or reserve. It is a great day for a man when, for a moment, seeing himself in the light of God, seeing his own imperfections, his own sinfulness, whatever it may be, he can cast aside the vain excuses by which he has tried, like Adam, to hide himself among the trees of the garden, and, in deep self-abasement, can make the open confession, 'I will arise and go unto My Father,' and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned before Heaven and against Thee, and am no more worthy to be called Thy son'. It is a rough path, which must be trodden with bleeding feet, but the way is homewards, Godwards, and the end is peace.

II. But let us notice the peculiar nature of the sin which the Psalmist confesses. It is an offence, so it would seem, not so much against God as his fellowmen, and yet his words are emphatic. 'Against Thee only have I sinned, and done this evil in Thy sight.' We are accustomed to the service of man being set in opposition or contrast to the service of God. The Psalmist looks deeper. He has learnt the great truth that he can only honour man by honouring the Divine element in him, that in injuring man he has injured Him who is the only source of man's greatness. This is the truth which the Incarnation has brought, or ought to have brought, much nearer to us than it was to David, 'Inasmuch as ye did it unto these, ye did it unto Me.'—H. R. GAMBLE, *Christianity and Common Life*, p. 85.

REFERENCES.—LI. 4.—E. B. Pusey, *Cambridge Lent Sermons*, 1864, p. 163. J. J. Blunt, *Plain Sermons*, p. 72. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. ii. No. 86. LI. 5.—Bishop Magee, *Sermons at the Octagon Chapel*, Bath, p. 1.

INWARD TRUTH

'Behold, Thou desirest truth in the inward parts.'—PSALM LI. 6.

WE in this country profess a great love of truth in the shape of integrity, verbal trustworthiness, and so on; our standard is not very exacting, but we could not get on at all without it. One has to confess that the standard of the world—though, thank God, it is better than it once was—is still very low. You cannot measure a man's motives by what he says; he may take the name of God upon his lips though in his heart he is not true.

I. The issue lies deeper than a mere question, for instance, of discount on a bill. We say after long acquaintance with an individual 'So and so is a true man; I have proved him'. Why do you use the word true? Because you know something about that man though it might not be considered proof in a court of law. You have been down to the depths of your friend's being, and you know he rings true, because more than once he has been willing to suffer for truth, the world not knowing. On the other hand, we know men who we feel are false though we cannot always say why; and here again our evidence in a court of law would be nonsuited. There are men whom you would not trust any further than you can see them; you know somehow by instinct of honest judgment, that these men would fail you in a crisis; they could be depended on just as far as it suited their interest and no further. A man who is as faithful in the shadow as in the light, as faithful when it does not pay to be faithful at the time as when it does—that is the man to whom to commit your trust; he was right with God ere he was right with you; and if it came to be a question whether he should sacrifice you or truth—truth as Spurgeon

understood it—it would be God he would choose, not you.

II. I would just indicate wherein really consists the greatest value in all estimates of moral character. It is not merely a question of dealing between man and man. If we had nothing to preach about except iniquity, our pulpit message would be a poor one; I mean unequity, by which a man does not deal straight with his fellows. It is sin with which we have to do—this is a man's transgressions against God, the thing that hides God from him. When you are dealing with iniquity you are really dealing at the same time with another factor deeper than any of the relations which a man holds with his fellows, and that is his relationship with God. It is with God, when we come to real dealings with truth, that you and I hold relation.

III. One word of application. If I address a man of double life, a man with something evil huddled out of sight, I would like to speak to him, not a word of threatening denunciation, but of pity and of pleading. If your life is a lie it would pay you better—I announce no penalty—to get right with the truth, however much it may scorch you, than to persist in the lie that seems to screen you. The truth and the truth only will make a man at peace with himself. You may stifle the voice of conscience, but the voice of God will speak again in time or in eternity—'Thou art the man'.—R. J. Campbell, *Sermons Addressed to Individuals*, p. 315.

SINCERITY

'Thou desirest truth in the inward parts.'—Psalm li. 6.

God's insistence on sincerity.

I. A Threefold Cause of Insincerity.

(*a*) It is always a hard thing to be sincere. One cause of this is the fierce struggle for existence now. For one soul that has a passion for sincerity there are a hundred that have a passion for success.

(*b*) It is harder to be sincere because of the increasing power of common standards. There never was a time when the thought of the many was so quickly voiced and registered. In the tremendous pressure of a general opinion it is harder for a man to be himself.

(*c*) But perhaps the deepest cause of insincerity is this, that we are living in a transition time. Here in one pew a father and son are sitting; and though the father may never dream of it there is the space of centuries between the two.

II. A Threefold Curse of Insincerity.

(*a*) It takes all the dignity out of the heart of life, and makes this world a very mean place.

(*b*) But insincerity carries another curse. I hardly think that there is any sin that mars and distorts the character like this.

(*c*) And the third curse is this. No sin so surely saps and undermines our influence. Once let man feel that I am insincere and all my influence for good, and all my influence for God is gone.

III. The Path to a Renewed Sincerity.

(*a*) We must win a deeper reverence for ourselves. We must believe in individual possibilities. We must remember that there are no nobodies with God.

(*b*) Then we must win a profounder faith in God. I defy any man to be consciously insincere who lives under those eyes that are a flame of fire.

(*c*) We must gain a closer fellowship with Christ. There is a lack of sincerity to-day. But do not let that blind us to the fact that sincerity is not the only virtue. I am not necessarily good. I am not necessarily right. I am not necessarily saved because I am sincere. There is a call for new sincerity in every heart, yet that sincerity is but a stepping-stone. Sincerity without humility is but a bastard virtue. It is the obstinacy out of which fools are made.—G. H. Morrison, *Flood-Tide*, p. 22.

References.—LI. 6.—J. Keble, *Village Sermons on the Baptismal Service*, p. 125. LI.—J. Knox, *Little Manchester Sermons*, p. 125. F. W. Farrar, *In the Days of Thy Youth*, p. 358. F. D. Maurice, *Sermons in Country Churches*, p. 190.

Psalm li. 7.

Probably the northernmost grave on the surface of the earth is one made for a member of the expedition of Sir George Nares to the Arctic Sea, in the ship *Alert*. It is near Cape Beechy, on the brow of a hill covered with snow, and commanding a view of crowded masses of ice which stretch away into the mysterious Northern Ocean, where, hung like a lamp over the door of the unknown, shines the polar star. A large stone covers the dead, and, on a copper tablet at the head, the words are engraved, 'Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow'.

Verse 18. The first presbytery of the Irish Presbyterian Church was constituted by immigrants from Scotland, in Carrickfergus, 10 June, 1642. There were five ministers and as many elders. The sermon was from Psalm li. 18, 'Do good in thy good pleasure unto Zion; build thou the walls of Jerusalem'. Two hundred years afterwards, in 1842, every minister of the Church preached from this same text. There were then about five hundred.—John Ker.

References.—LI. 7.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxxii. No. 1937. Alexander, *The Gospel of Jesus Christ*, p. 421. LI. 8.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xv. No. 861. C. W. Furse, *Sermons at Richmond*, p. 154. LI. 10.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. ix. No. 490. J. Vaughan, *Children's Sermons*, 1875, p. 229. E. B. Pusey, *Parochial Sermons*, vol. ii. p. 181. LI. 11.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xvi. No. 954. LI. 12.—C. Bradley, *The Christian Life*, p. 30. J. Baldwin Brown, *Aids to the Development of the Divine Life*, No. 5. J. Vaughan, *Fifty Sermons* (2nd Series), p. 159. LI. 13.—J. Duncan, *The Pulpit and Communion Table*, p. 310. LI. 14.—C. J. Ridgeway, *The King and His Kingdom*, p. 159. LI. 16, 17.—F. D. Maurice, *The Doctrine of Sacrifice*, p. 86. J. A. Alexander, *The Gospel of Jesus Christ*, p. 539.

'A broken and a contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise.'
—Psalm li. 17.

Dr. Whyte, in his small book on St. Teresa, mentions that this text was her continual cry—till she died with these words on her lips, 'A broken and a con-

trite heart Thou wilt not despise'. And thus, with the most penitential of David's penitential Psalms in her mouth, and with the holy candle of her Church in her hand, Teresa of Jesus went forth from her banishment to meet her bridegroom.

References.—LI. 17.—F. J. A. Hort, *Village Sermons* (2nd Series), p. 120. A. G. Brown, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 1056. Bishop Temple, *Rugby Sermons* (3rd Series), p. 99. J. Keble, *Sermons for Christmas and Epiphany*, p. 357.

'Build Thou the walls of Jerusalem.'—Psalm li. 18.

Henry Perreyve wrote to a friend who was about to visit Jerusalem:—

'Ah, my friend, help me and let us sing together; let us pray for the coming of that fair day when, the bonds of the earthly city being broken, she will soar like the eagle towards the regions of heaven. She will move onwards like a ship, towards the haven of her rest and of her glory. Let us plead that God may work: "Lord, do good in Thy good pleasure unto Zion, build Thou the walls of the holy Jerusalem. There wilt Thou accept from our hands the burnt-offering of the eternal sacrifice—O Jerusalem, sing unto thy Lord, Zion, praise thy God." That means, O my soul, O soul of my friend, sing unto Thy Lord, praise Thy God. All the Psalms, all the vows of Holy Scripture crowd into my heart. I can say no more, friend. But you have understood me. I repeat, kiss for me the soil of that holy land, and repeat to her those transports of love which the mere echo of her name still awakens in the hearts of her children.' —*Lettres de l'Abbé Henri Perreyve*, pp. 69, 70.

References.—LI. 18.—H. L. Thompson, *The Church of St. Mary the Virgin*, p. 98. W. M. Sinclair, *Difficulties of our Day*, p. 169. LI.—*International Critical Commentary*, vol. ii. p. 3.

Psalm li.

In the Middle Ages, and after the Reformation, this was the *Miserere*, the last cry for mercy, sung, or heard, by those who were about to step into the presence of the judgment-seat. When it was read to Henry V. of England on his deathbed, the closing words, 'Build Thou the walls of Jerusalem,' seemed to fall on the ear of the dying man as a reproach, for he had cherished a vow, and he murmured, 'If I had finished the war in France, and established peace, I would have gone to Palestine to rescue the Holy City from the Saracens.' It was read to Lady Jane Grey and her husband, Guildford Dudley, when they were executed together, 22 August, 1553, read to her in Latin, and repeated by her in English. It was read also at Norfolk's execution a few years later. It was the last prayer of Oecolampadius, who had his sickness aggravated and his death hastened by the untimely end of his friend Zwingle in 1531. He called the ministers of the churches round him, exhorted them to fidelity and purity of doctrine, prayed earnestly in the words of David in the 51st Psalm, and soon after died.—John Ker.

Psalm li.

Edward Bickersteth, one of the home saints and heroes of C.M.S. history, wrote at the close of his life in his Journal: 'O that the Lord should ever condescend to use one so sinful and unworthy. The 51st Psalm is the Scriptural prayer that most suits me.'

References.—LII. 3.—J. N. Norton, *The King's Ferry Boat*, p. 161. LII.—*International Critical Commentary*, vol. ii. p. 12. LIII. 2.—Bishop Harvey Goodwin, *Parish Sermons* (2nd Series), p. 165. LIII. 6.—W. N. Punshon, *Sermons*, p. 118. LIII.—*International Critical Commentary*, vol. ii. p. 16. LIV. A. Maclaren, *Life of David*, p. 100. LV. 4.—J. E. Vaux, *Sermon Notes* (1st Series), p. 58. LV. 5.—W. M. Statham, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xv. p. 248. LV. 6.—E. R. Conder, *Drops and Rocks*, p. 120. G. Dawson, *Sermons on Daily Life and Duty*, p. 1.

THE SECURITY OF INSECURITY

'Because they have no changes, therefore they fear not God.' —Psalm lv. 19.

Did you ever know so remarkable a reason assigned for irreligion? Here is the peril of a settled life. Here is the security of insecurity.

The idea of the word 'changes' is, as Poole the Puritan indicates, 'destructive changes'. They have no unpleasant, painful, changes. They live securely. All is always well with them. And this smooth, unruffled life is the ruin of their souls: 'They fear not God'. The Revised Version simply renders it as a fact without asserting the reason: 'The men who have no changes, and who fear not God'. The idea is evidently the same. Their settled life is the secret of their practical atheism. Earthly tranquillity is infinite spiritual impoverishment.

'Because they have no changes, therefore they fear not God.'

I. The Fact that 'they have no Changes'.—

1. They have no *regenerative* changes.
2. They have no changes of circumstance.
3. Some have no intellectual changes.
4. It is possible to have no emotional changes.
5. I have known Christians who hoped to have no experimental changes. It is a vain, delusive hope. The right use of changes is a wonderful instrument of sanctification. Tribulations give permanence to the fear of God. In the lack of a continuing city here we seek a city out of sight.

II. The Consequent Fact that 'they fear not God'.

I. 'Because they have no changes, therefore they fear not God.' It all but inevitably follows. There is an influence in changes which tends to the fear of God. *Changes cast us upon God.*

2. Changes make us pray.
3. Changes evoke praises.
4. Changes make us sympathetic.
5. Changes inspire hope in God.—Dinsdale T. Young, *The Gospel of the Left Hand*, p. 123.

THE DISCIPLINE OF CHANGE

'Because they have no changes, therefore they fear not God.' —Psalm lv. 19.

It is strange that this discipline of change should be such an important factor, for we almost feel it to be unnatural.

I. There is no real rest in the world for body or mind or heart or soul. We must admit also, if we are honest with ourselves, that we need the stimulus of constant change if life is to attain its best results. Changelessness would only lull the senses and the faculties to sleep. In the stress and strain of life character is formed. If all went smoothly and softly, if life knew no dread menace, if every wind were tempered for us, and an easy path ever prepared for the feet, would we be better men and women? If there were no changes would we fear God?

II. As a matter of fact, degeneracy has always set in with both nations and men when prosperity has been unalloyed. Science is the daughter of wonder, and wonder is the fruit of all the changes and movements of the world. Religion even has her secure empire in the hearts of men through the needs of men's hearts, the need for which they crave of a changeless centre in the midst of change. Moral degeneracy creeps upon the man or the nation that sits at ease, as the stagnant pool breeds malaria. The cloudless sky is a mockery if it speak not to us of God.

III. The discipline of change is meant to drive us out beyond the changing hour to the thought of eternity, out from the restless things of sense to find rest in God. What failure is like that of those who have been chastened and yet never softened, who have gone through the fire without learning the lesson, who have tasted the sorrow without the sympathy, who have borne the cross without the love? If it be failure to have missed the fear of God, even though fortune has smiled its fairest, what failure is that which has been broken by chains, and come through all its discipline and yet is deaf to the lesson? Blessed are they who learn the Divine meaning of life's limitations.—Hugh Black, *Homiletic Review*, 1904, vol. xlviii. p. 211.

References.—LV. 19.—J. Martineau, *Hours of Thought*, vol. i. p. 127. *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. iv. p. 249.

THE RELIGIOUS GROUND OF LIGHT-HEARTEDNESS

'Cast thy burden upon the Lord.'—Psalm lv. 22.

I. There has always been in the world a great admiration for carelessness. A young man has a great pride in saying 'I don't care'. When a command is imposed on him by a higher authority, he often resists it; but his main motive in the resistance is to show the absence of care. When the advice of a friend arrests him in a downward path, he frequently brushes it aside; but he is not so much actuated by love of the downward path as by the wish to appear reckless and free. Recklessness is to him the synonym of manliness. Now, what is it that in our young days makes this spirit to us so attractive? It is its apparent resemblance to something which is really its contrary—the religious life.

II. There is such a thing as Christian absence of care—a freedom from weight, anxiety, depression. But it is an absence of care, not an annulling of it. The social epicurean tells his comrade to cast away his burden; the Christian tells his comrade, not to cast it away, but to lay it somewhere else: 'Cast thy burden on the Lord'. There is a very great difference between the two commands. It is the difference between throwing your money into the sea, and putting it in a bank beyond the possible risk of failure. A Christian's care is always to him his money—his treasure. He does not want to lose it; he would place it nowhere except in hands where it had no chance of being neglected. Let us say, for example, that you are anxious about the future of your child. The social epicurean will tell you: 'Live for the day; do not look forward; enjoy the present hour and let to-morrow shift for itself'. But the Christian will say: 'You will best live for the present by making to-morrow sure. If you want to enjoy the hour you need not become cold to your child's future—you need not even think less about it. You have only to put to-morrow in other hands—in safer hands—in God's hands.'

III. It is not forgetfulness you need; it is mindfulness without mourning. It is not the trampling of care under your feet, but the transference of care to another bosom. Destroy it not, ignore it not, bury it not, escape it not; but take it up tenderly, fold it up cautiously, and lay it on the heart of the Lord.—G. Matheson, *Messages of Hope*, p. 145.

References.—LV. 22.—J. Vaughan, *Fifty Sermons* (8th Series), p. 147. *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. ii. p. 30. LV.—*International Critical Commentary*, vol. ii. p. 19. LVI.—3, 4.—A. Maclaren, *Weekday Evening Addresses*, p. 103.

Psalm lvi.

Verse 8. 'Thou tellest my wanderings; put thou my tears into thy bottle: are they not in thy book?' a verse frequently in the mouth of Archbishop Usher, one of the best and most learned men of his time—born in Dublin, 1580, driven to and fro through England and Ireland amid the troubles in Church and State, during one of the most troublous times in our history, and at length finding the rest he often sighed for at Reigate in England, 1655, after he had preached the Gospel for fifty-five years.—John Ker.

References.—LVI. 8.—J. Ker, *Sermons* (2nd Series), p. 290. E. M. Goulburn, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. ii. p. 104. J. Vaughan, *Sermons* (9th Series), p. 69. LVI. 9.—C. J. Vaughan, *Voices of the Prophets*, p. 94. LVI.—*International Critical Commentary*, vol. ii. p. 29. LVII.—A. Maclaren, *Life of David*, p. 119. *International Critical Commentary*, vol. ii. p. 37. C. Kingsley, *Westminster Sermons*, p. 302. LVIII. 1.—J. Vaughan, *Fifty Sermons*, 1874, p. 123. LVIII. 4.—J. N. Norton, *The King's Ferry Boat*, p. 126. LVIII.—*International Critical Commentary*, vol. ii. p. 42. A. Maclaren, *Weekday Evening Addresses*, p. 112.

'Who will bring me into the strong city?'—Psalm lx. 9.

The Jesuit missionary, Valignani, as he looked towards the long-closed Empire of China on his way to Japan cried: 'O Rock, Rock, when wilt thou open? O mighty fortress, when shall these impenetrable gates of thine be broken through?'

PERMANENT ELEMENTS OF RELIGION

'Hear my cry, O God; attend unto my prayer. From the end of the earth will I cry unto Thee, when my heart is overwhelmed; lead me to the Rock that is higher than I.'—PSALM LXI.

As it is with many other Psalms so it is with this. If we are to find in the Bible narratives a situation suitable for it we may allow ourselves to conjecture that it was written by David after Absalom's defeat, and before David's return to Jerusalem. The Psalm expresses the feelings of one who is a king in circumstances of great sorrow, who has experienced deliverance, and prays with confident expectation for restoration and long life. It falls into two divisions, each expressing two main thoughts; the second taking up the note with which the first closed. We have in the first anguish of heart leading to prayer, then recollection, from which springs hope. In the second we have hope based on recollection, and faith issuing in thanksgiving.

I. There are two elements in the Psalmist's anguish. 'My heart is overwhelmed,' he says. It faints within him. There is no strength or spirit left in him. The second element is more special to himself. He felt himself at the end of the earth, an exile from God's presence. He called to God as across a great distance. There are times when we too feel far from Him. The very intensity of our need of God may obscure from us the fact of His nearness.

II. In the midst of trouble the Psalmist remembers experiences that give him ground for hope. We see how in his deliverance David was quick to perceive the beginnings of the fulfilment of his prayers; that from being a dispossessed and exiled king he might be restored to his kingdom and throne. God's deeds of deliverance are promises and earnests. To the insight and foresight of faith they mean more than they are.

III. Finally the Psalmist rises into confidence for the future. He expects that his life will be prolonged and his throne established in the presence and favour of God. If we noted God's deliverances, if we daily called to mind and made mention of His goodness, what resources of hope we should have for darker times.—P. G. MACLAGAN, *The Gospel View of Things*, p. 84.

REFERENCES.—LXI. 2.—Spurgeon, *Evening by Evening*, p. 268. J. C. M. Bellew, *Christ in Life; Life in Christ*, p. 120. J. Bolton, *Selected Sermons* (2nd Series), p. 46. LXI. 3.—Bishop Woodford, *Sermons on Subjects from the Old Testament*, p. 129. LXI. 7.—Spurgeon, *Evening by Evening*, p. 43. LXI.—*International Critical Commentary*, vol. ii. p. 65. LXII. 1, 5.—A. Maclaren, *Weekday Evening Addresses*, p. 151. LXII. 8.—Spurgeon, *Evening by Evening*, p. 247. LXII.—*International Critical Commentary*, vol. ii. p. 68.

THE CRY OF THE HEART FOR GOD

'O God, Thou art my God.'—PSALM LXIII. 1.

WHEN I saw his hands wandering over the counterpane, and he picked at the threads, and his features were drawn as sharp as a needle, I knew there was only one way for him; and then he cried out suddenly: 'God! God! God!' Now I, to comfort the gentleman, told him I hoped there was no need to think of God just then; and so he died.

Probably many of you recognize these words. They are put into the mouth of a bad woman by Shakespeare—a bad woman who saw a bad man die. Mistress Quickly describes the death of Falstaff. I suppose what gives Shakespeare his place in the estimation of men is this—that outside the pages of the Bible, which is truer to man than any other book, probably he comes next. His characters are undying. Why? Because they are true to nature. He has taken in this particular instance the most unlikely man of all the men that he has drawn, and he has shown us that there is something in that man. He refers—we should not expect it—to God; and we feel it is true. We get at this—that to man, to every man, to every member of the human race who can think, God is the inevitable, God is the ultimate thought.

I. Wherever man is found he builds two things—he builds a hearth, the centre of his social and individual life, and he builds an altar, the symbol of that tendency in him which directs his thoughts and his heart towards God. Wherever you touch the history of mankind in any age you find that man is social and he is religious. He has a home and he has a temple. He advanced much in the cultivation of his social life; in the cultivation of his spiritual and moral life, he advanced but little until Jesus Christ came. Until God gave a revelation to the world more than half the world was enslaved, and hopelessly enslaved, and the ultimate appeal was always either to pure force or to pure passion. But in his spiritual things, in religion, he could get no further than this—the altar he builds must be dedicated 'to the Unknown God'. And with the Unknown God how many pretended known ones? He must worship, and he must find an object of worship, and yet he feels in his quest he is never satisfied, because he has never reached the truth.

II. Now there is one religion that stands alone in the world. There is one religion that differs from every system that has come from man, and it claims for the cause of that difference that it is not from man at all—that its origin is with God.

And this religion, that differs from all other religions, pronounces as the first thing the foundation upon which all else must rest—that God is the Creator of all that is not God, and that His creation is separate from Himself. There is only one other creed in the world, all the religions that ever have been you can sum up in one term—they are all alike in essence, they are the same, of the same origin, they are what is called pantheism. They are idolatrous; the man who worships money, the man who worships himself (a vast portion of the whole race have no other worship than that), they are all pantheistic—that is, they make a creature of some sort into God.

Now here, at the very first page of our religion and our religious book, in the very first utterance of that religious body which hass lated now 2000 years, and has, with all that can be said against it, blessed the

world as it was never blessed before, the first utterance of our creed is this—God is on one side, and all else is at the other; and the relation between the two is this—He brought out of nothingness all else that is. Now apply that to yourself. I am God's creature. He found a prompting which bade Him call to the abyss of nothingness, and He produced me. I was called out of nothingness by God. That means that I belong to Him in a sense in which nothing can ever belong to me. I can manufacture. Given a certain amount of education, of skill, and given the material, I can fashion it for my purpose; but creation is not that. Creation is calling out of nothingness into being. Are we not justified in putting that at the very beginning? Is it not right that this should be written in the first sentence of our Bibles? Is not the Church's instinct true when summing up the things that belong to our peace, that we must accept if we will be saved, she puts creation first? 'I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of Heaven and earth.'

III. But there is something more. If God has called me out of nothingness into being, He also sustains me from passing altogether into the nothingness from which He called me. This creative act of God, if I may so express it, is continuous. He sustains us. 'In Him,' says St. Paul, 'we live, and move, and have our being.' Now what He does He does for a purpose. He called me into being and gave me liberty; He gave me this head of mine and this heart of mine in order that I might do three things—that I might know Him, love Him, and fulfil His Will; and I am sinning against the primary truth that is written in my nature when at any time in my life I give myself up to other things than those for which I was created—to know Him, to love Him, and to do His Will.

References.—LXIII. 1.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons on Passages from the Psalms*, p. 154. R. Allen, *The Words of Christ*, p. 162. H. P. Liddon, *University Sermons*, p. 1.

THE SPIRIT OF WORSHIP

'O God, Thou art my God; early will I seek for Thee: my soul thirsteth for Thee, my flesh longeth for Thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is, to see Thy power and Thy glory, so as I have seen Thee in the sanctuary.'—Psalm lxiii. 1, 2.

This passage expresses the pleasure which one who is piously disposed has in the ordinances of public Christian worship.

I. (*a*) Though the Lord is nigh unto all such as call upon him, yet is He nigh to those especially who call upon Him faithfully—that is, in the spirit which He approves, and after the manner which He has prescribed, and in the place which He has chosen to set His name.

(*b*) Your aim should be to feel that you are daily approaching nearer to Him and He to you.

II. The source of that sacred delight which we should have in public worship would be:—

(*a*) The joy of spiritual repose.

(*b*) Its bringing more distinctly before us the realities of the happiness of the life to come.—E. J. Brewster, *The Sword of the Spirit*, p. 43.

References.—LXIII. 1, 2.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxiv. No. 1427. D. Moore, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 3166.

THE SOUL'S THIRST AND SATISFACTION

'My soul thirsteth for Thee. . . . My soul shall be satisfied. . . . My soul followeth hard after Thee.'—Psalm lxiii. 1, 5, 8.

The experiences of a soul in communion with God.

I. The soul thirsting for God. The Psalmist is a poet, and has a poet's sensitiveness to the external aspects of nature. He feels the pangs of bodily weariness and thirst, and these seem to him to be but feeble symbols of the deeper-seated pains of desire which touch his soul. The unrest, the deep yearnings, the longing and desires of our natures—what are they all except cries for the living God, tendrils which are put forth, seeking after the great prop which alone is fit to lift us from the mud of this lower world? But the misery is that we do not know what we want, that we misinterpret the meaning of our own desires, that we go to the wrong sources for our need. Shipwrecked sailors drink salt water in their wild thirst, and it makes them mad. Let us see to it, too, that since we believe, or say we believe, that God is our chiefest good, the intensity of the longing bear some proportion to the worth of the thing desired. Can there be anything more preposterous, anything in the strictest sense of the word more utterly irrational than tepid wishes for the greatest good? What would you think of a man that had some feeble wish after health or life? Cold wishes for God are as flagrant an absurdity as cold sunshine. Religion is nothing if it is not fervour.

II. The seeking soul satisfied. The lips that were parted to say, 'My soul thirsteth' had scarcely uttered it when again they opened to say 'My soul is satisfied'. It is no wonder. God's gifts are never delayed in the highest of all regions. Not only does this second text of ours give us that thought of the simultaneousness, in regard to the highest of all gifts, of wish and enjoyment, but it also tells us that the soul thus answered will be satisfied. If it be true, as we have been trying to say, that God is the real object of all human desire, then the contact of the seeking soul with that perfect aim of all its seeking will bring rest to every appetite, its desired food to every wish, strength for every weakness, fullness for all emptiness.

III. The satisfied soul presses closer to God. The soul that is satisfied will and ought to adhere with tenacity to the source that satisfies it. We, if we have made experience, as we may, of God and His sweet sufficiency, and sufficient sweetness, should be delivered from temptation to go further and fare worse. And then this clinging, resulting from satisfaction, is accompanied with earnest seeking after still more of the infinite God. When we turn ourselves to God and seek for all that we need there, there can be no satiety in us. So the two opposing blessed-

nesses, the blessedness of search that is sure of finding, and the blessedness of finding which is calm repose, are united in the Christian experience.—A. Maclaren, *Christ's Musts*, p. 98.

References.—LXIII. 3.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons on Passages of the Psalms*, pp. 162, 170. H. J. Bevis, *Sermons*, p. 144. LXIII. 6.—J. Martineau, *Endeavour after the Christian Life*, p. 84. LXIII. 7.—J. Armstrong, *Parochial Sermons*, p. 76.

THE PURSUING SOUL

'My soul followeth hard after Thee: Thy right hand upholdeth me.'—Psalm lxiii. 8.

In this Psalm we are brought into contact with the highest reach of Old Testament religion and the deepest spirit of the Psalter itself.

I. The heart of all spiritual religion is communion, and the aim of all high faith is communion; and nowhere does communion find such classic expression. When the author rises to the ecstatic state where his soul seems joined to God, few of us can follow him. Yet, as we look forward to communion, it is good for us to see what communion may mean to a man, good for us to hold out the ideal before our eyes of a soul following hard after God and cleaving fast to Him, upheld by His right hand. The subject of the Psalm is the heart's longing for God and the heart's joy in His fellowship—the need for communion and the joy of communion.

II. The human need for God to which this Psalmist gave voice demands a similar expression from us. Men may say that man cannot know God, can have no personal relations with the great First Cause. But they cannot say that man has no need of God, that man has no desire towards God, no instincts and cravings and spiritual wants. All history throbs with the passion of human longing. Without God life is a dry and weary land where no water is. But exceeding all that dim and dumb desire, that sense of incompleteness which men feel is the desire of the man who has known God that he might enter into full communion and that interrupted fellowship might be renewed. The Psalmist's situation corresponds somewhat; for he is absent from the sanctuary where alone he could realize to the full his loving worship. He comforts himself by happy memory when in times past he had seen God's power and glory revealed in the sanctuary. Spiritually he dwells in the House of the Lord, and feels that the Divine love follows him.

III. The Hebrew division of human nature was a twofold division into soul and flesh or body. When the Psalmist speaks of his soul thirsting and his flesh longing, he means that his whole being desires God. However dark and dreary, he is never lonely—he puts out his hand and feels that he is near, he rests in the presence of his gracious Companion. He has proved and tested his faith, and found it fit to live by. Nay, God's loving-kindness is better than life. Without it there would be nothing to live for. We have pledges of that love more precious than this pious heart could ever dream of. The symbols of communion speak to us with a power and a pathos that would have put new music into the Psalmist's song and a new wonder into his heart. If we hunger and thirst and long for God, will not we too be satisfied with His mercy? If God is our desire, God will be our portion. The pursuing soul reaches at last his goal and is satisfied. God is the rewarder of them that diligently seek Him.—Hugh Black, *Christ's Service of Love*, p. 92.

References.—LXIII.—*International Critical Commentary*, vol. ii. p. 72. A. Maclaren, *Life of David*, p. 250. LXIV.—*International Critical Commentary*, vol. ii. p. 76. LXV. 1.—S. Horne, *The Soul's Awakening*, p. 275.

Psalm lxiii.

This Psalm was chanted by Savonarola and his brother Dominicans, A.D. 1497, as they marched to the grand Piazza of Florence to meet the trial of fire to which they had been summoned by their enemies. Richard Baxter says of this Psalm: 'I can sing it, because though I have not a soul like David, I desire to have it. I *have a heart* to *the heart*.'—John Ker.

THE MYSTERY OF PRAYER

'O Thou that hearest prayer, unto Thee shall all flesh come.'—Psalm lxv. 2.

Instructive as we feel our prayers to be, when we try to think quietly what they mean, what they involve, we are often haunted by misgivings and difficulties.

I. Problems of Prayer.—Prayer in the sense of communion between the Divine and the human Spirit we can understand, but prayer in the sense of definite petitions—can I seriously hope that God will change the vast complicated order of things in answer to a momentary request from a single one of His creatures? And so the native hue of our resolution, of our instinct to pray is 'sicklied o'er by the pale cast of thought'. Now our sense of the worth—of validity—of prayer will depend upon our conception of God. We have had a wrong conception before our minds which we have seen to be responsible for much unsettlement of thought and indifference of life—a conception, I mean, of God as the Almighty dwelling in some vast and distant region, and beholding from afar this universe which He has called into being and over which He has inexorable laws. Now if belief in prayer means that we are to suppose that in response to our petitions this Being descends upon His universe and arbitrarily interferes with its course and breaks its laws on our behalf, then in our minds, filled as they must be with the truth of the unity of nature, there is no possible place for such a belief in prayer. But let us turn from this wrong conception to the true conception, and have God before our minds as One who is ever present, not only in the whole of His universe but in each single part of it, so that its ceaseless energy is His will, its law the expression of His thought; in all its myriad movements it is held together by the unity of His infinite Mind and Will. Then we shall find that within His unity of Nature there is a place, a real and necessary place, for prayer.

II. Unity of Nature.—(*a*) What do we mean by

this unity of Nature? The Unity of Nature is, let us remember, the rational order in which the universe and each part of it is held together by one indwelling Spirit. (*b*) Now secondly, what do we mean by 'the laws of Nature'? They are simply the expression to us of the ways in which this indwelling Spirit of God works; whenever we see the same effects following from the same causes, we say we discern a law of Nature, that is, a method by which God chooses to work in His world. (*c*) Thirdly, what do we mean by the power of Nature? We can only mean by the power of Nature the energy by which the Will of this Infinite Spirit works itself out in the universe; and power acts, and must act in a rational universe according to purpose. We may then, without difficulty, believe that the indwelling Spirit of God is everywhere so arranging, so adapting the forces of Nature in which He dwells that it shall minister to the spirit of man, by working upon his prayer and giving an answer to it as He sees best. Prayer therefore finds its place, its rightful place, we may even say its necessary place, in the unity of Nature. This does not mean that the answer to prayer can ever interfere with the course or break the laws of Nature. We merely mean that God can so arrange and order the laws of Nature as seems to Him best for a sufficient purpose.—Archbishop Lang, *The Church Family Newspaper*, 1907, p. 512.

A SERMON TO SEAMEN

'By terrible things in righteousness wilt Thou answer us, O God of our salvation; who art the confidence of all the ends of the earth, and of them that are afar off upon the sea.'—Psalm lxv. 5.

I. What is the Lord to us? He is the God of our salvation. And this implies that we all need salvation. You have not attained to right ideas of yourself and right ideas of God unless when you think of God you think also of your need of being saved from sin and of Him as the Lord and giver of that salvation. Salvation is of the Lord alone. It begins in His everlasting purpose, in His sacred covenant, in His Divine choice of His people, and is carried out by the gift of His dear Son, by His life and by His death. Now it is a curious thing that in this salvation there is a curious mixture of the terrible and the gracious. We see in salvation a God so terrible, so angry against sin, that even to save the man he loves He will not put up the sword of His justice. And how terrible a thing it is to view Jesus Christ coming into the sinner's place and bearing the wrath of God on account of sin!

II. I have set forth what God is to us—The God of our salvation. Now what will God do for us? He will answer us. This shows that we must all pray, There is not a believing man in the world but what must pray, and we shall never get into such a state of grace that we have not need to pray. What do we pray for? Well, according to the Psalm, one of the most important things is to pray against sin. Do your sins hold you captive? can you not keep away from them? Are they too many for you? Cry to the Lord to drive them all away. A word from Him can chase those demons from you and leave you at perfect peace. But remember, if we pray to be delivered from sin and to be brought nearer to God, He may answer us by terrible things in righteousness. God often sends us ingots of gold in rumbling wagons drawn by black horses. Our trials and troubles and crosses are among the best things we have. The more tender the love of God, the more likely are we to get chastening.

III. The third point is this. What the Lord is to the ends of the earth. He is the confidence of all the ends of the earth. I am going to spiritualize that—who are the ends of the earth? All that live at the extremes of heat or cold, we may liken them to the ends of the earth. And God is worthy to be the confidence of those who are farthest off from His Church, from Himself, from the Gospel, from hope, from anything that is good. The ends of the earth might mean also those that are least known. There are some that are the ends of the earth, of whom nobody thinks. Do I speak to one who has been thinking 'No one cares for my soul'? Do they quite pass you by? Well, come and put your trust in the Lord for He is the confidence of all the ends of the earth, and you resting in Him shall find a helper in Him.

IV. The last point is this. What is God to seafaring men, what should He be to them? He is 'the confidence of all them that are afar off upon the sea'. I have often likened the life of a seafaring man to what the life of a Christian should be. We take our bearings by the heavenly bodies. We are guided by the Word of God which is our chart, by the movements of the blessed Spirit within which is our compass. Trusting in Him we shall come to our desired haven without fear of shipwreck, for He that taught us to sail the spiritual sea will guide us safely over every inch of it.—C. H. Spurgeon, *The British Weekly Pulpit*, vol. II. p. 69.

THE RIVER OF GOD

'The river of God is full of water.'—Psalm lxv. 9.

There is no scarcity in God. The whole testimony of the Bible runs immediately and urgently in this direction: If we are straitened we are straitened in ourselves, we are not straitened in God; if we have not, it is because we ask not, or because we ask amiss; if any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God which giveth unto all men liberally—wisdom upon wisdom—and upbraideth not; giving does not impoverish Him, withholding does not enrich Him; the river of God is full of water—always full. If we die of thirst the responsibility is our own.

I. Here is a wonderful river, rolling past our very dwelling-places, rolling through the whole area of our life and our experience. The whole Psalm is a kind of festival song. God is so abundant, so hospitable, so gracious, so plentiful; the whole tone of His

sanctuary is plenteousness, abundance, more and more, to infinity. This Psalmist has a wondrous gift of utterance. I do not see how he can end this Psalm but with dancing and tumult and uproar of joy; and I cannot see how a man can be so thrilled with joy himself without making the valleys sing, and the thick standing corn lift up its voice in praise, and all the fields clap their hands, and all the mountains shout for joy. He has committed himself to a great task, and nothing but a special doxology can be the proper climax of a Psalm so exultant, so buoyant, so infinite in its desire to express its sense of the Divine bounty.

Here is a river unlike all other rivers. It is 'the river of God'. It is not a common stream; the Ganges and the Tiber thrown together could but poorly typify or symbolize this greater river that flows from the fount of the Divine heart. It is the river of God: it is not man-made, it is not man-directed, it is not man-owned, it is not man-patronized; it is God's, and we have only a freehold in it as God may grant us a lot and an inheritance in this ever-rolling and infinite river of life.

II. What of the responsibility of having such a river rolling through our whole life? God's abundance is greater than our necessity, God's answer makes our prayer look small; when we have said all we have to say, and think we have piled our supplications and desires heaven-high, and that we shall tax the resources of the Eternal to meet our demands, lo, one whispered breath of answer from God's heart dissolves the mountain we have piled, and we forget the littleness of our prayer in the infinitude of God's answer. Why will we build up ourselves against God? Who shall carry his own little manufactured vessel and catch the whole cloud of heaven within its small and contemptible capacity? Who can number the drops of rain? who can count the multitudes that dance upon the ridges of the earth and make them green with verdures and glad with joy?

III. What a wonderful revelation this is of the estimate which God puts upon human capacity! He has prepared for every man as if every man were a multitude of guests. Where does God pinch and scrape? Where does He so economize that He has barely leaves enough to cover the nakedness of the plantation? If God had made a little place for us at a little table, and if He had ever said to us, Dear little one, I give you welcome, but you will observe that the whole economy of this house is administered upon principles of bareness and stint and almost grudging, and I want you to respect the spirit of poverty by which my house is governed—there is no such passage, there is no justification for such a suspicion; the whole idea is plenteousness, abundance, fatness, multitudes, millions, the ends of the earth, and all flesh.

IV. 'The river of God is full of water.' You can satisfy your thirst there. All nations can satisfy their thirst there. All the passions, holy and beautiful and Divine, which constitute the charter of human nature, can be refreshed and satisfied at the river of God. There is a river the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God. There is a river of which it is said, Whithersoever the river cometh there shall be life; everything lived when the river came.—Joseph Parker, *City Temple Pulpit*, vol. i. p. 30.

Psalm lxv.

This beautiful Psalm, first of grace, then of nature, inverting the order of Psalm xix., seems to have taken early possession of the heart of the Christian Church. There is a prayer which has come down to us from the Church of Alexandria, alluded to by Origen, first half of the third century, in which its language is largely used, and applied to the land of Egypt: 'Send rain out of Thy treasures upon those places which stand in need of it. Renew and make glad the face of the earth by its descent that it may bring forth and rejoice in the rain-drops. Raise the waters of the river to their just height; renew and make glad the face of the earth by its ascent; water the furrows and increase their produce. Bless, O Lord, and crown the year with the riches of Thy goodness, for the sake of the poor, the widow, the fatherless, and the stranger.'—John Ker.

References.—LXV. 9.—H. Macmillan, *Bible Teachings in Nature*, p. 90. J. Clarke, *Christian World Pulpit*, 1891, p. 201. LXV. 10.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons on Passages of the Psalms*, p. 180. LXV. 11.—Spurgeon, *Morning by Morning*, p. 292. A. Tucker, *Preacher's Magazine*, vol. xix. p. 460. LXV.—*International Critical Commentary*, vol. ii. p. 80.

NOTHING BUT MIRACLES

'They went through the flood on foot.'—Psalm lxvi. 6.

That is really all I can say; if I were to add anything to that I would be adding prose to poetry, and poor, bald, rough paint to the finest colours used by finest artists. When will people believe that the text is the sermon? In this case we have sermon and text in one most surely. 'They went through the flood on foot.' Believe it, and you are a Christian; deny it, and you leave the Church, turn your back on the so-called sanctuary, and become your own altar and idol.

I. The miracles of Jesus Christ ought to be commonplaces to us. Let us place ourselves in imaginative relation to the whole conception. Christ never said, 'Gentlemen, miracles, if you please! Stand up for miracles!' Never; He grows the daisy without a word, He brings in the summer in silence fit for her queenliness, He makes no jarring, creaking noise as He rolls up the gates of the morning. But we begin where we please, and therefore God disappoints us. We begin at unaccustomed places, and say, There are many mysteries. We make the mysteries, and we must suffer for them. The Bible can only deliver its own letters sealed, and on the seal there is written, Not to be opened until the thirtieth century—century 150. The leaves that are already opened you may read, mark, and inwardly digest; they are food for your soul. These other letters are all sealed, each a legend of its own: To be read when the earth is

seventy thousand years of age; when society has been on earth five hundred millenniums, then you may open this seal. But there is a rascally desire to open the seals before the time, because man is naturally, under-naturally, a thief. All men are thieves.

II. Miracles fill our human life. Some people do not understand them by the name miracles, but we understand them all by the name Providence—providences, Divine arrangements, the holy, sweet, beneficent promises of God.

We have lived this text; we ourselves are living miracles. How do you happen to be where you are? 'Ah,' you reply, 'many a time I have thought of that. If my poor old mother could see me in this office in the City of London, she would be quite sure I had stolen something, she would be very anxious to get out of the way until she could speak to me privately, and inquire however I had come to have an office so large and so fine, and boys working in connexion with me, and men working under me; why, I should have to fortify the sweet old creature considerably before she would believe that her boy that used to bring in the kine in the gloaming away out on the grey hills could have come to this position.' And God has sometimes said to a man in the City, 'See, you know how you began; you used to tend the sheep'. Ah, I had forgotten that! Yes, but that is a fact; you used to call in and number the cattle night by night. Who brought you out of all that obscurity and set you in bright Jerusalem, David? Speak thy benefactor's name; is this the doing of the Son of Jesse, or is it the doing of the Trinity? Forms have changed, and forms always will change, but the mystery still prevails and abounds. Life is always a mystery; it is often a mystery of darkness, but it can by the grace of God be turned into a mystery of light. Even now they are taking a sunbeam to pieces and trying to find out exactly what it is composed of, putting all the elements back again and so forth. And they cannot tell what life is. No man can define light, no man can define love, no man can define life, no man can define God.

III. What we want is personal testimony. 'They went through the flood on foot.' I want the Church to rise up in all its memberships and each member to say, 'So did I: I have been in floods that threatened to overwhelm me, and just as my faith was giving way the flood disappeared, and I walked through on dry land. I have done it. I was dead—yes; I am alive—true.' How so? 'A great movement for which there is no name.' So many people are geographers, and so few are astronomers. There are people who even believe in geology, but they cannot rise to astronomy. Now it is the astronomic that rules the whole.—Joseph Parker, *City Temple Pulpit*, vol. vi. p. 126.

THE CONTRADICTIONS OF LIFE

'We went through fire and through water: but Thou broughtest us out into a wealthy place.'—Psalm lxvi. 12.

There are many lessons in that verse. They are filled up with the truth of the leadership of God. But I want to take one simple thought and send it out. It is the apparent contradictions of our life. For fire and water: are they not very opposite. Life, then, has need of opposites, and life advances through its contradictions.

I. Think of life's common experiences first. I take it there is no one here but has known the music and the light of joy. And then come sorrow and suffering and loss, and gloom for the sunshine and weeping for the laughter. And here is the flat opposite of joy. And if God was in that, how can He be in this, unless our Leader contradicts Himself? But the strange thing about Jesus Christ is this, that He has saved us by being a man of sorrow, yet He was always speaking of His joy. And the strange thing about the Christian Gospel is, that joy is its keynote, joy is its glad refrain; and yet it comes to me, to you, and whispers, My son, My daughter, take up thy cross and bear it. Is the Gospel in opposition to the Gospel? Nay friend, not that: a house divided against itself is doomed. But it is through the strange antagonisms of the heart, and all the teaching of a diverse guidance that we are brought at last to our wealthy place.

II. But passing from these common experiences of life, I note that we cannot open our New Testament but the same element of contradiction meets us. I think, for example, of that great word of Jesus, 'Come unto Me, and I will give you rest'. Now what is the very opposite of rest? The very opposite of rest is struggle. And yet I cannot open my New Testament but I find that the follower of Christ is called to war. 'Fight the good fight of faith,' says the Apostle. I cannot explain these contradictions, but I live through them and they bear me on. For somehow I have never peace except I struggle, and I cannot struggle if I am not at peace.

III. Now come a little deeper into the realm of thought. There is one truth that is a little in abeyance nowadays: I mean the truth of the sovereignty of God. We dwell so lovingly upon God's fatherhood that we are almost in danger of forgetting His sovereignty. Now tell me in absolute opposition to that foreordained will—what stands? You answer in a moment—the free will of man. If I am free to will as I believe, and not the helpless creature of necessity, what comes of the pre-determining will of God? Am I to give up my moral freedom? Heaven guard me, never! And am I to cast the sovereignty of God to be swirled and scattered by the winds of heaven? Nay, God forbid, life were a poor thing then. But I am to remember that I am going through fire and water, that God may bring me to a wealthy place.—G. H. Morrison, *Flood-Tide*, p. 159.

References.—LXVI. 12.—H. L. Thompson, *The Church of St. Mary the Virgin*, p. 121. LXVI. 16.—C. J. Vaughan, *Harrow Sermons* (1st Series), p. 388. LXVI. 18.—E. J. Boyce, *Parochial Sermons*, p. 18. LXVI. 20.—Spurgeon, *Morning by Morning*, p. 145. LXVI.—*International Critical Commentary*, vol. ii. p. 86.

THE CONNEXION BETWEEN SANCTITY AND SALUBRITY

'God be merciful unto us, and bless us; and cause His face to shine upon us; that Thy saving health may be known among all nations.'—Psalm lxvii. 1, 2.

I. There is strong connexion between health and happiness—between the shining of the heart and the soundness of the body. The connexion is more seen in the prevention than in the cure of disease. When an illness has actually mastered us it is usually vain to say, 'Keep up your spirits'. The tendency of illness is to keep down the spirits. This is suggested in the book of Job. Why does the Satan of the drama, after overwhelming Job by poverty and bereavement, ask leave to afflict him with ill-health. It is because, while poverty and bereavement make us prostrate, ill-health keeps us prostrate, prevents us from seeing the actual sunbeams which remain.

II. But it is as a safeguard from sickness rather than a cure of sickness that the study of sunbeams is valuable. When the body is laid low, all the light and music in the world may fail to raise it; but a very little light and music might have prevented its prostration. It is where the salt of life has lost its savour that the body is trodden down; but where the savour of life is enjoyed there is a body-guard.

III. Now, the Psalmist says that religion has a medical value. He says that everywhere—'Among all nations'—it tends to preserve health. It does so because it furnishes a sunbeam to the heart. It gives a promise of good fortune to come. A promise of coming good fortune brings a flood of mental energy, and that is converted into bodily energy. The worries that make us physically weak are almost entirely occupied with the future, whether of this world or other worlds. The sting of poverty is the thought of to-morrow. The sting of bereavement is the cloud beyond death. The sting of conscience is the doubt of our qualification for heaven. And if our worries are generally about the future, they can have no panacea like religion. Religion alone can make a heart confident about the future. Human effort may in a measure redeem the past; human toil may provide much for the present; but only the sense of God can gild my future. It is no mere metaphor when the Bible calls God 'The health of my countenance,' for the cares that ruffle the body are not the troubles of to-day but the troubles of to-morrow, and nothing can alleviate the troubles of to-morrow but the shining face of God.—G. Matheson, *Messages of Hope*, p. 101.

Reference.—LXVII. 1, 2.—J. Edmunds, *Sermons in a Village Church*, p. 144.

UNTO ALL NATIONS

'That Thy way may be known upon earth, Thy saving health unto all nations.'—Psalm lxvii. 2.

A Church which is in no sense a Missionary Church is really dead.

I. The spiritual prosperity of the Church at home becomes a fountain to feed missions abroad. The Gospel in its essence is remedial. It claims to be the one means of healing for the common malady of human nature. We may say that all missions are medical missions. The Gospel contemplates the whole world as one vast hospital full of sick souls and wounded hearts, and warped and diseased wills.

II. And therefore this Catholic evangel claims all nations and kindreds and people and tongues for its inheritance. Too often indeed, we hamper its energies and retard its conquests because we assume that pure Christianity necessarily involves any of the external features of our own civilization. Yet surely Asiatics and Africans can find 'saving health' in the New Testament, without being inoculated with the restless fever which we call 'progress'.

III. Those who look forward in faith to the fulfilment of God's missionary promises and the victory of Christ's Cross, anticipate a Church of the future which will certainly be no mere copy of the Church of the present. It is a strange and marvellous thing that 'Christianity has for so long a period been confined mainly to the white people, but its mission is to mankind, and mankind is not in any large proportion white. And surely there are great neglected Christian ideas, ignored and forgotten truths and graces which will be recovered and come to their own in the fullness of time, when Hindu theologies and Chinese mystics and negro saints bring their own characteristic gifts to the Church's common treasury.—T. H. Darlow, *The Upward Calling*, p. 321.

References.—LXVII. 3.—H. Alford, *Quebec Chapel Sermons*, vol. i. p. 334. LXVII. 5, 6.—G. A. Sowter, *Sowing and Reaping*, p. 49. LXVII. 6.—Spurgeon, *Morning by Morning*, p. 118. LXVII.—*International Critical Commentary*, vol. ii. p. 92.

THE BOOK OF RUTH

'God setteth the solitary in families.'—Psalm lxviii. 6.

These words express in the shortest possible compass the main lesson of the book of Ruth. It is rather a matter for rejoicing that the lovely pastoral, in which Ruth the Moabitess is the principal figure, forms no part of the record of that anarchic and sanguinary era, so that we take it up as an independent whole, complete in itself. Coming to it, indeed, after the violence and disorder of which the book of Judges is full, is like passing from scenes of battle and carnage to a quiet and peaceful landscape with its homely cottages and waving cornfields. How pathetic, for example, are the unstudied phrases that paint for us the desolation of the childless Naomi!

I. Yet the story of Ruth is not altogether a sad one. The closing scene comes as a cheerful contrast to the pathetic beginning; while, quite apart from this, we get a glimpse of the deeper compensations that enable us in some degree to justify the ways of God to man. Take, for example, the doctrine of a Divine Providence bringing good out of evil, and guiding human lives to unforeseen issues. I do not mean to say that this doctrine is clearly set forth in the book of Ruth; it teaches us, as life itself does, indirectly, by signs and tokens that are clear enough to all who have eyes to see and ears to hear. And the lesson taught in this

indirect way is, surely, that God is the Protector of all that trust in Him. Our lives are not random things—the sport of cruel accident. There is a clue to them; and the clue is in the hands of One who, being infinitely wise and merciful, has ordained this world as a scene of discipline and preparation.

II. Your lot in life, whoever you are, may be humble; you think it insignificant. You can do nothing for God. But ask yourself, can God do nothing in and through you? God's voice in this book says to you, 'Don't creep away into the cavern of your own private cares and griefs and hide yourself there; don't settle down into a life of moaning and sighing and querulous regrets. Come out of yourself; come out into the world all groaning and travailing in pain, and see whether Divine grace cannot help you to be a blessing and a consolation to others.'

III. But the picture is not complete yet. Ruth was not a daughter of Israel. She was an alien, a heathen, one of a race hated and despised by the chosen people. The old law said, 'An Ammorite or a Moabite shall not enter into the congregation'. But no law of God's making is levelled against truth or goodness; and in the great congregation of worshippers of the one true God, they who 'do justly and love mercy' are there by Divine right. What a rebuke there is here to our narrow formulas of race and creed and terms of communion.

IV. But what does the Bible answer to the sneer, 'Can any good thing come out of Nazareth'. It is 'Come and see'. So the bigot who fancies that his own particular Church or sect is a land of Goshen where alone, amid the surrounding darkness, the true light shines; to the cynical pessimist who goes about with a lantern looking for an honest man, the same answer is given. Call the story of Ruth idyllic if you like. I refuse to believe that it is exceptional. In this harsh world such lives are led, such deeds are done. The Bible story does but lay bare a vein of tender true-heartedness that not in one place only, but in places innumerable, runs underneath the selfishness and the pretentiousness of our modern life.

V. One more last word. The book of Ruth is a domestic story. Its moral for Christians is the consecration of the Christian idea of the home. When the Son of God took upon Him our flesh He revealed the sacredness of human life. He took up the institution of the family into the Divine order, and so hallowed it for ever. It is God who sets the solitary in families; and His sacred purpose is that, through the homely bonds of human fellowship, which link human beings together, they should learn to see and to strengthen the invisible bonds that bind us all to our Father who is in heaven. Surely it is worth our while to try to realize God's idea of home and kindred and the ties that unite those who live together and share the same lot.—J. W. Shepard, *Light and Life*, p. 114.

References.—LXVIII. 6.—G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 58. C. J. Ridgeway, *The King and His Kingdom*, p. 20. LXVIII. 10.—H. Melvill, *Sermons*, vol. i. p. 175. Spurgeon, *Evening by Evening*, p. 345. LXVIII. 11, 12.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons Preached in Sackville College Chapel*, vol. iv. p. 9. LXVIII. 12.—Bishop Woodford, *Occasional Sermons*, vol. i. p. 210. *Practical Sermons*, vol. ii. p. 312.

THE SILVER WINGS OF THE DOVE

'Though ye have lien among the pots, yet shall ye be as the wings of a dove: that is covered with silver wings, and her feathers like gold.'—Psalm lxviii. 13.

This Psalm is a hymn of glorious triumph. It was probably composed for and used on an occasion of great national thanksgiving in the history of the children of Israel. Throughout the whole of it, it is a most soul-stirring poem to anyone who has a soul to be stirred. Every verse of it breathes of victory on the battle-field, and triumph, and thankful hearts rejoicing. The central thought of this particular verse is clearly a contrast between some kind of humiliation on the one hand, referred to by the lying among the pots; some kind of exaltation on the other, referred to by the expression, 'having the wings of a dove: that is covered with silver wings, and her feathers like gold'. That is clearly the central thought, but the figure in which the thought is conveyed has proved to almost every one who has tried to interpret it a most perplexing problem. Dr. Thomson, the celebrated Eastern traveller, who in his day, not so very distant or remote, knew more of the manners and customs of Oriental countries than perhaps any other living person, acknowledged himself in his book to be absolutely nonplussed and completely unable to discover any connexion of a reasonable kind or character between these two figures. Some years ago, however, Miss Whately, a daughter of the great Archbishop of Dublin, was travelling in Egypt, and she noticed something which she thought might perhaps have suggested this figure to the Psalmist, and in her most deeply interesting book, entitled *Ragged Life in Egypt*, describes what she saw. She says, speaking of the flat roofs of the houses in Egypt, that in the houses of the very poor these flat roofs were usually in a state of the greatest filth, from the fact that they were made the convenient receptacles of the rubbish of the house. She says these places, both for their warmth at night and their shade and shelter by day, are the resort of tame pigeons and doves who sleep there in the heat of the day. In the cool of the evening, however, these doves emerge from behind the rubbish, and pots and broken earthenware, and, shaking off the dirt and dust, in the midst of which they have spent their happy day, fly upwards. Their outstretched wings as they catch the evening sun look as clear and as bright as silver—as if they had never been in contact with dirt or dust at all. She says that when she saw that, which she did so often, she at once thought it might be that which gave the Psalmist the idea of lying amongst the pots, dirty, dusty, and defiled, and yet having the wings of a dove, without any dust or dirt, and with no defilement, and shining like silver and gold. If so, what a picture of the possibility of our Christian life! You

see the believer living in the world but not of it, surrounded on every side by contamination and degrading influences, but untouched by any, living and moving amongst that which hurts and seems as if it must hurt, and spoils, and seems as if it must spoil, and damages, and seems as if it must damage the Christian life; but for all that the Christian life is not hurt, not spoiled, not damaged, not defiled. A dove often has to hide itself, and a tame pigeon often has to hide itself in an unlovely retreat, and yet when it darts out it shines in the glorious sunlight in unsullied beauty. If that is the Psalmist's meaning, how easy to apply it to our hearts and minds to-night!

I. The Christian and his Surroundings.—If a man is a true Christian he may as well maintain, if he wants to maintain, in the midst of the most unfavourable surroundings in which it is possible for his life to be cast, a distinctly lovely, loyal, and holy Christian life. Many Christians have their lot in life amongst surroundings which, so far from being helpful to the development of Christian character, are distinctly unpropitious and adverse to it. The point is this—these surroundings, if we have the Christian heart and the Christian will, and the Christian grace, need not destroy the Christian life. Though you may have lien among the pots in the shop, or the wharf, or the works, or the school, or the kitchen, or the warehouse, in the most uncongenial and unpromising business you can possibly think of, you may have, if you want to have—that is the point—a soul as clear as the dove's wing.

II. Living in the Sunlight.—It is in the sunlight that the wings of the dove show a silver and golden colour; in no other light. It is only in the transfiguring presence of the Lord Jesus Christ that the believer can shine, living with Him in daily life, living always in His presence, and never leaving it.

THE ASCENT OF THE SOUL

'Though ye have lien among the pots, yet shall ye be as the wings of a dove: that is covered with silver wings, and her feathers like gold.'—PSALM LXVIII. 13 (Prayer Book Version).

Go where we will the pestilential vapour of sin is ever with us. But like the doves in the sunlight we may rise above our surroundings, and our wings even give forth a glittering effulgence. Now, there are certain common pictures which assist in the soul's uplifting, without which, indeed, it must remain a dead weight in the body.

I. The first is that man's soul should feel after God and know Him as He has revealed Himself to mankind. There is cause for rejoicing, after all, in the soul's longing after God, for here is evidence that the spirit has commenced its upward flight. There is no life so hopeless and so blank, there is no death so cold and dreary, there is no soul so held fast in misery and iron as that of the poor mortal whose spirit never reaches Godwards. And we may rest assured that there is no other power so able to lift us and transport us to heights away from the world and the worldly life, as the realization first of all of God's Being and continual Presence.

II. And the second factor is worship. The spirit of worship is part of ourselves. As well try to root it out as to tear the hearts from our breasts. Herein is the second great power to carry the soul upwards, namely, that after we have come to know God as He has revealed Himself to us, we worship Him. It is the private uplifting of the soul, as well as our public expression, which has such immense power to carry us upwards to God.

III. Business. By business I mean busy-ness. Be a worker; be always doing something. There is no condition of life so calculated to destroy the soul as idleness. And so the converse is true. There is nothing in life which helps to elevate more surely than legitimate work. Christ has set us His example. And when work is done in His Name there can be no drudgery. There is the way heavenwards: to know God, to worship Him, and to fulfil the daily duties allotted to us.—J. A. CRAIGIE, *The Country Pulpit*, p. 105.

REFERENCES. — LXVIII. 13. — J. M. Neale, *Sermons Preached in a Religious House*, vol. i. p. 147. LXVIII. 18.—J. Keble, *Sermons from Ascension Day to Trinity*, p. 12. A. R. Ashwell, *God in His Work and Nature*, p. 76.

GOD'S WORK FOR US

(A Sermon to Citizen Soldiers)

'Thy God hath commanded thy strength: strengthen, O God, that which Thou hast wrought for us.'—PSALM LXVIII. 28.

THIS Psalm reconciles, interprets, enforces with most instructive power the contrasted thoughts which are pressed upon us by the festival and by the unwonted gathering here to-day.

I. At first sight there is something strange and incongruous in the assembling within these walls of an armed force when we are commemorating the mission of the Spirit of peace. But if I understand the two things rightly, this strangeness, this incongruity, is only on the surface. The festival may help us to feel that a citizen army is a true expression of Christian faith. For we have a noble inheritance to be kept at all costs for the sake of the whole family of God. In our national character, in our national situation, in our national opportunities we have received a gift from God; a gift which we are bound to use and to develop; a gift which we are bound to guard and consecrate; a gift which we are bound to administer in unselfish devotion for the good of all who are made one in Christ.

II. I do not forget that there are forces at work among us which tend to separate class from class, and to set one against another in fratricidal rivalry. I do not forget that some would represent loyal homage to rank and blood as derogatory to the generous Spirit which it purifies. But I am sure that the great heart of England is sound still. We believe—the whole framework of our life helps, nay forces us to believe—that our manhood is one, and, at the same time, in order that the whole may be one, differentiated in countless fragments of which each fulfils its proper office.

III. If Europe is to learn that manifold service is the true condition of unity, that order is the one foundation of progress, England must be the teacher. No one can recognize more gladly than I do the priceless benefits which the great nations of the Continent have conferred upon mankind at large and upon ourselves. But now they in turn are looking to us. They want what we have been trained to offer, if we have not wasted the heritage of our fathers, in the example of an energetic, a multiform, a harmonious national life. We have our own dangers great and terrible, but we shall meet them most effectively by striving as best we can to keep the charge which God has been pleased to give us for others. And for this reason the citizen soldier offers in his free-will service the image of the character which God now requires us to foster. He shows to us by the arms which he carries, and by the uniform which he wears, that there is something worth living for more precious than life itself; that the softness of luxury is a poorer thing in every way than patient effort. Endurance, obedience, self-sacrifice, these three express the teachings of his work; and those who love England best, and trust her future most boldly, will know whether it is not these three which must be with us if the nation is to fulfil its appointed task.—B. F. Westcott, *Peterborough Sermons*, p. 361.

References.—LXVIII. 28.—Spurgeon, *Evening by Evening*, p. 322. J. M. Neale, *Readings for the Aged* (3rd Series), p. 248. J. M. Neale, *Sermons Preached in Sackville College Chapel*, vol. ii. p. 342. LXVIII. 28, 29.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons on Passages of the Psalms*, p. 190.

A SAINT OF GOD

'Thou art wonderful in thy saints.'—Psalm lxviii. 35.

The idea contained in the statement of the Psalmist is the wonderful ways of God in all that He does, in His dealings with the holy places of the unseen world or in those places most holy of all, in His saints.

I. Consider what a revelation of God's wonderful way is to be found in that great saint, St. John the Baptist. God was wonderful in his birth, St. John was born contrary to the usual Divine arrangements of nature. God was wonderful not only in the birth and commission of His servant but in the formation of his character. The height of that character was—indomitable courage, a courage of the highest kind, to teach the truth whether men liked it or no. John tore away the cover that even the most plausible and exalted had made for themselves and showed them themselves.

II. St. John's highest call was that fearless loyalty to truth, to bury his own miserable self in the thought of his great commission and the marvellous vision of God that had been opened out before him. It was because of this wonderful courage and unselfish loyalty and strong conviction that there has been about all the saints as there was about St. John a strange fascination. And then there is one more point that perhaps may help us to see how wonderful God was in this saint. He was wonderful in allowing his apparent failure. And yet he had fulfilled his mission, he had prepared for Christ and for the Gospel of universal truth.

What appeared to us so tragic a close to so promising a beginning of the great saint was really part of the Divine work to complete a magnificent character that He had formed to prepare for the coming of the Master.

III. How shall we allow ourselves to think and to feel about such things? Shall we not, indeed, think of life with its joys, its brightness, its happy days, kind friends, dear relations, its unselfishness, or its clouds, perplexities, weariness, distresses, shall we not think of it as God's guidance for the best? We shall not sit down with our hands folded. We shall strive to retrieve in the world any failure by our courage: we shall remember that God calls us to work, not necessarily to success. We see something of God's mysterious wonderfulness in the image that He places before us in His saints.—W. J. Knox-Little, *Homiletic Review*, 1906, vol. lii p. 292.

References.—LXVIII.—*International Critical Commentary*, vol. ii. p. 94. LXIX. 10.—J. Keble, *Sermons for Holy Week*, p. 77.

LOOKING AND NOT FINDING

'I looked . . . for comforters, but I found none.'—Psalm lxix. 20.

Read the whole verse; it is like the falling of a great thunder-shower of tears. 'Reproach hath broken my heart; and I am full of heaviness: and I looked for some to take pity, but there was none; and for comforters, but I found none.' Say you that man wrote three thousand years ago? He wrote this morning, he is with us now, he is in our hearts. A man takes his sorrow with him more surely than he takes his shadow.

I. 'I looked for some to take pity.' What a chance they lost! Why, we have all lost our brightest chances. They often occur, on the streets, in hidden places, in habitations shut against the spirit of charity. When we cannot really effect deliverance we might say a kind word. Do you know the effect of a really sincerely kindly word upon a soul that is orphaned, desolate, broken-hearted, that does not think it worth while to live? People do not always want mere money; money is sometimes the very least of the gifts that we can confer. Sometimes all that is wanted is a tone, a little anthem in one little sigh. Life in its most tragic and sensitive moods receives all the ministries, and is glad to be renewed and freshened and cheered by some gentle, fraternal, Divine tone.

II. Then the deliverance is carried beyond the point of pity and comes up to that kind of ministry which is denoted by this word 'comforters,' the whole text reading, 'and for comforters, but I found none'. What is it to comfort? We have explained this a hundred times, and a hundred times have forgotten it. To comfort is to give strength, to increase the power of endurance. Paul said, 'I besought the Lord thrice to take away this thorn in the flesh,' and He said, 'My grace is sufficient for thee' and for any

number of thorns—let the thorns alone. Did He comfort Paul? Certainly: 'My grace is sufficient for thee'. It is exactly what thou dost most require. The Lord does not always remove the burden. He strengthens the back. That is comfort — *with, strength.* You can comfort a man so that you will give him courage; he may say, 'I will try again, this man has put things in a new light; I like his way of looking at things; he is a downright sensible man; other men have confounded me by many polysyllables, but this man has told me that if I just get beyond that corner I will see the green fields and hear birds singing in the blue air; I feel as if I could do it.' That is comforting, to tell a man that there is more in him than he suspects. That is comforting, to awaken the latent ability and say, 'Come, arise, the sun is shining broadly in the heavens now, and you are losing your chance; come, stand up; take up thy bed and walk'. That is how Christ comforted people. He said, 'What are you lying there for? rise, and go'. You say, 'Well, if that is possible, I will try'—and to try is to succeed. Faith is the great miracle-worker.—Joseph Parker, *City Temple Pulpit*, vol. v. p. 232.

THE BUILDING GOD

'God . . . will build.'—Psalm lxix. 35.

It is like Him, from all that we can gather concerning Him from His holy Word. God will put things together, God will give them shape and meaning; God will turn prose into poetry, and earth into heaven. He who built all things is God. But man builds? Yes, in a secondary and remote and very temporary manner. Against all man's building there lies this great testimony, Except the Lord build the house their labour is lost that build it. Distinguish between the outside and the inside of these edifications. Do not be content with the outside, the mechanical and architectural; these ought to be only signs and symbols of great temples and unmeasured heavens. What a lesson is this for the little human builder and the little human architect! He builds his cathedral, and at the top there is just room enough for the birds to halt upon it. It is a poor roof. Yet how many mistake a roof for the sky—the true roof, the firmament blue, starful, abiding. How many people are there who really know the difference between a ceiling and the sky? Even in brick-building and stone-building it is perfectly true, religiously and metaphysically true, that except the Lord build the wall it will fall and crumble back into the dust that was handled atheistically. Nature is on the side of her God. God is architect, and God is builder, and He is building all things on a plan. That is the difference between the building of ignorance and the building of omniscience; between the last and abiding building, and that which is but momentary in its uses. Recall the ideal.

I. Let us hear this colloquy. 'Thou shalt build an altar unto the Lord' (Deut xxvii. 5). That is the human side. 'The Lord doth build up Jerusalem' (Ps. cxlvii. 2). Thus saith man, thus God; and when the man speaks only as the agent of God it is as if God Himself were speaking, then the building is sure to be good, secure, and immovable. Many have taken to altar-building who were not called from God.

'The Lord doth build up Jerusalem,' and that is what He is doing all the time; it is Jerusalem He is building, the city of peace, the city of loveliness, the earthly metropolis that symbolizes a heavenly city. He is a long time about it; even God cannot be fast, rapid; He must work according to something that is in Himself, and would if it were possible be before Himself.

II. 'My son,' said one in the old days, 'build the house of the Lord thy God' (1 Chron. xxii. 11).

God takes notice of our building. Sometimes He may, speaking after the manner of men, smile at some of our brick-pile, bricks we have bought, wooden bricks that we shape into little things on the parlour table; and sometimes He burns to see them. He says, 'They shall build, but I will throw down' (Mal. i. 4). There are some winds too high for building in; the very winds seem to come and throw down our scaffolding and the shell of our temple. I wonder what such winds are. Where do all the winds come from? How quiet nature can be!—how tempestuous! It is the same nature; what if it be the same God, and that be the reason of it!

III. Building that has no meaning must be a great disappointment to the builder. 'Jerusalem is builded as a city that is compact together' (Ps. cxxii. 3)—built as a city that has meaning, built as a city that represents an ideal, built as a co-operative city, one part co-operating with another, answering another, supplementing another. No harum-scarum Jerusalem can God build. He made man, and He made him in His own image. He is still making man. Do not think that man-making work is done. Man advances a little century by century, so little we have no compasses fine enough to measure the progress.

IV. Only those who are right can build. Remember, that this is the Christian position. You can alter it if you please, and take all the consequences. 'Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid.' Think of man excelling God, finding a better foundation, quarrying the earth until he has found a nobler stone for holding the edifice of humanity. 'Built up in our most holy faith.' The Christian education is a process of building; the process is called by the significant name 'edification'.—Joseph Parker, *City Temple Pulpit*, vol. v. p. 271.

References.—LXIX. 35.—J. Parker, *City Temple Pulpit*, vol. v. p. 271. LXIX.—*International Critical Commentary*, vol. ii. p. 113. LXX. 5.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xvii. No. 1018. LXX.—*International Critical Commentary*, vol. ii. p. 124. LXXI. 9.—J. Baldwin Brown, *Old Testament Outlines*, p. 121. LXXI. 15.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons on Passages of the Psalms*, p. 198.

GOING IN THE STRENGTH OF THE LORD

'I will go in the strength of the Lord.'—Psalm lxxi. 16.

This is one of the longest texts in the Bible. In its application it covers an indefinite period of time. The way to write this text is to put a few asterisks after the first three words, 'I will go'. Asterisks, as you know, are used in books to signify a lapse of time. They denote that there is a space of time—days, or it may be years—between the story that comes before them and the story that follows them. So, I say, we need asterisks in this text. There is sometimes a long stretch of years between 'I will go' and 'in the strength of the Lord'. There is often a lapse of time ere the first and last of this verse meet, 'I' and 'the Lord'. Divinity is not always the first resource of humanity. Often it is its last resource. Men do not learn all at once to take God into their reckonings when they make their plans and forecast their endeavours. Some never learn that. And however the world may judge them, however it may congratulate them and envy them, whatever the fashion of their earthly fortunes, they are the failures—the real and final failures; and the day comes when they know that this is so.

I. 'I will go.' That is often the whole text in lips of inexperience. Oh the wild strong will of youth! Oh the omnipotence of those early determinations! Oh the finality of those early decisions! 'I will go in mine own strength. It is enough, and it will never fail me.' But oh, how tired the feet grow! and how far away the blue mountains ever are; and the journey grows greater and the pilgrim's strength less every day. And it may be there comes a day when the traveller can go no farther, all the strength of love and hope and enthusiasm expended. And there is nothing for it but despair or divinity. The soul finds God or it finds nothing. Life becomes a tragic failure or a triumph of faith.

II. But supposing that instead of thinking about the way itself, we begin to think about the end of the way. Instead of thinking about the difficulty of life, let us think about the destiny of life. 'I will go in mine own strength.' Yes, but where will you go? What is to be your destination? You may have health and skill to work, and the brain to think, and the heart to make many friends; and if the end of life were just to become a skilled workman, a clever student, or a social success—why you might do that 'on your own'.

But when you come to understand that you are here in the world to make a saint, to find some of the meaning of the immortal ideas of beauty, truth, goodness, sacrifice, and to develop and cherish in your heart that love that loves for love's sake, unrepelled by ugliness, unchilled by indifference, undaunted by malice—why, then, I say, you are face to face with something that strikes through your self-confidence and drives home into your soul a sense of your insufficiency for life as it was meant to be lived. 'I will go.' Say no more than that if you are only going to the market to make the best of a few bargains, and to the social circle to get the good word of a few friends. But that is not life. That is not finding your destination; that is missing the way, and any one with neither genius nor industry can do that.

III. Look at the things that give meaning and value and immortality to life. People sometimes say to youth, 'The world is at your feet'. But that is not true unless heaven is in your heart. Look out beyond the brief ambitions, the trivial honours, the cheap victories, and the spurious gains of earth, and behold—oh, so far beyond them all!—the stainless light shining from the towers and pinnacles of the city of God. And know that if ever you are to come to the gates of that city, it must be by winning a victory compared with which every temporal achievement is but child's play.—P. Ainsworth, *The Pilgrim Church*, p. 210.

References.—LXXI.—*International Critical Commentary*, vol. ii. p. 124. LXXII. 2.—Archbishop Alexander, *Royalty and Loyalty*, No. iv. LXXII. 3.—W. L. Watkinson, *The Ashes of Roses*, p. 118. C. D. Bell, *Hills that Bring Peace*, p. 3. LXXII. 6.—H. J. Bevis, *Sermons*, p. 243. J. Keble, *Sermons for Christmas and Epiphany*, p. 268. LXXII. 10, 11.—G. Huntington, *Sermons for Holy Seasons*, p. 43. LXXII. 12-14.—J. Monro-Gibson, *A Strong City*, p. 213. LXXII. 16.—M. G. Pearse, *Sermons to Children*, p. 67. LXXII. 17.—A. Miller, *American Pulpit of To-day*, p. 55. J. Bannerman, *Sermons*, p. 236. LXXII. 19.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. iii. No. 129. LXXII.—*International Critical Commentary*, vol. ii. p. 131.

MISSIONS: GROWTH OF THE KINGDOM

Psalm lxxii.

The outlook seems dubious when we see (1) but a 'handful' of corn, (2) and that 'in the earth'—one handful for a whole world, (3) and some on the top of the mountains. But it is reassuring when we know (1) that it *is* corn—God's good wheat, (2) that even on the top of the mountains its fruit shakes like Lebanon. What will it be in the richer valleys? What were the words of Jesus but a handful of corn, and that upon the top of the mountains? But it is the only seed that can produce its harvest in every land, in every corner of the world.

UNTIL I WENT INTO THE SANCTUARY

'Then thought I to understand this: but it was too hard for me, until I went into the sanctuary of God: then understood I the end of these men.'—Psalm lxxiii. 15, 16 (P.B.).

The difficulty of the writer of the Psalm is a very old difficulty, and yet it seems to us to be perpetually new. Think what it was that troubled him. What was his difficulty? 'I was envious when I saw the ungodly in such prosperity. They come in no misfortune like other men, neither are they plagued like other folk.' At what period of the world's history, in what spot of the universe, are the echoes of that question not still heard? The inequality of things. Up starts the question before us, the problem of suffering, the mystery of evil, the strange impossibility of reconciling the two sides of life—here is the difficulty which perplexed him. I venture to think that

there is no thoughtful person but, if he ever thinks at all about human life, this strange, tangled medley will sometimes say, and say it almost in despair, 'I thought to understand this; but it was too hard for me'.

And what is the solution? Is there any solution? The solution is this: 'It was too hard for me until I went into the sanctuary of God'. What does he mean? How did it help him, and how may it help us?

I. In the sanctuary there came to him the thought of God. The whole place was full of it. How did that help him in the perplexities that troubled him? Think for a moment what the real difficulty was. It was not a difficulty of his mind; it was a difficulty of his conscience. It was not an intellectual difficulty; it was a moral difficulty. 'Until I went into the sanctuary.' Of course, in the simplest sense, he meant he went into the place where they were accustomed to go to lay down the burdens of their lives, that which made churchgoing to those old Jews such a beautiful reality, so different from much of the formal conventional churchgoing to-day. He went into the sanctuary. It was the natural place to go to. But, I think, it meant something more than that. It was not merely the place, but that to which the whole place witnessed. It was the thought of God, the consciousness of God, and the consciousness of God meant the consciousness of purpose. Could it be otherwise? To believe in God is surely of necessity to believe in His purpose. To say the opening words of the Creed, 'I believe in God,' is to believe that there is no tangle, no puzzle, no labyrinth. It is only that we have not yet discovered the clue, God has not yet placed it in our hands. We can afford to wait if there is something to wait for.

II. In the sanctuary he discovered himself. I suppose there is no thoughtful person but has often and often echoed that question, What am I? What is that thing I call myself? What does it denote, and what does it involve? What am I? My body—is that myself? At first sight there seems to be so much to be said for it because my body is so intertwined with my soul, that if I am tired I cannot pray; if I am in pain I can hardly think. At first sight my body seems to be myself. But somebody says, 'No, your self is the changeless part of you, and your body changes'. The body of to-day is a very different thing from the body of twenty years ago. My mind, then—is that myself? And again the answer comes, 'No. Your thoughts, your feelings, your opinions, they are not what they were ten years ago.' But your self remains unchanged. In the sanctuary of God I discovered myself. Why? Because the whole of the sanctuary, and the worship of the sanctuary, and every detail of the worship is based upon the assumption that I am more than body and more than mind, that I am a deathless spirit, and that I cannot live by bread alone.

III. 'Until I went into the sanctuary.' Because, in the sanctuary, he discovered something else. He discovered the influence of worship. There is a strange reflex influence in all acts of devotion. When the Lord Jesus prayed, He was transfigured; so when a man prays, he is bringing a strange influence, morally and spiritually, upon his being, and he rises up from the act of prayer as the Lord rose from His prayer, a stronger, calmer, braver man. And so it is also with the influence of worship. In days like these, when life is so anxious, more especially to men; when business is so exacting; when a right judgment is so important; when a prompt, almost instantaneous, decision is so frequently demanded, it is pathetically sad that some of the very men who want the power most should cut themselves off from the calming influences of the House of God, where for aught they know they might be able to say as Asaph said: 'It was too hard for me, life was too anxious, business was too exacting, disappointments were too overwhelming, until I went into the sanctuary of God'.

IV. And lastly. 'Until I went into the sanctuary; then understood I.' Because, in the sanctuary, he discovered another truth. In the sanctuary of God he found the truth of the consecration of himself to God. The whole place spoke of consecration separated for the worship of God; every holy vessel set apart; the priest consecrated to God's service. The whole place was full of the consecration of things and of life to God. Is there a more tremendously important truth than that for us to try and write upon our hearts?

GOD THE SOLE DELIGHT OF THE ELECT

'Whom have I in heaven but Thee? and there is none on earth that I desire beside Thee.'—PSALM LXXIII. 24.

THIS Psalm gives the embodiment of the deepest, innermost, and most primary life of the soul; where thought is not, but the life is reduced to the ultimate facts of spiritual consciousness, the certain premises of spiritual thought, the knowledge of self and the knowledge of God.

I. The soul that aspires to contemplate the ways of Providence is met by a difficulty at the outset. God's ways are not as our ways, His gifts to men are not proportioned, as we should have proportioned them, to their deserts, and this difficulty, which is stated at the beginning of the Psalm, is not solved, in a final and universal way, in any part of it; it is solved only to the satisfaction of the Psalmist himself, with just the hint at the intellectual solution that God's judgment in the world to come will remedy what now seems to be defects.

II. When the question of God's just government has once been satisfactorily explained, the soul cares no more for the details of the explanation; she only desires to prostrate herself before Him and confess her weakness and His surpassing glory. In communion with Him, even such unequal communion as she feels to be the best she deserves, she is strengthened and ennobled, and rests and is comforted.

III. 'Nevertheless I am always by Thee; for Thou hast holden me by my right hand.' In this

sublime selfishness, if we are to call it so, he is content to stay; he forgets all others. He can do without the glory until God's own time shall come for giving it; the guidance of God's counsel may last as long as He shall please, so that only it be not taken away. And now we shall see in what sense his religion is selfish, and in what sense not. It is selfish so far, and so far only, as all love may be said to be selfish. It seeks its own delight, but a delight that is not found in self, or in its own prize or possessions, but only in loving and being loved by Another.

IV. I am afraid that this ardent all-absorbing personal love for their Lord is not, as a matter of fact, the prevailing feeling and the keenest desire of Christians in their thoughts of the other world. What is it that people of our time most fondly think of, and exult in most, when they think that God has given them a right to expect admission into heaven? Is it not generally, not union with God, but reunion with their earthly friends, or with God's servants whom they have revered that have gone before them? And sometimes people's thoughts of heaven take a yet lower form—lower, more selfish in the evil sense; they look forward to a blessedness that consists not in realized love for another, but in mere personal enjoyment and possession; and fancy heaven only a more perfect earth, with all earth's enjoyments that are not plainly sinful or casual.

Now until we are able to have nothing and desire nothing but God, we are not fit for heaven. If we would have the happiness that we seek, we must receive it in God's form, and seek it in His way, by disinterested love for Him and our brethren, not schemes for our own personal exaltation even in things spiritual. What we have to do is to go out of ourselves, not out into the world, but into God; to leave a self-centred selfish desire for happiness, and seek His will and His kingdom; only by that the truest happiness will be found.—W. H. Simcox, *The Cessation of Prophecy*, p. 178.

Psalm lxxiii.

After the defeat of Montcontour, as they were carrying Coligny off the field, nearly suffocated by the blood of three wounds pouring into his closed visor, an old friend, who was being carried wounded beside him, repeated the first verse of this Psalm—

Si est ce que Dieu est très doux.

'Truly God is good to Israel.' The historian adds: 'That great captain confessed afterwards that this short word refreshed him, and put him in the way of good thoughts and firm resolutions for the future'. If the whole Psalm is read, it will be seen to be singularly suited to such an emergency; and so well were the Psalms then known, that the first verse called up the whole.—John Ker.

THE CUP IN THE HAND OF THE LORD

'In the hand of the Lord there is a cup, and the wine is red; it is full mixed, and He poureth out of the same.'—Psalm lxxv. 8.

What is the cup of the Lord in my text? What is the cup of salvation in another Psalm? What is the cup of blessing in St. Paul? Are there two different cups? Are we to distinguish between the cup which Christ drained and the cup which He blessed? Are we to divide the Passion from the Eucharist? Good Friday from Maundy Thursday? no, we are not to divide them. The two are one. The Eucharist is the communion of the Passion. The power of the Passion is the power of the Eucharist.

I. Those who enter into the devout communicant life have found the secret of joy, for they have the life of Christ. But they are also self-consecrated to suffering; for the life of Christ is a dying life; His joy is wrung out of the heart of sorrow. They are dedicated to fellowship in His sufferings, that their fellowship in His glory may be real. This is the dominant conception of the Passion-narrative in St. John. We are not to look upon Good Friday simply as a defeat followed by a victory. The victory was won in and through suffering; it did not simply come after it. All this is in the cup which our Saviour drained, and which He gives us to drink. The red wine with which the cup of the Lord is full mixed, and which He poureth out for us, is His blood. Blood—the symbol of life, not of death; but of life poured out, consecrated by dying.

II. What does this challenge mean to us, dropping metaphor and mysticism? 'Can ye drink of the cup that I shall drink of?' We know that we must answer, We can, unless we prefer to say that we have neither part nor lot in the life and death of Jesus Christ. But what is involved in our acceptance of the challenge? We are able, at anyrate we wish to try—to do what? Surely the cup is the burden of human sorrow and human sin—the accumulated results of all the errors and vices and crimes that poor humanity commits every day. A bitter draught it is; 'Thou hast given us a drink of deadly wine' we might say when it is put before us. Jesus Christ was willing to drain it—as an act of love, and as an act of obedience. He took up the burden of frail humanity. He let it crush Him and by so doing He conquered it. That is the claim, the challenge, that Christ makes to us. We cannot tell what He will require of us, it may be much or it may be little; but have we the spirit of love and the spirit of obedience, in which as I have said, Christ Himself lived and died for man? If we have we may answer humbly but confidently, 'We are able'; for our great Captain will set us no impossible tasks.

III. You will see now why the cup which our blessed Lord drained and the cup which He blessed are one and the same cup. It is the cup of communion, of brotherhood; the cup of kindness which pledges us to bear each other's burdens instead of shifting our own; and it is the cup of the red wine poured out, the precious life-blood freely given, the living sacrifice, holy and acceptable unto God.—W. R. Inge, *All Saints' Sermons*, p. 153.

Reference.—LXXV.—*International Critical Commentary*, vol. ii. p. 160.

THE OLD TESTAMENT A HISTORY OF THE JEWS

'In Jewry is God known: His name is great in Israel.'—Psalm lxxvi. 1.

We call the Jews a people. What does this mean? It generally means a number of persons bound together by three things: by having one blood, one language, one land. Other bonds may usually come in, such as one set of customs, one law, one government, one religion. But the three I have mentioned are the most constant.

I. First one blood. The Jews mixed wonderfully little with other people till quite late in history, and the family feeling was part of their religion. One of the names by which they are called is 'The Children of Israel'. Generation after generation was thus taught to look back to the first beginnings of the people. It lifted them out of base and earthly things. It carried them half-way to God. For God Himself was likewise known to them in the same form. Declaring Himself as the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, He brought Himself near to them through their recollections of their forefathers.

II. Secondly, a people is held together by speaking one language. This bond of language the Jews possessed. Almost from the first it became intermixed with their thoughts about God. First the memory of His Commandments as written on the Tables of stone or spoken by the lips of Moses, then the possession of holy books, the short beginnings of a Bible, led them to feel that their common speech was not merely the necessary means of conversing with each other on the things of everyday life, but also supplied the outward form in which God spoke to their fathers and to them.

III. Again, men are made one people by dwelling in one land. And such was Judea or Jewry, the land of Israel to the Jews, the children of Israel. The affection which they bore it was one of the most powerful ties which helped them to feel that they were indeed one at times when other causes were tearing them asunder. God saw fit that for their sins they should be carried away prisoners into a strange land, and there they seemed ready to be scattered away and leave no traces on the face of the earth, till in due time part of them obtained leave to return to their own country, and then once more the people rose out of the dust. Their entrance into it was marked by wonderful signs of God's presence and favour, and He taught them to look on continuance upon its sacred soil as the highest earthly blessing, the best reward for those who obeyed His laws.

IV. We have now considered the three chief signs which mark a people in the proper sense of the word, and which the Bible shows to have marked the ancient people of God, the Jews. So far they were in a great measure like other peoples, old and new. The difference was that God made Himself known to no other people. That is what renders their history a treasure of the highest and best instruction to us; not a mere subject of curiosity for those who have time and opportunity to busy themselves about things that happened so very long ago, but a possession meant for the use of every one of us.—**J. F. A. Hort**, *Sermons on the Books of the Bible*, p. 13.

References.—LXXVI. 3.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xiv. No. 791. LXXVI. 5.—S. Baring-Gould, *The Preacher's Pocket*, p. 119.

'Thou art of more honour and might than the hills of the robbers.'—Psalm lxxvi. 4 (Prayer Book Version).

Charles Kingsley had a special love for this Psalm. When sailing up the Rhine, and looking on the ruined strongholds of the old freebooters, he writes: 'How strange that my favourite Psalm about the hills of the robbers (hills of prey) should have come in course the very day I went up the Rhine!'—**John Ker.**

THE DIVINE COERCION OF EVIL

'Surely the wrath of man shall praise Thee: the remainder of wrath shalt Thou restrain.'—Psalm lxxvi. 10.

Let us note for our consolation and encouragement the two precious truths expressed by the text—the Divine restraint of evil, and the Divine compulsion of evil to issues of good and blessing. For, whatever the variations in the interpretation of the original by the great scholars, this is substantially the significance of the passage before us.

I. The Divine Restraint of Evil.—'The remainder of wrath shalt Thou restrain.' The mighty army of Sennacherib, splendidly equipped, full of fury and confidence, suddenly and mysteriously melted away under the power of Jehovah, leaving Jerusalem intact and joyful; and the permanent significance of this event is, that no weapon formed against the kingdom of God shall finally prosper, that every conspiracy in a critical hour shall be brought to nought.

1. In nature we see abounding examples of the fact that limits are fixed to the destructive forces, limits they may not transgress. There is a benign law, a delicately poised balance, a sovereign virtue, an antiseptic quality, in the very constitution of things, which keeps the destructive elements within bounds, and preserves the world a theatre of life, sweetness, health, and beauty. And as the snake is in the grass, the hawk in the sky, the poison-plant in the woods, so the octopus, alligator, and shark infest the waters; yet the protective law operates there also, sheltering whatsoever passeth through the depths of the seas.

Evil is full of boasting; it is insolent, mocking, rampant, apparently irresistible; it threatens to occupy the whole sphere—annihilating all that is good, soiling whatever is beautiful, quenching in darkness whatever is joyous; yet somehow it breaks off unaccountably where and when we did not expect it to break off, not having wrought nearly the mischief that seemed inevitable. 'Fear ye not Me? saith the Lord: will ye not tremble at My presence which have placed the sand for the bound of the sea by a perpetual decree, that it cannot pass it; and, though the waves thereof toss themselves, yet can they not

prevail; though they roar, yet can they not pass over it?'

2. If in nature these gracious limits are imposed on the genius of destruction, let us be assured that stern circumscriptions restrain moral evil and render impossible its triumph.

II. The Divine Compulsion of Evil.—'Surely the wrath of man shall praise Thee.' Not merely restrained, but coerced to most desirable issues. Not only is Zion saved from evil, she is served by it. The peoples of the earth, the estranged heathen peoples, through their defeats and humiliations, are to attain to true insight and reverence. The most furious and the most enraged are to come to the thankful acknowledgment of God. Such is the significance of the closing strophe of this Psalm. The rage of kings and peoples is overruled to the glory of the Church of God and to the ultimate salvation of the revolters.

Let us, however, be clear as to what is exactly meant by evil working good. We must remember that evil is evil, not good in the making, not undeveloped good. Essential evil is the deliberate contradiction of the Divine will, the positive violation of the Divine law, programme, design, the clash of God's will and the creature's. And, secondly, that good is never brought out of evil—that is impossible. When it is affirmed that evil works for good, we mean that God so antagonizes wicked men, vile institutions, and malign movements, that in the final result they develop the good they threaten to destroy. The selfishness, pride, and licence of the world are made to work its purification.

Let us not be overpowered by the vision of the power of evil. Whatever is done against us in our personal life by the injustice of men or the maliciousness of demons shall, whilst we remain faithful, work for our final gain. What is the moral of the book of Job but the subordination of alien wrath to the profit of the saint? From a great fight of unmerited affliction we see the patriarch emerge more rich and powerful than when the storm burst upon him, and with a deepened experience that must have given to his restored prosperity tenfold interest and satisfaction. The government of God extorted from the malice of hell splendid spoils in which Job was arrayed. So now with every loyal child of God. '*All* things work together for good to them that love God.'—W. L. Watkinson, *The Fatal Barter*, pp. 62-76.

References.—LXXVI. 11.—Parker, *City Temple Pulpit*, vol. i. p. 218. W. G. Bryan, *Seven Sermons on the Sacrament*, p. 54. LXXVI. 17.—H. Woodcock, *Sermon Outlines*, p. 72. LXXVI.—*International Critical Commentary*, vol. ii. p. 165. LXXVII. 5.—W. R. Inge, *Faith and Knowledge*, p. 211.

THE PORTAL OF A NEW PERIOD: A NEW YEAR'S SERMON

'I will remember the years of the right hand of the Most High.'—Psalm lxxvii. 10.

The New Year admonishes with a triple exhortation. It bids us think of three tenses and of a threefold progression. We are bidden to reflect on the good old time, to give thanks for the new and better time, and to work for the future time, the best of all.

I. Think of the days of old and of the wonders of the Most High. Gratitude demands such meditation. But such thankfulness for the mercies of the past does not involve discouragement of the conditions of the present. Where should we be to-day if the philosophy of the old pessimists were true? Noble souls of the older times were ever apt to work mournfully on the world of their own day. Bernard of Clairvaux looks back wistfully to the olden time 'when the Apostles cast their nets to catch men, not as we do, to gain gold and silver'. And all sections have thus looked back aspiring to regain the purity of the old days of Christendom.

II. Think devoutly on all the goodness of the grace of God manifested from the days of the Apostles down to the days of your youth, but give thanks for the new, better time which God accords to us. In many an aspect is this indeed the better time. To-day men have begun to realize that Christianity, rightly understood, is the noblest socialism, that is to say, it is the fellowship of love. Men now begin at last to comprehend that humanity is a whole, a corporate unity, a body, and that the unruly, the destitute, yea, even the criminals are members—sick and sad members indeed, but nevertheless members needing care and protection.

III. Thank God for the better, brought about by the grace of Christ, but let us lift up our eyes and our hearts to greet the better time that is still to come. The past, that panorama in which progress and retrogression are alike portrayed, reveals that as the doctrines and teachings of the Divine Man have spread so mankind has been the better, the brighter, the purer, the more humane and thoughtful. It is the sign of the times—it is the happy portent for the future. Work for the future, the best time! It still remains for us to struggle towards that best and to conquer it for our successors, for this better present age is deformed by blots that are dark and saddening. Truly something better than present conditions must be achieved, and let each of us resolve, by word and example, to bring about the desired confirmation. For each individual life great tasks are in prospect.—Paul von Zimmerman, *Homiletic Review*, 1909, vol. lxii. p. 64.

Reference.—LXXVII. 10.—S. Cox, *Expositions* (3rd Series), p. 152.

THE SPELL OF CHRIST

'I will remember the years of the right hand of the Most High. I will remember the works of the Lord.'—Psalm lxxvii. 10, 11.

The Gospels in their narrative simplicity do not as a rule pause to analyse motives, still less to debate and comment upon the fascinations and qualities of Him whom they present. The simple but vivid brevity of the notices will compel from us the thought necessary to interpret them: and in pressing past the excited and thronging multitudes to see how hearts were truly won, we shall be saved from fancying that the main

and central strength of the Gospel then lay in anything but what it lies in now.

I. Among the causes of that strength we shall be both right and reverent if we assign a chief place to what, in other cases, we call personal influence, or the ascendancy of character. At the outset there is record of it usually expressed: 'Jesus increased in favour with man'. With His ministry this became a more definite attraction. The bidding to John and James, to Andrew and Peter, to Philip, to Matthew, to leave all and follow Him implies for its success a strong spell of personal influence, to which the eager, impulsive offers to follow Him whithersoever He went bear a voluntary witness.

II. From the personal influence of a preacher we turn naturally to the influence of His message. In Him the word and the character were not only harmonious: they were one in their effect. Surely nothing was more unique alike in Christ and His teaching than the truth, adequacy, and tenderness of His treatment of sin. In every epistle of the Apostles, in every word of their preaching, and in the convictions of the believers, there appears that intense and vivid conception of the contrast between good and evil, which almost invented for itself a new vocabulary in such words as 'sin' and 'holiness'.

III. It is sometimes alleged that the prominence thus given to sin is an artificial and conventional thing. To such a challenge Christian teaching can, I think, give no answer but a direct contradiction, and an appeal to fact, as such fact, inward and moral, can be interpreted by the sincere and humble-hearted, and by them alone. The motto of the school of Christ is written by the Master Himself across its portal: 'He that hath ears to hear, let him hear'.—Bishop Talbot, *Oxford University Sermons*, p. 16.

THE SANCTUARY OF GOD

'Thy way, O God, is in the sanctuary.'—Psalm lxxvii. 13.

The sanctuary is the place in which God is known and His truth honoured and spoken.

I. The Enthroned Bible.—There is in Paris an old picture which represents an early Christian assembly, and above it a throne, but on that throne is seated neither king nor bishop. There rests simply an open Bible. In the sanctuary the Word of God is enthroned—the Word written, the Word spoken. In the sanctuary God's nature, character, and creative power are made known.

II. God's Way of Creation.—We hear a great deal about the discoveries of modern science; but the first verse of the Bible, the Book of the sanctuary, outweighs them all. The favourite theory of the day, though it is getting some hard knocks from some of your scientific men, is the theory of evolution; but that theory affirms not the cause, but simply the method of creation. The creative power remains the same whether by a direct act or by the slower process of evolution or development. Of course we are speaking of theistic evolution, for there is an atheistic form which would get life out of matter, instinct out of life, mind out of instinct, and free will out of necessity. There are atheistic evolutionists who will swallow all theories, anything but the sublime declaration of the sanctuary, 'In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth'.

III. God's Way of Providence.—By providence is meant His affectionate care over all that He has made. The universe is a cradle, and the hand of the Father—the Mother God—rocks it and all things here are to serve His children. He has placed all things under laws, and these laws are cruel only to those who are too ignorant or too careless to obey them. You say these laws are immutable, that they roll along relentlessly. But we should remember that these laws are also controllable. Who is the wise man? Why the man who subjugates these laws not by violating them, but by harvesting them and using them.

IV. The Indwelling Spirit.—There is also the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. The holy man must be followed by the Holy Ghost. He is the great revealer. He is within our hearts directing the current of our thoughts towards the pure, the spiritual, the heavenly. He so pure yet seeing our impurity dwelling within, moulding and fashioning that He may behold in us His fruits of purity and love. Thus we have in the sanctuary God's way made known as the Creator, Preserver, Redeemer, and Sanctifier. The Church exists to promote man's welfare everywhere. It is the way of the highest instruction, it is the way of consolation.—Hugh Johnston, *Christian World Pulpit*, No. 1868, p. 120.

Reference.—LXXVII. 13.—H. Melvill, *Sermons*, vol. ii. p. 297.

THE HIGHWAY IN THE SEA

'Thy way is in the sea.'—Psalm lxxvii. 19.

Doubtless when the Psalmist penned our text his first thought was the crossing of the Red Sea. He was seeking to revive his drooping heart by recalling the saving power of God in Israel's past. Thy way is the sea—were there not glimpses in that of truths which the Exodus never could exhaust? So did the writer feel—so must we all feel—and it is on some of these suggestions that I wish to speak.

I. First, then, think of the sea as an object of dread. There were two places above all others dreaded by the Jews. The one was the desert and the other was the sea. The desert—for it was across the desert that these armies came which besieged Jerusalem and pillaged it. And the sea—because it was full of storm and treachery in Jewish eyes; it was the hungry, cruel, insatiable deep. Now comes the voice of the great Jewish singer and says to the people, 'God's way is in the sea'. In the very sphere and element they dread is the path and purpose of divinity. I think we should all do well to learn that lesson—God's way is in the very thing we dread. We love the energy and glow of life; but we dread the silence of death and the cold grave—but the way of the Lord of heaven is in the sea.

II. Again, the sea is the abiding home of mystery.

There is a twofold mystery about the sea—illimitable distance and unfathomed depths. Do you think it is profitless and idle dreaming to see in that a parable of life? The commonest life in the heart of the common crowd is more mysterious than any ocean, and it is its distance and its depths that make it so. It is not the achievements of man which are mysterious: it is the things which man never can achieve, and which he yet longs and hopes and hungers for, through century after century of failure. It is the reach of it through death into eternity that encircles with mystery the life of man.

III. Once more, the sea is the element of restlessness. We are not here to be satisfied and rounded. We are here to strive and yearn and toil and pray for things that are too large for threescore years. And in that distressing and yet Divine unrest there is the way and ordering of God. God's way is never in the stagnant pool; His way is ever in the restless sea.

IV. Lastly, I would have you note this about the sea; it is the meeting-place of all the waters. It is not in the things that isolate and part us that the way of God is pre-eminently seen; it is the things that draw us heart to heart; it is in the meeting-place of all the waters. In our sorrows and joys, our hopes and aspirations we are blended like the waters in the sea. And it is there, where we mingle in a common brotherhood, that the seeing eye will find the way of God.—G. H. Morrison, *The Unlighted Lustre*, p. 83.

THE SECRECY OF GOD

'Thy way is in the sea, and Thy path in the great waters, and Thy footsteps are not known.'—Psalm lxxvii. 19.

Men tell us that there are few more impressive sights than that of a burial at sea. It is even more solemn and arresting than the last rites beside an earthly grave. There is the ceasing of the throbbing engines; the gathering of the hushed crowd upon the deck. There is the simple service; the lifting of the body; and then—the plunge into the deep. And it is this element of silent secrecy, this hiding in unfathomable depths, which thrills and solemnizes and subdues. Something like that was in the poet's mind when he said of God, 'Thy way is in the sea'. Mingling with all his other thoughts was this, that God has His unfathomable secrets.

I. Note first some of the spheres in which the Divine secrecy is notable, and we shall think, to begin with, of God's gifts.

1. Think, for example, of the gift of love. In the darkest spot of earth some love is found. There is no man so brutal and so base but some one loves him and thrills at his approach. And yet how silent and how secret love is, hiding itself away from human eye, chary of uttering its depths in language, and speaking in a momentary glance. It is so always with the love of God. God's love is here, bedewing every thorn, shining on every hedge around the home. And yet how secret and hidden it all is—how meaningless to blind or holden eyes—till Christ has come, and showed His wounded side, and led us to the glory of the cross.

2. The same thing also is true of the gift of life. Life is the one impenetrable secret. We have it, and we thank God for it to-night, and yet the wisest knows not what it is.

3. Then once again this element of secrecy is evident in the providence of life. Not with the sound of bell does God arrive, when the feet are at the turning of the ways. Over the silent sea the boat approaches, with some one in it predestined to be ours; but the oars are muffled and we hear it not, as it comes from the haven of the far away. Decked with the broidery of common moments, the moments which are not common reach us. Wearing the aspect of our usual hours, our great hours of destiny arrive.

4. Note the element of secrecy in God's approaching to the soul in grace.

II. The secrecy of God is meant to be a spur to drive us on.

1. There are things that we are better not to hear, and God has the gracious strength to keep a secret. How often have we said in conversation, 'Ah, how I wish you had never told me that!' We can never look with the same eyes again since that one word was whispered in our ear. And we put it from us, and it comes again, and it rises from the dead when we least wish it; and we are meaner, and we are ashamed, just because some one could not keep a secret. There are times when there is strength in speech. There are times when there is strength in silence.

2. The secrecy of God should give us hope. There is hope for the world, and there is hope for men when we can say 'God's footsteps are not known'.

3. The secrecy of God is meant by God to keep us faithful. It is the pattern for our common life. It is given to help us on our daily round. Rarely are we summoned to great deeds. To many of us they never come at all. We are not beckoned along the shining road to anything that might arrest the world. We make our journey by a quiet way, with crosses that are very commonplace, with duties that are ordinary duties, unlustred by any sparkle as of dew. There are blessings in a life like that. When a man is famous his footsteps are well known. He is not the nearer God on that account. From the tiniest violet up to Jesus Christ God moves in quiet and unobtrusive paths. And if it is thus He lavishes His beauty, and makes His infinite sacrifice of love, *we* can be very near Him in our calling.—G. H. Morrison, *The Return of the Angels*, p. 45.

References.—LXXVII. 19.—A. P. Stanley, *Sermons on Special Occasions*, p. 340. C. J. Vaughan, *Memorials of Harrow Sundays*, p. 116. LXXVII.—*International Critical Commentary*, vol. ii. p. 172. LXXVIII. 5-7.—H. M. Butler, *Harrow School Sermons* (2nd Series), p. 238.

MEMORY, HOPE, AND EFFORT
(A New Year's Sermon)

'That they might set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep His commandments.'—PSALM LXXVIII. 7.

IN its original application this verse is simply a statement of God's purpose in giving to Israel the Law, and such a history of deliverance. So, then, the words may permissibly bear the application which I purpose to make of them in this sermon, re-echoing only the thoughts which the season has already, I suppose, more or less, suggested to most of us. Though every day be a New Year's Day, still the alteration in our dates and our calendars should set us all thinking of that continued lapse of the mysterious thing—the creature of our own minds—which we call time.

I. Let us associate God with memory by thankful remembrance. I suppose that there are very few of the faculties of our nature which we more seldom try to regulate by Christian principles than that great power which we have of looking backwards. The one thing that all parts of our nature need is God, and that is as true about our power of remembrance as it is about any other part of our being. The past is then hallowed, noble, and yields its highest results and most blessed fruits for us when we link it closely with Him. The past should be regarded by each of us as it is, in deed and in truth, one long record of what God has done for us. Such an exercise of grateful God-recognizing remembrance will deliver us from the abuses of that great power by which so many of us turn our memories into a cause of weakness, if not of sin.

(*a*) There are people, and we are all tempted to be of the number, who look back upon the past and see nothing there but themselves, their own cleverness, their own success; burning incense to their own net, and sacrificing to their own drag.

(*b*) Another mood leads us to look back into the past dolefully and disappointedly, to say, 'I have broken down so often. I may as well give it all up.' Never! If only we will look back to God we shall be able to look forward to a perfect self.

(*c*) There are others to whom remembrance is mainly a gloating over old sins. Alas! for the man whose memory is but the paler portraiture of past sins. You may find a refuge from that curse of remembrance in remembering God.

(*d*) Some of us unwisely, and ungratefully, live in the light of departed blessings, so as to have no hearts either for present mercies or for present duties—for all these the remedy is that we should not forget the works of God, but see Him everywhere filling the past.

II. Let us live in the future by hope in Him, our remembrances and our hopes are closely connected. Hope owes to memory the pigments with which it paints, the canvas on which it paints, and the objects which it portrays there. But in all our earthly hopes there is a feeling of uncertainty which brings alarm as well as expectation. But if, according to my text, we set our hopes in God, then we shall have a certainty absolute.

III. Let us live in the present by strenuous obedience. After all memory and hope are meant to fit us for work in the flying moment. Both should impel us to this keeping of the commandments of God; for both yield motives which should incline us thereto. If my memory weakens me for present work, either because it depresses my hope of success, or because it saddens me with the remembrance of departed blessings, then it is a curse and not a good. And if I dream myself away in any future, and forget the exigencies of the imperative and swiftly passing moment, then the faculty of hope, too, is a curse and a weakening.—A. MACLAREN, *Christ's Musts*, p. 118.

REFERENCES.—LXXVIII. 9.—S. Baring-Gould, *Village Preaching for a Year*, vol. i. p. 9. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xii. No. 696. LXXVIII. 10.—J. Baines, *Sermons*, p. 113.

DRINK FROM THE DEPTHS

'He gave them drink as out of the great depths.'—PSALM LXXVIII. 15.

THE Psalmist is here reviewing the providence of God that sustained the children of Israel in the desert. That providence had made a deep impression on him, and he delights to dwell upon its wonders. Take, for example, the water from the rock of which the Psalmist is speaking in our text. It comes to him in a flash as the great wonder of it that God gave them drink out of the great depths. What the people came for is a draught of water, and God in His mercy gives them their desire. On that thought I wish to dwell—carrying it through some of the activities of God.

I. Think then for a moment of the world of nature as it unfolds itself in all its beauty round us. There is not a bird or beast, there is not a tree or flower, but is ministered to in the way our text describes. I take the tiniest weed that roots among the stones, the flower in the crannied wall of which the poet speaks, and I ask what does it need to live? It needs a little warmth; it needs an occasional moistening with rain. Now in a certain measure this is true, but you can never stop there in this mysterious universe. Try to explain the light that a rose needs, and you are carried into the depths of solar energy.

II. Again, think of our senses for a moment, think of our sight and hearing for examples. To one man, as to the Peter Bell of Wordsworth, a primrose is just a primrose and no more. To another in the meanest flower that blows there are thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears. Or two men listen to a piece of music and one as he listens is profoundly stirred by it; yet play that piece before another, and it is sound and fury, signifying nothing. So at the back of every sense we have there is a deep that you can never fathom.

III. Again let us think of God's ways in providence in the ordering and discipline of our lives. One of the lessons we learn as we grow older is that our discipline is not exceptional. It is not by exceptional providences that we live. It is not by exceptional

joys we are enriched. It is by sorrows that are as old as man, by joys that are common, as the wind is common that breathes on the meanest street.

IV. Then think again for a moment of the Bible. Now there is one thing that always arrests me in the Bible. It is that the Bible is such an ancient book and yet is so intensely modern and practical. There is not a problem you are called to face, there is not a burden you are forced to bear, but your strength for it all shall be as the strength of ten if you make a daily companion of your Bible. It gives us a drink out of the great depths.

V. Then, lastly, think for a moment upon Jesus—of Jesus in relation to His words. If ever words were as water to a thirsty world, surely it was the words that Jesus spake. That is why the words of Christ will live even when heaven and earth have passed away. You can exhaust the cup, or drain the goblet dry, but you cannot exhaust the spring fed from the depths.—G. H. Morrison, *The Wings of the Morning*, p. 198.

MISTRUST THAT DESTROYS

'A fire was kindled against Jacob, and anger also went up against Israel; because they believed not God, and trusted not in His salvation.'—Psalm lxxviii. 21, 22.

I. Unbelief is malignant when it is a product of the flesh and its tyrannous appetites. Of that we have an instructive example in the text. That was not a guiding angel, a ministering presence, a guardian providence altogether to their minds, which brought them through the depths of the sea and forgot coupons for the banquets that should have been arranged for them at different stages of their journey. In the midst of their toils and privations the fretful descendants of Abraham were having the best possible training for prowess, sovereignty, full salvation.

II. There are men who are unbelievers because their vanity has been vexed and their ambition thwarted, and in the scheme of things which would win them faith and approval, others must needs be found bowing at their feet. God's programme of life and salvation differs from ours, and this tempts us to be unbelieving. Some of us make it a condition of the trust God asks from us that we shall first get all we want.

III. Another sign of malignant unbelief is that it thwarted men in working out the appointed problems of life and salvation. The mind trained to methods of historical research is exasperated to contempt by the uncritical methods of pietists who do not grasp the human part in revelation, and the Bible is despised because of the narrowness and illiteracy of some good Christians who honour it. The man needs our richest pity over whom, for any of these reasons, the Bible has lost its authority. Very often it happens that the unbelief we have cultivated so far afield, we bring back into the circle of our common duties, and find ourselves torn, disheartened, disabled in the presence of providential tasks which lie ready to our hands. That is where the condemnation begins. The unbelief which is malignant, kindling a fire against Jacob and wrath against Israel, is that which reduces men to the level of the brute before the lofty calls and solemn problems of daily life.

IV. The unbelief is malignant which impeaches a God who is in the very act of proving His covenant friendship with us and leading us forth into freedom, privilege, blessedness. The unbelief which affronts God is that which denies His personal sovereignty over us and impugns His gracious ministry in our lives. We are not dealing merely with the history of effete religions, and our mistrust is not the epitaph penned by a distempered soul for the tomb of a departed God. Our vaunted doubt is an affront to a living Benefactor, a stab at the warm love that is ever brooding over us, a gross filial impiety; for the signs that our lives are under constant guidance are as indisputable as those vouchsafed to Israel of old, however much they may differ in form.

V. Unbelief is malignant when the most memorable experiences of our history furnish sufficient warrant for the faith we are required to exercise. God never asks from men an arbitrary and impossible faith, and it will always be found that He has prepared us by the lessons of our previous history for the next heroic act of trust that is required. The demand for faith is culminative, and the longer our experience of His guiding and saving ministry, the greater the obligation that rests on us. The faith God seeks must be achieved first of all in connexion with the problems of our personal life, and when it is achieved there, the stupendous histories and pronouncements of the Bible will no longer cause us to stumble.—T. G. Selby, *The Unheeding God*, p. 42.

SOUL FOOD

'Corn of heaven . . . angels' food.'—Psalm lxxviii. 24, 25.

What do you live upon? How many lives have you? Who is the sustainer of your life? In what direction do you look for daily sustenance? Surely here in these two texts, which are in reality one text, we find exactly what man needs at his best estate—'corn of heaven, angels' food'. Is such sustenance available? Yes. Are there any invitations to partake of this food? Certainly; invitations given as with the blast of trumpets to come and eat, to come buy wine and milk without money and without price.

I. What do we live upon? Here is corn from heaven, here is angels' food, and we may perhaps never touch it. Let it not be supposed that God is responsible for our self-impoverishment; He never meant us to impoverish ourselves, He never meant us to attempt to satisfy our hunger with the husks that the swine do eat.

II. This wonderful Psalm shows the absolute futility of mere miracles. God seems to have worked all His miracles in this 78th Psalm; it is as full of miracles as the Lord's sermons were full of parables. Yet all ended in a deeper atheism; not an atheism as we understand the word, a term emptied of God, but a term so filled with gods as to dethrone God.

These people in the wilderness tempted God to do

another miracle, and then another, and at last miracles became commonplaces to them, ceasing to be miracles and sinking below mere anecdotes or transient circumstances. Let us get back to the idea that God is the sustainer of man, God is the bread-giver; let us go back to our little child-prayer, Give us this day our daily bread. That prayer will do more for the world than atheism has ever done; that prayer will keep the world sweet when many a vain intellectual theory will pervert its imagination and destroy its conscience.

III. 'Corn of heaven, angels' food.' Let the imagery stand for all that it really means. We cannot take out of it the idea that bread and water and honey and locusts and all the old wilderness' fare may be so accepted and utilized as to become as if it were corn of heaven and angels' food. Surely it was angels' food in the most literal sense that Adam ate when he was in the Garden of Eden.

Are we sustained by the living God? Do we live upon God? Do we understand how many kinds of food or elements of sustenance God can give to us? Jesus Christ revealed the great philosophy of living; He said, 'Man shall not live by bread alone'. The meaning is so often mistaken or perverted, as if the passage read, Man must have something more than bread, he must have something to his bread, it will not do to give him mere bread, bare bread. The passage has no such poor drivelling meaning. Here is a great philosophy of sustenance; man shall not live only by bread, as if there were only one way of living, as if there were only one method of keeping man together in his personal identity. God can feed a man on the rocks or in the air or on the sea, away from civilization wholly. When men rightly live in God the world will be at rest, and not until then. There is no way of rightly living in God but through Jesus Christ His Son.—Joseph Parker, *City Temple Pulpit*, vol. II. p. 233.

References.—LXXVIII. 25.—H. Melvill, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 1497, p. 113. LXXVIII. 40.—F. E. Paget, *Helps and Hindrances to the Christian Life*, vol. i. p. 88. LXXVIII. 41.—Archdeacon Wilberforce, *Sanctification by the Truth*, p. 12. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. v. No. 272. LXXVIII.—*International Critical Commentary*, vol. ii. p. 178.

THE GOSPEL PALACES

'He built His sanctuary like high palaces, like the earth which He hath established for ever.'—Psalm lxxviii. 69.

All ye who take part in the building of a church know that you have been admitted to the truest symbol of God's eternity. You have built what may be destined to have no end but in Christ's coming. Cast your thoughts back on the time when our ancient buildings were first reared. Consider the churches all around us; how many generations have passed since stone was put upon stone till the whole edifice was finished! The first movers and instruments of its erection, the minds that planned it, and the limbs that wrought at it, the pious hands that contributed to it, and the holy lips that consecrated it, have long, long ago, been taken away; yet we benefit by their good deed. Does it not seem a very strange thing that *we* should be fed, and lodged, and clothed in spiritual things by persons we never saw or heard of, and who never saw us, or could think of us, hundreds of years ago? Does it not seem strange that men should be able, not merely by acting on others, not by a continued influence carried on through many minds in a long succession, but by one simple and direct act, to come into contact with us, and as if with their own hand to benefit us, who live centuries later? What a visible, palpable specimen this, of the communion of saints! What a privilege thus to be immediately interested in the deeds of our forefathers! And what a call upon us, in like manner, to reach out our own hands towards our posterity! Freely we have received; let us freely give.—J. H. Newman.

THE DIVINE FORGETFULNESS

'O remember not against us former iniquities: let Thy tender mercies speedily prevent (go before) us.'—Psalm lxxix. 8.
'I will forgive their iniquity, and their sins will I remember no more.'—Jeremiah xxxi. 34.

Man's cry and God's answer, that is our subject; man's cry—for pardon, renewal, restoration; God's answer—willingness and power both to forgive and forget.

I. Man's Cry for Pardon.—What is this sense of sin that pursues man so persistently, and of which the cry of the Psalmist is a proof that we can neither get away from it nor forget it without help from above? It is at once a proof of man's grandeur and of his impotence. God and Nature seen at strife within us. That which we should be and might have been rises upon us in clear tormenting vision; then that which we are gives this the lie and torments us still more. And so that strange sentiment, or experience, or quality of our nature rises in power within us—remorse, which is the feeling engendered by the changelessness of an ill-spent past, in whole or in part. Memory may sleep, but it never dies. We can bear many memories if we think they are our own, safely locked up in our bosoms. But there is another consciousness than our own, other than that of the whole human race; a consciousness universal as being, pure and retentive as the light, holy as holiness itself can be; which holds all that ever was, that has ever happened to us and within us, in its unfailing, unfading grasp, and which never forgets. It is the thought of this tremendous cosmic memory which is the ultimate bar of judgment at which all good and evil must receive their verdict, the ultimate correction of an easy-going optimism as regards the issue of wrongdoing. There is no escape from God's knowledge of the present, nor from His memory of the past.

II. The Transformation of Memory.—We shall not come into any satisfying faith in the forgiveness and forgetfulness of God till we realize that all reality of sin remains and must remain for ever; and yet that forgiveness and forgetfulness are both real. The Cross of Christ is the furthermost point in the journey of heavenly love in seeking to bring back the lost;

a love that bent all the Divine attributes (like the earth under the stresses that carry it round the sun) into a perfect circle of reconciliation. And so when man, recognizing this miracle of atoning love, repents and is reconciled to God as a dear child, the result is a moral forgiveness, which is also a moral forgetfulness.—E. Griffith-Jones.

References.—LXXIX. 15.—J. H. Hitchens, *Catholic Sermons*, vol. ii. p. 73. LXXIX.—*International Critical Commentary*, vol. ii. p. 197. LXXX. 1.—J. Parsons, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 1702, p. 655.

THE MIGHTINESS OF REDEMPTION

'Stir up Thy strength, and come and help us.'—Psalm lxxx. 2.

The greatest of all helps to realize the magnitude of redemption is the experimental sense, the unwrought consciousness of 'the exceeding sinfulness of sin'. Take this for an axiom. He thinks lightly of the greatness of redemption who thinks lightly of the power of sin. He regards Jesus as a superfluous helper who regards Satan as a contemptible foe. The two spiritual conceptions are co-equal, correlative. It is when like David we cry out, 'Innumerable troubles are come about me: my sins have taken such hold upon me that I am not able to look up,' that like David also, we stretch out our hands to our mighty Succourer, and feel the force of the prayer which may often have passed our lips before, 'O Lord, let it be Thy pleasure to deliver me: make haste, O Lord, to help me. Thou art my Helper and Redeemer; make no long tarrying, O my God.'

I. I refuse to limit the great work of redemption to what is called, in the language of popular theology, 'the saving of the soul'. Wherever sin in its remotest consequences has reached, there Christ's work reaches also. We do a fatal injury, as it seems to me, to the work of redemption, as a practical human idea, when we disconnect it, as some are fond of doing, from the temporal and even the material interests of mankind. It is my full belief that the Cross of Christ has done, proportionately to the matter on which it works, as much for us in this world as it will do in the next. The 'Kingdom of Heaven' in the idea of its great founder began with St. John's baptism—runs its first course in this lower world—throws its light on 'life' as well as on immortality. For the law of the kingdom of God is progress—development—of the species, speaking generally; and of the individual, too, where it has free course and is not frustrated. It works more effectually in the nobler parts of our nature; in the spirit than in the soul; in the soul than in the body. But there is nothing in human nature that is too high to need it, too low to be susceptible of its influence. Even 'our vile bodies' are to be changed into the 'likeness of Christ's glorious body' according to the working whereby He 'is able to subdue all things unto Himself'. The fullness of spiritual discernment—the great gift of heaven first; sanctification, that which now worketh in us mightily, next; but 'the redemption of the body' also has its place in the scale of regeneration, though the quickening spirit of the last Adam has not yet swallowed up death in the completeness of His victory.

II. It is no reflection on the Divine power that in this or that instance it may seem to us to have failed in its purpose or to have wrought out its end by imperfect or even evil agencies. For to us is committed the scarcely less wonderful power of antagonism; we worms of the earth can frustrate as regards ourselves—ay, and as regards others—'the grace of God'. It is the inexplicable mystery of human free will, concurrent with Divine omnipotence. And if the treachery of a Judas, or the malice of a Caiaphas, or the moral weakness of a Pilate, or the fickleness of an ignorant crowd, were really agencies in the salvation of the world, what can we do but admire the resources of that omnipotence which by a Divine alchemy can transmute human evil into human good, and vindicate its sovereignty even by submitting to the use of base instrumentalities, and, like the light of the blessed sun, can pass through the foulest media, clouded perhaps, and robbed of some of its brightness, but yet uncontaminated and undefiled.—J. Fraser, *University and Other Sermons*, p. 248.

References.—LXXX. 14.—C. Perren, *Revival Sermons*, p. 185. LXXX.—*International Critical Commentary*, vol. ii. p. 201.

THE PREPARATION FOR A RELIGIOUS LIFE

'Quicken us, and we will call upon Thy name.'—Psalm lxxx. 18.

I. This is a singular prayer from the worldly point of view. The common notion is that religion is a dulling process—a cooling down of the pulses of life. We speak of the yielding to temptation as fast living, and we blame for it what we call the ardour of youth. When a man begins to think seriously, we say that he has sobered down, grown mellow, abated in the fire of early years. All this implies one idea—that seriousness of life is a deadening of life. The Psalmist takes exactly the opposite view, 'Quicken us, and we will call upon Thy name'. To him religion is not a dulling, but a vivifying process—a process which does not diminish but which increases the heart's ardour, which does not retard but which accelerate the pulses of the being. He would suggest that to become religious a man needs, not less life, but more, not a narrowing but an enlargement of the stream.

II. It is generally supposed that when we begin to live in God we must subside in our life for the world. The Psalmist, on the contrary, says that before religion can dawn there must be a natural vivifying of the worldly powers, 'Quicken us, and we will call upon Thy name'. Religion in the heart is made the result of intensified natural life. And I think it will be found that the Psalmist is right. For what is the prevailing cause of irreligion? I say 'irreligion'—not 'doubt,' for doubt is a form of religious seriousness. What, I ask, is the prevailing cause of irreligion? It is indifference; and what is indifference? Is it

not simply deadness—want of interest in the things of life. If you would make a religious man serious, you must quicken his pulse to the objects around him. It is this quickening of the pulse that the irreligious man resists. It is to resist intense feeling about worldly things that he flies from flower to flower of pleasure, deadening his appetite as he goes. It is to resist intense feeling about worldly things that he rests not in any spot, however green, but changes his place each hour lest he should read its solemnity. It is by veiling my sight of earth that I lose my sight of heaven.—G. Matheson, *Messages of Hope*, p. 233.

References.—LXXX. 19.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. v. p. 384.

CONSECRATION AND EXPECTATION

'Hear, O My people, and I will testify unto thee,' etc.—Psalm lxxxi. 8-10.

I. The duty of religion flows directly from the fact of God. Wherever God is acknowledged there religion is obligatory. To us then who admit that there is a God of whom we know something religion cannot be optional. God is, and it is our duty to honour and obey Him. Full obedience, then, is one fundamental element of religion, as it is brought before us in our text. We might find a ground for demanding obedience to God further back than any special experience of God's redemptive working. A sufficient stringency of duty arises, for instance, from the relation of the creature to the Creator. The demand that we should perfectly obey and wholly consecrate ourselves to the Lord our God comes to us as it did to Israel. Nor can we pretend to have complied faithfully with it. Under the uniformity of our worship our fickleness has been every whit as real as that of Israel long ago. Might not an impartial observer conclude that we worshipped at least two Gods? A God of this world six days and a God of the world to come, whom we seek to placate, on the odd seventh day, with no great earnestness, by certain acts of worship of no long duration? The truth is that we fail in the fundamental element of religion which I have called obedience, unless we do all things, week-day and Sunday, to the glory of the only God. There is an interesting parallel between us and the Israelites. As Israel traced its origin to God's redemptive grace working by Moses, so we may trace the origin of our Christian Church to God's redemptive grace working by Christ.

II. We pass now to the second element of religion which our text gives us—the element of expectation. We fail in this duty of expectancy as much as in the duty of obedience. A large expectation is as much a duty as a complete consecration. The religion of redemption is emphatically the religion of hope. Our prayers disappoint us, not because we ask more than we had a right to expect, but because we ask too little. If we ask of the greater things we shall get all we need of the less. All sin is unreasonable, but no sin has so little to say for itself as the sin of those who profess to lament their failure, and yet refuse to admit those words of salvation which are ever sounding in their ears, and which, if believed, would make all things new.—P. J. Maclagan, *The Gospel View of Things*, p. 187.

References.—LXXXI.—*International Critical Commentary*, vol. ii. p. 209. LXXXI. 12, 13.—Bishop Harvey Goodwin, *Parish Sermons* (2nd Series), p. 50. LXXXII. 8.—F. D. Maurice, *Sermons*, vol. iii. p. 1. LXXXII.—*International Critical Commentary*, vol. ii. p. 214. LXXXIII. 3.—J. T. Stannard, *The Divine Humanity*, p. 141. LXXXIII. 16.—J. Keble, *Sermons from Lent to Passiontide*, pp. 23, 34.—LXXXIII.—*International Critical Commentary*, vol. ii. p. 217.

Psalm lxxxiv.

Foxe, in his *Book of Martyrs*, under the year 1554, in the reign of Queen Mary, gives an account of the youthful martyr. It is taken from his brother's narration. 'He suffered with great constancy, and recited the 84th Psalm as he was a-dying. Then there was a gentleman who said, "I pray God have mercy upon his soul". The people said, "Amen, Amen". Immediately fire was made. Then William cast his Psalter right into his brother's hand, who said, "William, think on the holy passion of Christ, and be not afraid of death!" And William answered, "I am not afraid". Then, lifting up his hands to heaven, he said, "Lord, Lord, Lord, receive my spirit"; and, casting down his head again into the smothering smoke, he yielded up his life for the truth, sealing it with his blood to the praise of God.'—John Keb.

DELIGHT IN GOD'S HOUSE

'How amiable are Thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts.'—Psalm lxxxiv. 1.

The utterance of a Hebrew exile who is cut off from the privileges of worship and sacrifice on Mount Zion. The Psalmist prays that he, though distant, may share the blessing of those who can enter the holy place of the tabernacles of the Most High. And thus the close of the Psalm suggests that grace and glory are not altogether confined to the temple courts.

I. Even in the Old Testament no local sanctuary has a monopoly of the Divine Presence. And in the New Testament we realize that the Most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands. It has seemed easy and natural for Christians to chant this Psalm, referring it to the services of the Christian Church. Nevertheless we must distinguish and discriminate in our application of its phrases, and interpret them in the clear light of the argument of the Epistle to the Hebrews: 'Ye are come unto Mount Zion, unto the heavenly Jerusalem'.

II. It may even be questioned whether Christians should call any earthly building 'the House of God'. God's house for each individual man is just the place where he finds himself at home with God: 'any place where God grants the vision, where God lets down the ladder'.

III. Yet this expresses only part of the total truth. Christianity is supremely a fellowship, and we realize the living God in the fellowship of His children. It is among the gathered company of believers that

Christ manifests His real presence, and fulfils His promise to their corporate and collective faith.—T. H. Darlow, *The Upward Calling*, p. 232.

THE HOUSE OF GOD

'How amiable are Thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts!'—Psalm lxxxiv. 1.

This is the language of love, and in this brief sentence is forcibly expressed the royal Psalmist's impassioned love for God, through the medium of His recognized abode.

I. The Object.—'Tabernacles' signifies places of temporary rather than of fixed or permanent abode; and in this is implied the evanescent, short-lived nature of the race, and all that belongs to sublunary existence.

II. The Special Significance of this Appellation.—The advantages such Divine favour affords:—

(*a*) As a source of comfort and rejoicing.

(*b*) As essential to faith, faithfulness, and success.

III. The House of God as a Blessed Reality.—The powers of darkness foiled, and victory on Israel's side.

CHRISTIAN WORSHIP

'How amiable are Thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts.'—Psalm lxxxiv. 1.

This Psalm was written evidently under circumstances of some deep sorrow or anxiety which had caused absence, and that a constrained absence, from the tabernacles of the Lord. The Psalm further describes the going up of the pilgrims of Zion to the Temple of Jerusalem, and the increasing blessing that they felt in communion with one another, journeying all toward Jerusalem.

I. What is the position of affairs as appertaining to the interpretation of this Psalm? There was private worship then as now. Many of the Scriptures of the Old Testament enforced that duty; and there is public worship now as there was then, with all the Old Testament lessons carried forward, and all the New Testament lessons adding on their special edification and example.

II. In the New Testament the great rubric of public worship is this, 'Wheresoever two or three are gathered together in My name,' says Christ, 'there am I in their midst'. And we have this additional command in the words of the Apostle, 'Forsaking not the assembling yourselves together as the manner of some is'. We urge these things because of two classes of men: (*a*) First because of the careless and the thoughtless who think they can live, but know that they cannot die, without the means of grace, and who seldom if ever attend the house of God. (*b*) Another class consists of some amongst our own selves who are so spiritual in their own mind, or in their own understanding of themselves, that they have no sympathy for those that are without, despise anything like material or concrete methods for conducting the worship of God, and esteem buildings, systems, forms, and all externals as nothing worth at all. In enforcing upon the careless and the thoughtless the important duty of public worship, you include the importance of private worship; because those persons who neglect public worship are almost sure to neglect private worship too; whereas, those that attend private worship are those that most value and appreciate the public worship of God in the communion of His people.

III. In the dispensation of the Spirit in which we now live amid all the spiritual demands of the New Testament Church, God still has appointed and approved of the outward and the visible means of grace. Is it by dreams and visions that God makes known His mind to us? No, but by His holy word which is a book—a book, a tangible, real, genuine, veritable book, so far external as to be a book printed on paper, and printed with ink, just as other books are, and that is the way in which God communicates whatever of His mind we have ever attained.

References.—LXXXIV. 1.—R. D. B. Rawnsley, *Sermons in Country Churches* (3rd Series), p. 293. LXXXIV. 1, 2.—C. Bradley, *Faithful Teaching*, p. 116. LXXXIV. 3.—Spurgeon, *My Sermon Notes—Genesis to Proverbs*, p. 154. LXXXIV. 6.—P. Brooks, *The Mystery of Iniquity*, p. 18. Spurgeon, *Morning by Morning*, p. 257. LXXXIV. 7.—J. Keble, *Village Sermons on the Baptismal Service*, p. 301. H. M. Butler, *Harrow School Sermons* (2nd Series), p. 230.

THE GLORIOUS LAMP OF HEAVEN

'The Lord God is a sun.'—Psalm lxxxiv. 11.

I. The progress of our life is not unlike the progress of astronomy. We all begin in one way or other by making this earth on which we dwell the centre. The strange thing is that while this remains the centre, for us as for the astronomers much is dark. A thousand problems baffle our inquiry, and a thousand questions are answered by a cry. But the day comes—and it comes to every man—when he has his choice of being a Copernicus. He has his choice of making the great refusal, or of making the grandest of all discoveries, for the greatest discovery a man can make is that God is the centre of the system.

II. How beneficent is the power of the sun, and yet from what a vast distance it is exercised. I am sure that most of us have been oppressed at times by the thought of a distant God. Like Job we have looked to the right hand and He was not there, and to the left and have seen nothing of His form, until under the weight of thoughts like these the distance of the Almighty Father chills us, and we cannot pray with realizing power nor can we walk with realizing faith. Tempted and tried thus let us recall our text: 'The Lord God is a shield—He is a sun'. Wherever His Throne be, in distances illimitable, shall He be outmatched in power by His creature?

III. Without the atmosphere the sun could never bless us. May I not use that mystery of nature to illuminate a kindred mystery of grace? It is one of the ways of God in all His workings to grant His blessings through an intermediary. Christ is the mediator of the better covenant. Through Him the sunshine of heaven's love can reach us and in the rays

of that sunshine we are blessed.—G. H. Morrison, *The Unlighted Lustre*, p. 65.

Psalm lxxxiv. 11.

'No good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly.' When Thomas Carlyle was leaving, in doubt and despondency, his quiet mountain home at Craigenputtock for the untried tumult of London, he quoted part of this verse for comfort to his brother Alexander and himself, but mingled it with the words of another passage, Romans viii. 28.—J. K.

References.—LXXXIV. 11.—R. S. Candlish, *Sonship and Brotherhood of Believers*, pp. 66, 79. LXXXIV. 11, 12.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxviii. No. 1699. LXXXIV. 12.—H. P. Wright, *Preacher's Magazine*, vol. xix. p. 80. LXXXIV.—*International Critical Commentary*, vol. ii. p. 224. E. Johnson, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxv. p. 75.

THE PRAYER OF A PATRIOT

'Wilt Thou not revive us again, that Thy people may rejoice in Thee?'—Psalm lxxxv. 6.

An old commentator has summed up the purport of this Psalm in the following words: 'The prayer of a patriot for his afflicted country, in which he pleads God's former mercies and by faith foresees better days'. Such a Psalm reminds us, first of all, that a good Christian must be a good patriot, ardently concerned for the truest welfare of his own people and his native land. Moreover, it suggests that we may appropriate to this England of ours in a modified yet real and profound sense the sacred word which applied originally to Israel.

I. This Psalm, with the reiterated stress which it lays on the pardon of man's sin and the turning away of God's wrath, reminds us of one truth which Christian workers never dare forget. The first and the supreme need of men is their need to be forgiven. In the eyes of the Apostles the world seemed divided into two great classes, the forgiven and the unforgiven. Compared with this ultimate distinction nothing else seriously matters. While we strive for social betterment and take counsel together over plans and efforts to cure the evils which afflict our land, let us give due place to that Divine remedy which implicitly includes the rest.

II. Wilt Thou not quicken us again? We implore Him who is the Lord and Giver of life to revive among us that life of the spirit which is so apt to be stifled and deadened by the pressure of the world. Nothing can give thoughtful Englishmen greater concern than the decay of high ideals alike in the politics and the literature of the nation. And in the Church itself, while we raise vast sums of money and multiply our religious machinery, do we not grow painfully aware of a certain dearth and poverty of spiritual passion which can only be reinspired and rekindled from above?

III. We note finally this test and touchstone of a real revival. It fills Christians with new joy and delight in God Himself. As the Holy Ghost comes upon us and the power of the Highest overshadows us the Church breaks out in a fresh Magnificat, and sings: 'My spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour'. And the Church becomes the irresistible missionary when it can chant that victorious song.—T. H. Darlow, *The Upward Calling*, p. 134.

References.—LXXXV. 6.—C. Perren, *Revival Sermons*, p. 271. J. Vaughan, *Fifty Sermons* (10th Series), p. 210. J. Kerry, *A Book of Lay Sermons*, p. 161. LXXXV. 9.—E. Bickersteth, *Thoughts in Past Years*, p. 283.

Psalm lxxxv. 10.

'Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other,' was the text of Dr. Thomas Goodwin, the great Independent divine, at the opening of Parliament, 27 January, 1659, when Richard Cromwell was installed as Protector. The sermon is a reasonable plea for liberty of conscience, and an exhortation to unity and peace—seed cast on stormy waters, not to be found till after many days.—J. K.

Reference.—LXXXV. 11.—P. Brooks, *The Law of Growth*, p. 20.

THE TRUE OUTLOOK FOR FAITH

'Righteousness shall go before Him.'—Psalm lxxxv. 13.

I. Why should the Psalmist say that God's righteousness goes before Him; why should he not have written, 'His righteousness will be seen as He is passing by'? Because this latter would not be true. It is not as God passes that His righteousness is seen. The idea I take to be that we cannot expect to understand the goodness of God until His plan has been unfolded. We feel His action to-day; we shall only learn its wisdom to-morrow. We see the storing of vegetable matter in the depths of the earth; we say, 'To what purpose is this waste?' By and by it is dug up for coal; it becomes the source of household fires and the means of swift locomotion. We find that in its buried state it has been waiting to be the minister to human civilization, and we say to God, 'Thou hast understood my thoughts afar off—Thou hast made provision in advance'. We see a man of great powers immured in a wilderness; we say again, 'To what purpose is this waste?' By and by the wilderness becomes a thoroughfare, and the solitude is broken. We find that in his buried state the man has been waiting for the hour of a great destiny, and we cry to God, 'The completed years have praised Thee'. We see the Priest of human souls crucified by the world; we say once more, 'To what purpose is this waste?' By and by that Cross becomes His glory, His kingdom, His crown. We find that in His buried state He has redeemed the world, and we cry to God, 'The fullness of the time has justified Thee'.

II. In all these acts the righteousness of God has gone before Him. It has not been seen while He was passing by. The thing seen was something apparently adverse to God—something which seemed to derogate from His providence. But the object present to the Divine eye was always the future. It rested not on the buried vegetation but on the

coming coalfield, not on the deserted place but on the desert made populous, not on the death in humiliation but on the days when such humiliation should be deemed the climax of glory. To see the righteousness of God you must see Him by to-morrow's light.—G. MATHESON, *Messages of Hope*, p. 93.

A PATTERN OF PRAYER

'Bow down Thine ear, O Lord, hear me,' etc.—PSALM LXXXVI. 1-5.

THE prayer that springs from a deep-felt need, and will not cease till that need is supplied, may say the same things over a hundred times, and yet they shall not be vain.

I. The Invocations. In general, this Psalm is remarkable for its frequent use of the Divine names. In almost every verse they recur, and their frequency gives us a vivid impression of earnestness, of consciousness of need, and of faith so sore pressed that it could only sustain itself by perpetual renewal of its grasp of God. Five times in these verses of our text does he invoke Him, and that by three several names—Jehovah, my God, Lord. These three sacred names have each a distinct meaning when used in prayer; they bring up various aspects of the character of God as the basis of our confidence, and the ground of our petitions. So, then, when we blend all these together, it is as if the Psalmist had said: 'The ever living, the covenant Jehovah, my God in whom I claim a personal interest, who loves me with an individualizing love, and cares for me with a specific care, the absolute monarch and sovereign of the whole universe is He to whom I come with my supplication. I think of His names, I trust in them, I present them to Him, whom they all but partially declare; and I ask Him—for His own name's sake, because of what He is and hath declared Himself to be, to hear my poor cry, to answer my imperfect faith, to show Himself yet once again that which His name hath from old proclaimed Him to be.'

II. So much then for the invocation, and now a word or two in reference to the petitions which these verses give us. As I have said, they are all substantially the same, and yet they so vary as to suggest how familiar all the aspects of the deliverance that the Psalmist desires were to him. The way in which God's mercy is to guard and save is left, with meek patience, to God's decision. No sorrow is so crushing and hopeless but that happiness may again visit the heart where trust and love abide. Only let us remember that this Psalm seeks for joy, where it seeks for help, not from earthly sources, but from God.

III. Finally, we have to consider the pleas on which these petitions are based. The logic of prayer here is very remarkable and beautiful. Every feature of the Psalmist's condition and character, as well as all that he knows of God, becomes in his life a reason with God for granting his prayer. The human side of the relation between God and His servant is further urged in the subsequent claims which refer to the Psalmist's longings and efforts after fellowship with God. It is His own mercy in Christ which we present. It is the work of His own love which we bring as our plea.—A. MACLAREN, *Sermons Preached in Manchester*, vol. III. p. 257.

REFERENCE.—LXXXVI. 9.—J. Wordsworth, 'The One Religion,' *Bampton Lectures*, 1881, p. 1.

RELIGIOUS CONCENTRATION

'Unite my heart to fear Thy name.'—PSALM LXXXVI. 11.

To a writer of such broad sympathies as the Psalmist, the doctrine of the Divine unity suggests a prophetic picture of the gathering together of all nations for God's worship. From the north and the south, the east and the west, he sees many races flowing together with one consent and bowing reverently before the Lord God of Israel. And as he contemplates the glory of the coming days he longs to realize an earnest of its peace in his own undivided consecration to God.

I. Various powers belong to us between which no true bond of coherence makes itself felt. Our minds seem to have suffered dismemberment, and we watch ourselves discharging God's service with little bits of our being only. There can be no complete oneness of character till we adopt the Psalmist's prayer and persevere till it is answered.

(*a*) That power of religious concentration for which the Psalmist prays is the just tribute to God's greatness. The worship and service of the Most High must absorb us and will even then be tremendously inadequate.

(*b*) A religion illimitable in the range of its interests demands a service into which all the forces of life gather themselves. Isolated acts of worship do not satisfy the spirit of its requirements. The homage Jehovah seeks is many-sided, including praise, faith, reverence, contemplation, obedience, philanthropy, and consuming love.

II. This united and mutually consistent action of all the powers of the soul is necessary to religious perfecting. Some parts of the nature are more predisposed to God and religious exercise and pursuits than others, but the goal is not reached whilst they act in isolation.

III. What is the difficulty which hinders this unification of all the forces of the nature in the Divine service. It is obvious that the impediment is not deficiencies of intellectual training. The mental powers do not act together in close file at a word of command from the hidden life, and it will be some years before that comes to pass. And this fact has its counterpart in the processes through which the art of religious concentration is attained. If sin had not introduced a fixed discord into man's nature it might still have been needful for him to acquire unity of thought and life by a term in the school of experience.

IV. The grace for which the Psalmist prays is one and the same with the power which sanctifies. Holiness is practical religious concentration, achieved

through the commanding motive of love to God. When the heart is united to fear God's name all social and secular pursuits become indirect forms of worship, binding more closely to God and awakening delight at the thought of His presence.

V. The inevitable set of the human mind is towards concentration, and if we do not acquire the habit for good it will master us for evil. One man's nature specializes itself into the pursuit of pleasure, another's into the acquisition of power, and that of a third into money-getting, divorced even from the satisfaction of spending. It behoves us to see that it is the best within us which becomes dominant, and that this supreme concentration chooses for its processes the things which are pure, lovely, and sacred, rather than the things which are evil.—T. G. Selby, *The God of the Frail*, p. 330.

References.—LXXXVI.—*International Critical Commentary*, vol. ii. p. 235. LXXXVI. 17.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxvi. No. 1559.

THE CITY OF GOD

'Her foundations are upon the holy hills.'—Psalm lxxxvii. 1.

I. It is a remarkable circumstance that the splendid hopes of the Prophets and Psalmist of the Old Testament are always directed to a regenerated society in the future as the greatest blessing of the expected coming of the Messiah. The pious Israelite looked forward to the future of his people, that seed of Abraham which God has chosen for Himself; he did not contemplate his own future apart from theirs. And at times it almost seemed as if the sense of his personal destiny in the world beyond the grave were lost in his conviction of the great destiny of the nation to which he was so proud to belong. So it is with the kingdom of God which was to realize the brightest dreams of the Psalmist. Its blessings are for individual men and women; but they are given to them in virtue of their citizenship in the heavenly kingdom of Jesus Christ our Lord. The New Jerusalem like the Jerusalem of which the Psalmist wrote is the city of God.

II. And therefore surely it is a holy city. That is easy to believe of the Church in heaven; it is not so easy to believe of the Church on earth. For it is the perpetual reproach of Christians that the citizenship which they have inherited is too often despised and abused. We dare not measure the greatness of God's gifts to us His children by the eagerness and loyalty of our response. It is not our feeble faith but God's strong love that has laid the foundations on which this city is built.—J. H. Bernard, *Via Domini*, p. 305.

Reference.—LXXXVII. 2.—G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 249.

THE ANNIVERSARIES KEPT IN HEAVEN

'The Lord shall count, when He writeth up the people, that this man was born in Zion.'—Psalm lxxxvii. 6.

I. I understand the meaning of the passage to be that the anniversaries of the future will be held for the righteous. We observe at present the anniversaries of the intellectually great—of the poet, of the statesman, of the distinguished general, of the scientific discoverer. But without disparaging these, the Psalmist looks forward to a time when the birthdays observed will be on the ground of goodness. We hold the natal days of the heroes of history. What a surprise it would create if it were to be announced that a commemorative service was to be held to keep the centenary of some humble woman historically unknown! And yet it is not too much to say that in the large majority of cases the distinguished have been indebted to the unknown. Many a man who has had his theatre in the world has had his metropolis in the nursery; the crucial hours of his life have been the hours the world never saw—the hours spent at a mother's knee and brightened by a mother's teaching. Many a great thinker has got his wisdom from some obscure schoolmaster 'never heard of half a mile from home'—from one who had all the thought in his soul but just lacked the gift of expression. Many a successful candidate for life's favour has owed his power of endurance to the cheering words of some optimistic Christian who met him at a time of despondency and prevented him from giving in. Many a toiling wrestler for the cure of human disease was first taught to love humanity by witnessing the holy patience of some humble sufferer who bore without repining, who was afflicted and murmured not, who carried the cross and made no sign.

II. The man who has reached the top of the mountain has been stimulated by the cry, 'Excelsior'; but it has been oftener the voice of another than of himself. It has come from the valley, from the place of the lowly, from the scene of the undistinguished. The deeds of silent sacrifice, the homes of humble piety, the acts of covert kindness, the words of unrecorded righteousness, the examples of unpublished purity—these have been the sources of human greatness.—G. Matheson, *Messages of Hope*, p. 7.

References.—LXXXVII. 6.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. vii. No. 382. LXXXVII.—*International Critical Commentary*, vol. ii. p. 239. LXXXVIII. 1, 3.—Archbishop Alexander, *Bampton Lectures*, 1876, p. 133. LXXXVIII. 7.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xix. No. 1090.

'I am afflicted and ready to die from my youth up; while I suffer Thy terrors I am distracted.'—Psalm lxxxviii. 15.

St. John of the Cross in *The Ascent of Mount Carmel* quotes this text in its Latin form: 'Pauper sum ego et in laboribus a juventute mea'. He says that David calls himself poor although it is clear that he was rich, because his will was not set on riches, and so he was in the same state as if he had really been poor. But if he had formerly been actually poor and had not been poor in will, he would not have been truly poor, since the soul was rich and full in appetite.—Obras Espirituales, *San Juan de la Cruz*, vol. i. p. 13.

References.—LXXXVIII. 15, 16.—T. Arnold, *Christian Life; Its Hopes*, p. 106. *Ibid. Sermons*, vol. v. p. 106. LXXXVIII. 18.—C. Vince, *The Unchanging Saviour*, p. 224. LXXXVIII.—*International Critical Commentary*, vol. ii. p. 242. LXXXIX. 11.—W. M. Sinclair, *Words from St. Paul's*, p. 1. LXXXIX. 14.—W. H. H. Murray, *American Pulpit of To-day*, vol. ii. p. 927.

THE JOYFUL SOUND

'Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound: they shall walk, O Lord, in the light of Thy countenance.'—PSALM LXXXIX. 15.

IN these words David speaks of the blessedness of the people that know the joyful sound. Although year by year the sound of the trumpet brightened the hearts of God's chosen people, yet there was one year in which that sound brought them exceeding joy. It was the year of jubilee when on the day of atonement, when all the solemn services of that day were over, there was brought to the suffering and to the poor great joy. At the sound of that trumpet every slave was set free. Yet the words had a deeper meaning even for David; for all through the teaching of that olden time there was an under-current heard by those who had ears to hear, which told them of exceeding joy. It was the hope which was the centre of their life, the great object of their longing, the hope of one who would deliver them from worse than earthly bondage, and restore them to a possession which they had forfeited by their sin.

I. But to us have not these words a deeper meaning still? The joyful sounds that stir our hearts tell us not of a coming salvation but of a Saviour who has come. It speaks to us who through our sins had forfeited the kingdom of our God, and tells us that He, our Saviour, has opened that kingdom of heaven again to all believers.

II. But how many there are to whom this is but an idle tale—an empty, not a joyful sound. They shut out all these thoughts with the absorbing cares and the fleeting pleasures of a perishing world, content to live in a fool's paradise, to dream away the few short years of life, and then wake up to the awful realities of eternity. A thousand-fold more blessed than that careless, godless, reckless worldliness in which so many thousands live and die, is the fiercest agony of a sin-burdened soul, because it opens the heart to hear the joyful sound—the joyful sound which tells that, sinners though we be, and crushed beneath a load of guilt which is insupportable to us, there is one who has died to take away our sins, 'And the Lord hath laid on him the iniquities of us all'.

III. But again there are souls that have been roused to seek after God, who have long since begun the awful struggle against still unconquered sin, who are striving against the principalities and powers that surround them as they seek to fight their way to the open gates of the heavenly city, and whose hearts almost sink and fail within them as temptation comes back again and again, and as through their weakness they fall under temptation's power. Are there any who have known such a blessed unrest as this—such a glorious state of conflict as this—the conflict of an awakened soul against the powers of evil. Is it not a joyful sound that speaks to you from the lips of Jesus? 'My grace is sufficient for thee, my strength is made perfect in weakness. Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.'

IV. But again there are souls that are weary with the long labour and toil and trial of the heavenward road. They are weary of the conflict, long that it were over, yet wondering how or when it shall be. Oh, with all the power of joy comes to such hearts the blessed promise of our Lord and Saviour to all weary souls—'Come unto Me, and I will give you rest'.

REFERENCES.—LXXXIX. 15.—J. Cumming, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 1575, p. 231. Spurgeon, *Old Testament Outlines*, p. 126. LXXXIX. 19.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. i. No. 11. LXXXIX. 19, 20.—G. Trevor, *Types and the Antitype*, p. 125. LXXXIX. 37, 38.—E. H. Gifford, *Voices of the Prophets*, p. 215.

MAN'S NEED OF IMMORTALITY

'Remember how short my time is; wherefore hast Thou made all men in vain?'—PSALM LXXXIX. 47.

I. I WOULD describe this as the earliest Bible cry for immortality. It is a very peculiar cry. It is grounded not upon instinct, but upon reason. It is not a longing founded upon the mere love of life. It is not a desire based upon the mere dread of death. It is not a wish rising from the mere search of new surroundings. It is a cry originating in the spirit of economy—the resistance to waste. The Psalmist is impressed with the inadequacy of the term of human life. He does not mean that it is too short for enjoyment; enjoyment is always taken at a quick draught. But he thinks it too short for the work assigned to it. He sees the labourer hired into the vineyard with orders to perform a certain task. But he finds that the task given to the labourer is one which he could not possibly perform within the limits of the working day. He says, 'What does the Lord of the vineyard mean by this disproportion between work and time, surely He must intend the labour to be continued into another day!'

II. You will find that the deepest cry of all ages has been the Psalmist's cry. What makes us crave a future is not a sense of this world's misery, but a sense of this world's vanity. We say with the Psalmist, 'Wherefore hast Thou made all men in vain—why hast Thou given them working orders which are quite incommensurate with the brief time they have to live on earth?' We feel that there is more furniture to be put into the house than the house will hold. We are prompted to boundless aspirations, and we live on earth for but an hour. We are inspired to endless love, and it never reaches summer. We are bidden by conscience to work for all ages, and we have only three score years and ten. Life's day is too short for us. It is not too short for the bee, which completes its destined palace. It is not too short for the lark, which completes its destined song. But it is too short for man whose ideal is unrealized, whose song is unfinished, whose labour in the field is scarce begun.

III. Therefore, O Lord, I know that this is not my goal. Thou hast furnished me with powers which here can have no adequate exercise. I speak of the ephemeral insect; yet if this life were my all, the insect would not be so ephemeral as I. . . . The insect finishes the work which Thou gavest it to do; I leave my studies incomplete, my book unwritten, my picture

without its closing touch, my house without its topmost story. But it is just my incompleteness that makes my hope. I know Thou wouldst not give me power to be squandered; I know Thou hast appointed for me another day. It is not my fear that cries to Thee; it is my sense of justice and my wish to indicate Thy justice. If earth met all my needs, I would accept the day of death. But earth has not fully responded to any one cry of my spirit as I claim response from Thee. Surely there are answers waiting somewhere to the myriad epistles written by my heart! Forbid that I should think Thou hast made my life in vain.—G. Matheson, *Messages of Hope*, p. 97.

References. — LXXXIX. 47. — G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 21. J. Martineau, *Hours of Thought*, vol. i. p. 203. LXXXIX.—*International Critical Commentary*, vol. ii. p. 250. XC. 1.—C. F. Aked, *Christian World Pulpit*, 1891. p. 10. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. i. No. 46.

Psalm xc.

When we have passed that limit of age which Psalm xc. indicates as the most usual boundary of human life, the near horizons become for us those of the world beyond this present life.—Ernest Naville to the Countess de Gasparin, *La Comtesse Agénor de Gasparin et sa Famille*, p. 426.

Psalm xc. was read by the Rev. J. McCormick over the victims of the great Matterhorn disaster of 1865. The Prayer Book from which it was read was found on the body of the Rev. Charles Hudson, one of the dead. Mr. McCormick wrote: 'Imagine us standing with our bronze-faced guides, leaning on their axes or alpenstocks, around that singular grave, in the centre of a snow-field, perhaps never before trodden by man, with that awful mountain frowning above us, under a cloudless sky— in the very sight, as it were, of the Almighty—and try and catch the sound of the words: "Lord, Thou hast been our refuge from one generation to another. Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever the earth and world were made, Thou art God from everlasting, and world without end. Thou turnest man to destruction: again Thou sayest, Come again, ye children of men."'

THE OLD FAITH — WHAT IS PANTHEISM?

'Lord, Thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations. Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever Thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, Thou art God.'—Psalm xc. 1, 2.

I. Pantheism is the attempt to reduce everything that exists to one vast principle. It sounds very plausible, but it can never get over one great difficulty at the very outset; mind is not matter, nor is matter mind. It is attempting to be too wise, and to forget the limited nature of our thoughts, our minds, our experiences. The earliest philosophers were materialists. They also made the mistake of trying to discover one principle for everything. The earliest Pantheist, on the other hand, was a nephew of Plato who ruled the school of Athens about 350 years before Christ. He thought that all that we mean by God was produced finally out of the long development of nature.

II. Meaning of Pantheism.—Pantheism derives its name from its motto, meaning one and all—that is, everything is God. According to this view God is the universe itself; beyond and outside (and before) the universe He does not exist, but only in the universe. He is the Soul, the Reason, the Spirit of the Universe, and all nature is His body. . . . The main point of Pantheistic belief is that the Soul of the Universe is not a personal, self-conscious Being who appears in His whole power and character in any one event or at any one moment, so as to be conscious of Himself or to make us conscious of Him; but that this Soul of the Universe is nothing but the one ever-same essence, filling everything and shaping everything by an unconscious necessity, unfolded only by the laws which govern everything, but apart from existing things having no reality to be seen or heard.

II. Insuperable Difficulties.—There are insuperable difficulties in Pantheism. The idea of a universal substance which exists without a Creator, by laws which had no author, merely brings us back to the great, ultimate question of all religion and all science —How did these things begin? And the answer of revelation that there is an eternal self-existing Being, who inhabiteth eternity, whom we know by His attributes of law, goodness, power, beauty, love, omnipotence, omnipresence, eternity, light, and truth, and who is known to us in part by His words, is in reality the only reasonable answer that can be given. The Pantheists are apt to insist on the difficulty they allege in conceiving of a Personality that is unlimited. But that difficulty only exists because our own personality is limited, and our experience is confined to our own personality. If we were to confine all theory and all belief to mere personal experience we should find little help in thought or life or conduct. The universal substance of which the Pantheists speak is just as much beyond our own experience. So it is with the eternity of that substance which they proclaim. It is equally beyond our experience to say whether the universe is limited or extends for ever and ever. We are surrounded by mysteries, and we can but rest on that explanation which appears most reasonable and best supported.—W. M. Sinclair, *Church Family Newspaper*, 1907, p. 212.

Reference.—XC. 1, 2.—A. M. Fairbairn, *The City of God*, p. 35.

Psalm xc. 1-4.

These verses are the burial song of the Russian Church.

Dr. Stoughton, describing the funeral of John Hampden, says: 'His remains were conveyed to the churchyard of Great Hampden, close beside the old family mansion, where the patriot had spent so much of his life in the studies and sports of a country gentleman. Through lanes under the beech-covered chalk hills of the Chilterns a detachment of his favourite troops, bareheaded, carried him to his last resting-place—their arms reversed, their drums and

ensigns muffled—mournfully chanting as they slowly marched along the dirge from the book of Psalms: "Lord, Thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations. Thou turnest man to destruction. Thou carriest them away as with a flood; they are as a sleep: in the morning they are like grass which groweth up. In the morning it flourisheth, and groweth up; in the evening it is cut down, and withereth." When the funeral was over, the soldiers retiring from the village church to their quarters made the green woods and the white hills, that summer day, resound to the beautiful prayer, so appropriate to their circumstances, Psalm XLIII.: "Judge me, O God, and plead my cause against an ungodly nation: O deliver me from the deceitful and unjust man. For Thou art the God of my strength: why dost Thou cast me off? Why go I mourning because of the oppression of the enemy? O send out Thy light and Thy truth; let them lead me." John Hampden met his death in June, 1643, in the beginning of the great civil war. He died in prayer, with the words, "O Lord God of hosts! great is Thy mercy; just and holy are Thy dealings unto us sinful men. O Lord, save my bleeding country. Have these realms in Thy special keeping. Lord Jesus, receive my soul! O Lord, save my country; O Lord, be merciful to—" His speech failed, and falling backwards he expired.'

REFERENCES.—XC. 4.—C. Vince, *The Unchanging Saviour*, p. 49. D. Swing, *American Pulpit of To-day*, vol. i. p. 176. XC. 9.—J. Parker, *City Temple Pulpit*, vol. vi. p. 272. R. D. B. Rawnsley, *Sermons in Country Churches* (1st Series), p. 299.

THREESCORE YEARS AND TEN

'The days of our years are threescore years and ten.'—PSALM XC. 10.

THE whole ever-shifting mysterious thing we call life is full of hope and parable and morning; still there is the morning star, that child of hope, that centre and source of infinite light. There is not a heart here in all these multitudes of people that has not been broken or will be broken. Every man is on the way to his own grave; yea, though he be laughing at the graves of others or heeding not that they are passing by him in blackness, the dead that are going to be buried, yet the fool is on the way to his own last freehold.

I. Life is short—yet so long. It is a contradiction in number; it is a paradox in reality. How short our life is! A flash—gone! How long! when will this black-robed procession unwind itself and get around the road and pass the corner that we may not see it any more? Yet life is short; for it is like unto something that is evanescent when it is treated of aright. It is a post among the hills and the valleys; it is a smoke rising up and fading away; a wind that comes for a little time, and then passeth on to blow on other acres and other worlds.

Life is short, therefore I can intermeddle with only a few things, therefore I had better consider which are the truly great and worthy things; therefore I must buy up the opportunity, redeem the time, and make the most of this dower more than gold with which God has blessed my personality. Our greatness is in our consciousness, its largeness, its intelligence, its sanctification; that is how we stand.

II. And not only is life short, but life needs help. The strongest man will say that; however rich a man is, he cannot do without some other man. There are times when it is so dark that even the outputting of the hand is a gospel. Oh to feel a holding hand, a familiar grip! it makes the darkness light, it brings sustenance to the soul. We cannot do without one another. The weakest may help the strongest. Paul said, 'Brethren, pray for us'. There is the mightiest man in the Church asking some man and woman heart to pray for him, when the water is deep and cold and the night so dark. It is a wonderful thing this, that we all need help, if not to-day yet to-morrow.

III. No help that can be given to man is so gracious, so complete, as the help that is given by the Son of God. On these three grounds I stand; millions stand on the same grounds and praise the same Saviour. Jesus Christ comes to us when other people are engaged with the feast and are pledged to the dance and have no time for old sorrow and wordless misery. Jesus Christ says, 'Call upon Me in the day of trouble'; nobody else will want to see you; call upon Me; look in your diary, and you will find the day of trouble is a disengaged day, a vacant line; others will come to you on all the other days, but call upon Me and I will fill up that space for you. Jesus Christ will go where no one else can go.—JOSEPH PARKER, *City Temple Pulpit*, vol. III. p. 136.

THE DYING YEAR

'So teach us to number our days.'—PSALM XC. 12.

THE slow, sad experience of life wrought out in the Psalmist a twofold result—he has learnt the secret both of detachment and attachment. This aged pilgrim grows more and more weaned from the world and detached from things trivial and temporal. Such should be the effect of the right numbering of days and the years as they escape us—to learn at last that though the world passeth away and the lust thereof, yet he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.

I. Like all the greatest spiritual poetry, this Psalm has a deep undertone of remorse and retribution. Which of us can gaze forward into his own future without a sense of judgment to come? And who dare face that future except by humble trust in the miracle of God's reparation and atonement.

II. What does it mean to 'number our days'? It means 'to take the measure of our days as compared with the work to be performed, with the provision to be laid up for eternity, with the preparation to be made for death, with the precaution to be taken against the judgment to come. It is to estimate human life by the purposes to which it should be applied, by the eternity to which it must conduct.' It

means to gauge and test our own career in the light of its moral and spiritual issues. And as God teaches us this we understand the secret of true wisdom. For wisdom lies in a just estimate of the real values of things.—T. H. Darlow, *The Upward Calling*, p. 436.

References.—XC. 12.—H. P. Wright, *Preacher's Magazine*, vol. xix. p. 37. J. E. Vaux, *Sermon Notes* (4th Series), p. 2. XC. 14.—H. S. Wilmot-Buxton, *A Year's Plain Sermons*, p. 413. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. lx. No. 513. J. Bush, *A Memorial*, p. 104.

A MESSAGE OF UNDYING HOPE

'Shew Thy servants Thy work, and their children Thy glory.'
—Psalm xc. 16.

The Psalmist here is looking out over a scene of great disappointment and failure. He sees in his mind's eye human life in its beginning, and in its end. And as he looks out over so much apparent failure his heart fails him. As he looks out and draws near to the end of his reflection on life, he utters the words which prevent despair, for as he looks out upon the failures he looks also beyond, and he knows that the work of God can never fail. He knows that though the work may seem to fail, though one man lives and dies and has apparently wrought but little, there are other hands to take up the work, other voices to deliver the message.

I. No Work for God Fails.—That is the secret of the saints' hope. They have done their work in fear and yet in faith, and they have laid themselves down, conscious that their work cannot fail. We, who reap the fruits of their labours, know at any rate that their toil has not been in vain. In our hand we hold the martyr's robes, red with the blood of the faithful, and stained with the tears of the penitent. We understand as the inspiration of their lives falls upon us that their work is eternal. And so, as we see the glory, as we gather where they have sown, we understand why it is that in the kingdom of God there is no such thing as failure.

II. The Call to Duty.—That is the message of the past; it is not a sentimental reflection on the days which are gone, nor is it a tearful meditation upon things which are gone, but it is rather the call to duty. For if the past is our inspiration, we are the fulfilment of its hopes and desires. The elders in every age are able to resign their tasks because they know that they will not appeal to the younger generation in vain. What answer shall we give them? Shall we not tell those whose days are being numbered that their faith is not misplaced, and that their confidence is sure?

III. A Message of Undying Hope.—And therefore, if the thought of the Psalmist becomes for us our warning and our hope, we of the younger generation do grow impatient as we wait for the day of the Lord. We want to see Him King. We would take Him by force, if need be, as men tried to take Him of old; we want to see Him King in street, in lane, in home, in workshop; we want to see Him King wherever the evil passions of men are rending them as the devil rent them of old; we long with a great longing to-day for the crowning of Christ. The pitiable thing is that the time is so short; we can do so little in the short span of our life. That was indeed a pathetic picture which some years ago took the world by storm. It was the picture of an artist who sat before his unfinished canvas with his brush slipping from his nerveless and dying fingers, conscious that he must pass away before his work was finished. The tragedy and pathos of it was that the time was short, that he would have given his right hand for another year of life, and it was not given to him. That is our feeling, and therefore the message of the Psalmist rings out to-day its cry of eternal and undying hope, because it tells us that our unfinished work shall be finished. It tells us that there is no task which He has set us that God will not complete hereafter; no message that He has bidden us deliver which shall not be uttered in time.

'Let Thy work appear unto Thy servants, and Thy glory unto their children.'—Psalm xc. 16.

This was the favourite text of Bishop Gordon, the pilgrim missionary of the Punjab, who was known as 'the Christian Fakir'. 'We should be thankful,' said this devoted pioneer, 'if the work is ours, so that God's glory is manifest to the next generation.'

References.—XC. 16.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons on Passages of the Psalms*, p. 208. XC. 16, 17.—H. M. Butler, *Harrow School Sermons*, p. 424. G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 241.

WORKING AS UNTO GOD

'And let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us: and establish Thou the work of our hands upon us: yea, the work of our hands establish Thou it.'—Psalm xc. 17.

These are the closing words of a most pathetic Psalm which we have sung in our service this morning. For ages it has been regarded as the poem or prayer of Moses, the man of God. Nor is there any reason to doubt the authorship. For us the Psalm is pathetic, not only because of the circumstances under which it was written, but especially from its place in our burial office. It has been heard by many of us on some of the saddest days of our lives, grandly contrasting the brevity of man's life with the eternity of the being of God, and earnestly pleading, 'Let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us: and establish Thou the work of our hands upon us'.

The words give expression to a prayer, an implication, and a desire.

I. A Prayer.—'Let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us.' Does the petition seem too bold for mortal man, begirt with infirmity and debased by sin? Let us remember the Holy Scriptures themselves encourage and warrant it. Must we ponder the glories of nature, in the crimson of the sunlit sky, the carpet of flowers in a summer wood, the dancing freeness of the waves of ocean, and must we say these are the folds of the skirts of the Most High? We may most truly thus reflect. And yet by this means we should never be able to conceive of the true beauty of the Lord our God. For this consists in the moral excellence of the

Eternal. And, therefore, when the Lord would cause His glory to pass before Moses, He proclaimed the name of the Lord as 'gracious and merciful, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth'. And when we would behold the beauty of the Most High, we need not visit scenes of splendour, we need not wait to behold the blushing morn or crimson even, we need not plant ourselves on some lofty promontory to gaze upon the 'many-smiling face of ocean,' now gentle in its lapping, and again cruel in its rage. Far better shall we apprehend the Divine glory if we contemplate the Man of Sorrows, Who had not where to lay His head, and ponder reverently His truthfulness as before Pontius Pilate He witnessed a good confession; His gentleness as He took the children in His arms, and put His hands upon them and blessed them; His patience as He was speechless before His judge and prayed for His murderers. In these consist the true beauty of God; not in self-assertion, or display, or vindictive wrath. Let young men and young women learn that distinctions of title, accumulations of wealth, even stores of learning, cannot impart to the human character one-half the beauty that comes from truthfulness and gentleness and patience; from the things which are the very beauty of the Lord our God.

II. An Implication.—The text implies that man's time and energies are engrossed by work. The Divine dignity of work is set forth by the Saviour as in magnificent terms He asserts, 'My Father worketh hitherto, and I work'; and again as He reflects, 'I must work the works of Him that sent me while it is day: the night cometh when no man can work'. The simplicity and unity of all work is taught by the Lord's answer to the question, 'What must we do that we may work the works of God?' Instead of elaborating a list of various details, Jesus Christ returned one comprehensive, all-sufficient response: 'This is the work of God, that ye believe on Him Whom He hath sent'. Never let us think of our work as irksome, to be if possible avoided and scamped, a hindrance to our religious life. Rather, whatever the work allotted to us, we must regard it as chosen for us by our God, to be quickened, illumined, glorified by a living faith, and discharged in the name and to the glory of our God. Various, indeed, is the work to which we are called: some to labour with their hands in hard toil; others to toil with their brains in a labour no less irksome; others, again, to the responsible and difficult duty of the administration of wealth; others, once more, to the hardest of all toil, in the patient endurance of sickness and of pain. But, whatever the toil allotted to us, in the faith of Christ it is to be undertaken, and in that faith completed.

III. A Desire.—But, as we think of work, thus simple in its motive and aim, yet ever varied in its details, does not one earnest yearning fill our spirits? Though we may be but ordinary persons with only average abilities and opportunities, yet does not one question thrill us with a chilling anxiety? Our work, at which we have toiled so unsparingly year after year, what will be its end, its climax; will all be swallowed in a sea of nothings? Alas! from many a quarter the answer might seem to offer no brighter prospect. Look where we will in the narrow circles of our families and towns, or the larger view of nations and empires, one law of change seems everywhere triumphant. And yet the Hebrew Psalmist encourages us to express one of the deepest longings of our nature in the prayer, 'Establish the work of our hands upon us'. Nor is the prayer too bold or fruitless. For while the dreams and toils of earth and of selfishness must vanish and be engulfed, the work done in the name and for the sake of Christ, though it be but the gift of a cup of water, shall live on in its influence and its recompense. It makes all the difference in the world whether we work merely because of custom, through necessity, or consciously for Jesus, because of His Cross and love. Such faith saves our work from being monotonous or irksome, it makes it not in vain in the Lord, a building which will endure even though it be tried by fire.

GOD'S INNER CIRCLE

'He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.'—PSALM XCI. 1.

THIS wonderful Psalm has always been a favourite with the mystic and quietist. For it expresses what we may call the Beatitude of the Inner Circle. Most religions have distinguished carefully between the rank and file of the faithful, and that select company of initiates who taste the hidden wisdom and have access to the secret shrine. From the nature of the case some such distinction exists even in the kingdom of heaven. Christ Himself allowed a difference between 'His own friends' and those many disciples who are servants still. Only we must never forget on what this difference depends. . . . The Father who is Lord of heaven and earth has seen good to hide His secrets from the wise and prudent, and to reveal them unto babes.

I. As we recognize the reality of this Inner Circle of souls enlightened and initiated, these verses suggest some signs and tokens which characterize those who not merely wear their Lord's livery, but are actual courtiers in the palace of the Great King. We may say that they are more at home with God than other Christians, and they are also more alone with God. These dwellers in the secret place of the Most High are like children at home there, who have received the Spirit whereby they say always, 'Abba—that is, Father'.

II. Such spiritual intimacy requires a spiritual privacy as well. To come close to God means not merely to be withdrawn from the noise and glare of the world, but also to be embraced in that shadow with which the uncreated height softens His glory to our eyes. For those who are thus brought near to their Father in heaven, there rises a strange delight in remembering the Divine Omnipotence. They exult in His power and might, His majesty and dominion.

III. And thus it comes to pass that the self-same attributes of God which daunt and repel us at a dis-

tance, are transformed into our very shelter and joy when once He covers us with His feathers. 'Thou shalt not be afraid.' No promise is oftener repeated and ratified to the childlike soul. Those who belong to God's Inner Circle bear on their countenances the seal that they are quiet from fear of evil, that they have gained the victory over terror and dismay.

IV. In God's Inner Circle the childlike spirit is made one with the will and the love of the Almighty Father. And herein lies our security and refuge against whatsoever may await us in this world or in any other.—T. H. Darlow, *The Upward Calling*, p. 38.

References.—XCI. 1.—J. Vaughan, *Fifty Sermons* (9th Series), p. 134. W. L. Watkinson, *The Ashes of Roses*, p. 114. XCI. 1, 2.—R. S. Candlish, *The Gospel of Forgiveness*, p. 227. XCI. 1, 16.—E. H. Bickersteth, *Thoughts in Past Years*, p. 247. XCI. 2.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxii. No. 1297. XCI. 3.—*Ibid.* vol. iii. No. 124. XCI. 3.—Spurgeon, *Morning by Morning*, p. 24. XCI. 4.—C. Bosanquet, *Tender Grass for the Lambs*, p. 16. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xv. No. 902. XCI. 5.—*Ibid. Evening by Evening*, p. 113. XCI.—*International Critical Commentary*, vol. ii. p. 278.

THE PERILS OF THE MIDDLE-AGED

'The destruction that wasteth at noonday.'—Psalm xci. 6.

The noonday of life is the time of middle age, when the morning freshness of youth has passed away. And so the destruction that wasteth at the noonday may be referred to the peculiar temptations of the period.

I. One of the features of middle age is this—that by that time a man has found his life-work. Now with this settlement into a single task there generally comes a certain happiness. But just here arises one danger of that period—it lies in the contraction of the manhood to the one groove in which the life-work runs. Absorbed in the business on which his living hangs a man contracts into a business man. No matter how successful a man be, if he is impoverished and contracted by success, then in the sight of God he is in peril of the destruction that wasteth at noonday. Faced then by that peril how may we hope to overcome it? One way is to have some lively interest out of the single line of the career. But there is something better. It is the thought that there once moved on earth a man who was perfect in the whole range of manhood. That is the value of fellowship with Christ in an age when specialism is inevitable.

II. One of the perils of the noonday is the deadening of faith. In middle age there is neither the stimulus of youth nor of age to lead a man to trust in the unseen. Youth has its dangers, but the sins of the middle age, though not so patent, may be more deadly, for they lead to that encrustation of the spirit which the Bible calls the hardening of the heart.

III. But not only is middle age the time when we are in peril of losing faith in God. It is also very notably the time when we are in danger of losing faith in man. We see how different men are from our dreams. The vision we had of them is rudely shattered, and with the shattering there goes our faith. Some men it makes utterly hard-hearted; others it makes tolerantly cynical. There is but one help in that temptation—it is to remember that though He knew the worst, Christ never for one hour lost faith in man.—G. H. Morrison, *The Wings of the Morning*, p. 131.

THE REFUGE OF THE DEVOUT SOUL

'Because thou hast made the Lord, which is my refuge, even the Most High, thy habitation; there shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling.'—Psalm xci. 9, 10.

I. We have here the cry of the devout soul. This cry of the soul recognizing God as its asylum and home comes in response to a revelation of God's blessing and to large words of promise. So the words of my text, 'Thou art my refuge' are the best answer of the devout soul to the plain words of Divine promise. This cry of the devout soul suggests to me that our response ought to be the establishment of a clear personal relation between us and God. We must isolate ourselves and stand, God and we alone—together—at heart grips, we grasping His hand and He giving Himself to us.

II. Note how this cry of the devout soul recognizes God as He to Whom we must go because we need refuge. It is only when we know our dangers and defencelessness that God as the refuge of our souls becomes precious to us. So underlying and an essential part of all our confidence in God is the clear recognition of our own necessity. In all regions the consciousness of human want must go before the recognition of the Divine supply.

III. Note the still more abundant answer which that cry evokes. There may be observed a certain distinction of tone between those promises which precede and those which follow the cry. Those which follow have a certain elevation and completeness and fullness beyond those that precede. They who store in patient and thankful hearts the faithful promises of God, have taken a sure way to make the gifts still larger and His promise still sweeter, and their fulfilment more faithful and precious. By the body we are brought into connexion with this frail outer world, and we try to make our homes out of shifting cloud-wrack, and dream that we may dwell secure. But we need a better dwelling-place than earth and that which holds to earth. We have God Himself for our true home. The secret of exemption from every evil lies in no peculiar providence, ordering in some especial manner our outward circumstances, but in the submission of our wills to that which the good hand of the Lord our God sends us for our good; and in cleaving close to Him as our refuge.—A. Maclaren, *The God of the Amen*, p. 158.

Reference.—XCI. 9.—Spurgeon, *Morning by Morning*, p. 58.

THE MINISTRY OF ANGELS

'He shall give His angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways.'—Psalm xci. 11.

The ministry of angels is too clearly written in Holy Scripture for any of us to doubt it, even if we had

not the evidence of our own experience. The work of the angels is—

I. To Guide us.—It is a great mystery, yet who can question that we may be led by them? The Gospel for to-day's service tells us of the angels of little children always beholding the face of the Father in heaven. It is impossible to suppose that their work ceases when we pass from childhood's state; and it is a comfort to think that our angels, receiving their inspiration in heaven, will lead us in the right way, if only we will submit ourselves to them.

II. To Guard us; or, as the text has it, 'to keep' us. Years ago, when one, who is now a bishop, was curate in a rural parish, he was sent for after midnight to visit a distant house where there was said to be serious illness. He went there, passing through a lonely road, only to find that he had been hoaxed. Years passed, and the incident was never explained until the bishop was sent for to visit in prison a man condemned to death. The prisoner recalled the incident, and explained that it was he who had sought to lure the curate out that he might rob him. 'And why did you not do so?' asked the bishop. 'Because,' came the reply, 'another man joined you just when I was going to attack you.' There had been no man; who can doubt but that it was the bishop's guardian angel?

III. But Notice the Limitation.—'To keep thee,' but only *in all thy ways*, and the story of our Lord's temptation shows us that the guidance and guardianship is given only when we are in the right way.

Reference.—XCI. 11.—J. Keble, *Sermons for the Saints' Days*, p. 372.

LET NOTHING YOU DISMAY

'Thou shalt tread upon the lion and adder: the young lion and the dragon shalt thou trample under foot.'—Psalm xci. 13.

The whole of this Psalm is an unfolding of the certain outcome of fellowship with God. The man who dwells in the secret place of the Most High finds there a Divine power of protection and defence which lifts him into a place of safety in all the assaults of the enemy. As a hen covers her brood with her feathers, so is he covered by the Lord. He is defended as with a shield; he is upheld by angel ministrants so that his unwary footsteps do not slip. It is indeed a Psalm of the joy-bells which ring over the union of weakness with strength, of human need with Divine fullness. It tells with clear simplicity of the completeness of the provisions of grace for the life of the believer, and rings out, as though in defiance of the adversary, the clear note of certain victory in the inevitable conflicts of life.

I. The lion—strongest and fiercest of beasts—may well stand for a man's besetting sin, the temptation which is always nearest to him and from which there seems no available way of escape. And just as lions do not frequent the haunts of mankind, but are met in lonely and desert lands, so is this temptation met in the unshared solitudes of life. As in the days of Nero, Christians are always antagonizing lions, but the arena of their conflict is not open to the public. The struggle is waged without human spectators, and the victory when realized is unapplauded save in the courts of conscience and of heaven. Or, again, the lion may stand for the open opposition which every man meets as he pursues the pathway of God's revealed will.

II. The adder hidden in the grass or rocky crevices of the pathway, ready to dart out upon the unsuspecting pilgrim, with the power of death in its sting, well expresses the swiftness and unexpectedness with which temptation often assails men. The lion roars and gives warning of his approach, but the adder is most frequently encountered without any warning whatever of its presence. Suddenly the attack is delivered, and only he whose feet are Divinely shod can tread down the unlooked-for enemy. Who has not known temptation of this sort? It is of such that most defeat is recorded. Paradoxical though it sounds, such temptation usually finds its point of least resistance in a man's strongest part.

III. The dragon stands for temptation of an entirely different order, for no such beast is known to man, except as the creation of his own imaginations. The dragon is but the fierce creature of mythical story, the terror of earlier ages, and the dread of childhood. As such it stands here for those temptations which are largely the result of uncontrolled thought, those creatures whose existence is the projection of a disordered mind on the soul's vision. Though but imaginary, they are none the less strong to destroy those who do not in the courage of faith resolutely 'trample them underfoot,' and no Gospel promise of victory would be adequate which took no account of them. A man's strongest foes are not only of his own household but frequently of his own heart where the dragon has its birth. Evil desires, enmities, ambitions, jealousies, hot passions, are all the product of an unchecked imagination, and going forth from out the heart they assume mysterious strength to leap upon and overcome their own parent. Of the same origin, though of different form, is the dragon of dark pessimism, most frequently concerning the future.—J. Stuart Holden, *The Pre-Eminent Lord*, p. 29.

GOD'S ANSWER TO MAN'S TRUST

'Because he hath set his love upon Me, therefore will I deliver him: I will set him on high, because he hath known My name.'—Psalm xci. 14.

These words seem to me to carry two thoughts: the first what God delights to find in a man; and the second what God delights to give to the man in whom He finds it.

I. There are two things that the great Father's heart seeks, and wheresoever it finds them He is glad and lavishes upon such a one the most precious things in His possession. Now the word rendered 'set his love' includes more than is suggested by that rendering, beautiful as it is. It is not my love only that I am to fasten upon God, but my whole self that I am to bind to Him. God delights in us when we cling

to Him. Let us cling to Him in our thoughts, hour by hour, moment by moment, amidst all the distractions of daily life. Let us cleave to Him still further by the obedient contact of our wills with His, receiving all our instructions from our Father in heaven. There is another thing in the text which, as I take it, is a consequence of that close union between man in his whole nature and God. You have to become acquainted with Him and be very familiar with Him—that is to say, to fix your whole self on Him—before you 'know' Him; and it is only the knowledge which is born of love and familiarity that is worth calling knowledge at all. Only he knows God to whom the commonplaces of religion have turned into facts which he verifies by his own experiences.

II. Note secondly what God gives to the man in whom He finds such things. 'I will deliver him,' says the promise. God's promise is not that no evil shall come to the man who trusts him, but that he shall be delivered out of the evil that does come, and that it will not be truly evil. Still further we have another great promise: 'I will set him on high because he hath known My name'. That is more than lifting a man up above the reach of the storm of life by means of external deliverance. There is a better thing than that—namely, that our whole inward life be lived loftily. Then perhaps there is a hint in the words, on an elevation even higher than that, when, life ended and earth done, He shall receive into His glory those whom He hath guided by His counsel.—A. MACLAREN, *The God of the Amen*, p. 167.

WHAT GOD WILL DO FOR US

'He shall call upon Me, and I will answer him: I will be with him in trouble; I will deliver him, and honour him. With long life will I satisfy him, and shew him My salvation.'—PSALM XCI. 15, 16.

THE words which we have now to consider cover the whole range of human life and need, and may be regarded as being a picture of the sure and blessed consequence of keeping our hearts fixed upon our Father, God. The verses of the text fall into three portions: there are promises for the suppliant, promises for the troubled, promises for mortals. Now let us look at these three.

I. The promise to the suppliant. If a man's heart is set upon God, his very life-breath will be a cry to His Father. Any man who has learned to love God will live in the exercise and habit of prayer, and it will be his instinct to cry to God in all changing circumstances. True prayer is the cry of the soul for the living God in Whom is all that it needs, and out of Whom is nothing that will do it good.

II. (*a*) Further, here we have a promise for suppliants, 'I will be with him in time of trouble'. The promise is not only that, when trials fall upon us, we shall become more conscious, if we take them rightly, of God's presence, but that all which is meant by God's presence shall really be more fully ours, and that He is actually nearer us. (*b*) Then there follows the next stage, deliverance from trouble, 'I will deliver him'. He will deliver us not only by taking the burden off our backs, but by making us strong to carry it, and the sorrow which has changed into calm submission is sorrow from which we have been delivered. (*c*) Lastly, there is the third of these promises for the troubled, 'I will honour him'. Is not that the end of a trouble which has been borne in company with Him; and from which, because it has been so borne, a man may be delivered even whilst it lasts? Is that not God's way of glorifying us before heaven's glory?

III. Last of all we have the promise for mortals, 'With long life will I satisfy him, and show him My salvation'. The idea contained in this promise may be fully illustrated by the expression which is used in reference to a select few of the Old Testament saints, of whom it is recorded that they died 'full of days'. They had got all out of the world which it could give, and were contented to have done with it all. The heart that lives near God will find in life all that life is capable of giving, but will be satisfied to have lived, and be contented to die.—A. MACLAREN, *The God of the Amen*, p. 177.

PSALM XCII.

Is called by Dante (*Purg.* XXVIII. 80), *Il Salmo Delectasti*, because, in the Vulgate, the 4th verse begins with the words, 'Thou hast made me glad'. A beautiful female form, representing the higher life, is introduced as saying, 'She is so happy because she can sing like the Psalm *Delectasti*, "Thou, Lord, hast made me glad through Thy work"'.

CASAUBON was one of the most learned men of his age, and truly devout. He was so humble and reticent, that some doubted his religious spirit; but there is an incident he records in his diary which reveals it, and which shows the hold the book of Psalms had on the hearts of Christians of that time. He and his wife, residing in Paris, wished to go to the Protestant Church of Charenton. There was only a frail old boat to take them up the Seine, but they ventured it rather than lose the service. 'On embarking,' he says, 'my wife, as her custom was, began to sing the Psalms. We had finished Psalm XCI. and had reached Psalm XCII. 12, when the boat sank. With difficulty we saved our lives, but the Psalm-book, which had been a wedding gift to my wife twenty-two years before, was lost. We reached in time for the second service; and on looking into the book of a young man near me to see what was being sung, I found it was Psalm LXXXVI. 13, "for great is Thy mercy towards me: and Thou hast delivered my soul from the lowest grave". I thought immediately of the word of St. Ambrose, that "those who listen to, or read, the Psalms aright may find as if they had been indited expressly for themselves".'

REFERENCES.—XCII. 2.—Spurgeon, *Morning by Morning*, p. 227. *Ibid. Sermons*, vol. xix. No. 1138. XCII. 5.—W. L. Alexander, *Sermons*, p. 191. XCII. 10.—M. O. Evans, *Christian World Pulpit*, 1891, p. 322. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xix. No. 1122.

THE PALM-TREE

'The righteous shall flourish like the palm-tree.'—PSALM XCII. 12.

THERE is a singular Rabbinical tradition that the 92nd Psalm was composed and sung by Adam in Paradise to celebrate God's power in creation. 'For Thou, Lord, hast made me glad through Thy work: I will triumph in the works of Thy hands' (v. 4). More in accordance with its actual history is the fact that this Psalm was sung in the temple services every Sabbath morning at the time of the offering of the first lamb, when the wine was poured out as a drink-offering unto the Lord. It is still used in the Sabbatical services of the synagogue: and so this 92nd Psalm has been interwoven with the religious history of the Jewish race for nearly three thousand years.

The great thought of the Psalmist is to express his joy in the clear conviction of God's righteous government of the world, manifested in the final overthrow of the wicked and the triumph of the righteous.

I have singled out the palm-tree as the subject of my sermon because I believe there is not in the Word of God a more striking type of the Christian life. I believe, with Basil, that Nature, as the handmaid of Revelation, is the 'school and lecture-room of souls'. To the sanctified imagination, creation is instinct with Divine teaching. In spring, the seed sown—some falling among thorns and some by the wayside, some on the rocky ground and some in the good soil—has its lessons of warning and instruction. In the summer, the new-mown grass speaks to us of the brevity of life. 'All flesh is as grass.' The golden sheaves of autumn remind us of the harvest at the end of the world; whilst the purity of winter's snow tells us that, although our sins may be as scarlet, yet that we may, through pardoning grace and justifying righteousness, be as white as snow.

The tall, stately palm, with its dark, pillar-like shaft, and its capital of feathery fronds, is one of the most graceful objects in nature. I am not surprised that Linnæus should call this tree 'the prince of the vegetable world,' or that Humboldt should speak of the palm as 'the loftiest and stateliest of all vegetable forms'. Whilst this tree is associated, speaking generally, with that part of the world which was the cradle of the human race, it is especially connected with the land of Palestine. The word Phœnicia is doubtless derived from the Greek word for palm. So much was the palm the representative tree of Palestine that Vespasian, when striking a coin to commemorate the capture of Jerusalem by Titus, depicts Judæa as a woman sitting dejected and desolate beneath a palm-tree, guarded by a Roman soldier. The Middle Ages continued this connexion of thought by giving the name of Palmer to the pilgrim who had returned from the Holy Sepulchre, because of the custom of bringing home the sacred branch. The palm was to Syria what the oak is to England, the spruce to Norway, the pine to Canada, and the chestnut to Spain—the representative tree.

I. *It often flourishes in the desert, and always indicates moisture.* We are told by travellers that on the northern borders of the Great Desert, under the Atlas Mountains, groves of palms are the great feature of the arid region. The heat is so intense that even the natives can scarcely endure the scorching blast when the wind blows from the south; and yet here, as we have observed, the palm flourishes. What is the explanation? Beneath the sand is moisture. The palm-tree rises from the sterile surface, but its tap-root drinks in the water from beneath. These palms of the desert seem to be striking emblems of many Christian lives. All men are equally dependent upon the aid of the Holy Spirit, but how different are the influences which surround the children of God! Some are planted, not as the palms in the Plain of Jericho, nor as willows by the water-courses, but rather as palms in the sterile desert. When we think of a man like Lot in Sodom, or of Joseph in Egypt, of Obadiah in the court of Ahab, of Daniel in Babylon, of saints in Cæsar's household, we ask, How could they live a life of holiness in such a moral desert? They were in the world and not of it! How can this thing be? Faith's penetrating root reached the fountain of living water. Their life was 'hid with Christ in God'.

II. *The palm-tree grows as long as it lives.* Physically we are like the Exogens, the oak and the elm, etc. We grow to maturity, and then imperceptibly we begin to decay. It is a law of our nature, but God never intended that it should be thus with our inner life, with the growth of grace in the soul. If we are truly children of God, we shall be like the palm. We shall grow till we die. 'The righteous shall flourish like the palm-tree.' We shall 'go from strength to strength' until every one appeareth before God in Zion.

III. *The palm-tree gives a grateful shade.* The Christian ought to extend a genial, a sanctified, and a heavenly influence. If we think of a palm-grove as a picture of Christianity, we observe what beneficent institutions have grown beneath its shadow.

IV. *The main feature of the palm is its upward growth—its tall, straight shaft.* The idols of the Gentiles are compared to it. 'They are upright as the palm-tree' (Jer. x. 5). The affections of a righteous man are set on things above, and not on things below. They are ever moving heavenward, where Christ is. He is ever desiring more intimate communion with Jesus, ever breathing after heavenly joys, ever seeking a greater conformity to his Master, till he comes, 'in the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ'.

V. *The palm has ever been the emblem of joy and victory.* Palm branches were used by the Greeks and Romans to celebrate their triumphs. So the saint on earth is victorious over sin and Satan and the world. He is more than conqueror 'through Him that hath loved him,' and ere long he will join

the 'palmiferous company,' that 'great multitude which no man can number, of all nations, and kindreds, and peoples, and tongues,' standing 'before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands'.—J. W. Bardsley, *Many Mansions*, p. 30.

THREE TYPICAL FORMS OF GROWTH

'The righteous shall flourish like the palm-tree: he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon.'—Psalm xcii. 12.

There are three typical ideas illustrated in the realm of plant life.

I. The palm is what is known as an Endogen, or inside grower, that is, the oldest and hardest wood is at the circumference, the newest and softest at the centre. Man's life is very much moulded and determined by his surroundings and by the intricate network of influences that hedge him in. Anyone, when once awakened to the sense of spiritual realities, and seeking to work out his own righteousness, appreciates the value of all outward helps, and accordingly makes diligent use of them. But the result is unsatisfactory. The deep places of the heart too often remain untouched.

II. The cedar is an Exogen, that is, it grows from the centre to the circumference, like most of our finest trees, adding a new ring of growth to the outside every successive year, so that you can tell its age by the number of concentric rings which the horizontal section of its stem exhibits. This is the method of growth more especially illustrated in the evangelic or Protestant form of Christianity. Normal Christianity begins with the heart. A leading peculiarity of the cedar and other plants which are marked by a growth from the centre to the circumference, is that they send out branches, and, being expansive, often cover an extensive area. Religious character is a growing thing, year by year, necessarily expanding and progressive, reaching forward to further and happier results, never satisfied with past attainments, but striving unceasingly after fuller unfolding and perfecting of character.

III. There is a third typical form, as may be instanced in the tree fern. This typical form is called by the botanist an Acrogen or top-grower, the growth of every successive year being a fresh layer of new wood on the summit of the former year's growth, suggesting the fact that your life must be upward as well as inward and outward, nearer to God, more heavenly. This growth Godward and heavenward will best insure the growth both of your inner being and that of the more outward aspects of Christian life.—J. Miller, *Sermons Literary and Scientific*, p. 172.

THE BLESSING OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

'The righteous shall flourish like the palm-tree.'—Psalm xcii. 12.

You will at once see by looking at this text that it is an exceedingly precious promise. The condition of the promise is that of righteousness.

I. The righteous man is the man who is in right relation with God, who has been made right, who has been properly adjusted to the law and the plan of Divine government for his life. Man in Adam lost his righteousness, and hence the work of God from that sad day until this good hour has been to bring man back into proper relationship and fellowship with God, and in order that that might be done it was necessary there should be atonement. The whole race of mankind has been redeemed and made righteous in the atoning death of Jesus Christ. But even this is conditional. It is here provided in the atonement of Jesus Christ, but no man ever shares that which is provided in this marvellous atonement until he comes, submitting by an act of his faith, and appropriates the merits of this atonement. To share the blessings of this promise there must be adjustment made between the soul and God. The soul must look up and receive by faith the atoning merit of the grace of Jesus Christ.

II. Now David is taking a simple everyday illustration, and with it he is attempting to teach the most profound and the most blessed truth. First of all, it is said of the palm-tree that it is the only tree that has its growth from the heart out. The righteous is a man whose growth shall be from within out. It is at the heart that the Spirit of God aims His first work, and from the heart to the head and to the feet and to the hands goes the Spirit of God, ramifying every avenue of our being in the likeness of Christ.

III. Then, again, let me say that the righteous shall grow like the palm-tree in that the palm-tree will not mix with any other tree. You cannot graft a palm-tree, you cannot graft anything to a palm-tree; the moment you begin a grafting process with the palm-tree it dies. The righteous man shall be a man that can live in any community and not find himself taken up with the conduct of the community in which he lives, provided that community is unrighteous.

IV. It is said by travellers in Eastern countries that as they pass through the desert regions the sight of the palm-tree, which tells of water near by, is greeted with great joy. So it is with the righteous man who is in right relationship with God, spiritually and bodily—that man is a sign of joy. He is a great comfort to this sorrowing world. Wherever a righteous man is found, a man in right relationship with God and right relationship with his fellow-men, he has got a reputation, and his reputation is like an oasis in the great desert world of need; and so it is with the Church.—Len. G. Broughton, *The Homiletic Review*, 1908, vol. lvi. p. 466.

References.—XCII. 13.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons Preached in Sackville College Chapel*, vol. iv. p. 24. XCII. 13-15.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxiii. No. 1365. XCII.—*International Critical Commentary*, vol. ii. p. 282. XCIII. 5.—A. Watson, *Sermons for Sundays, Festivals, and Feasts* (2nd Series), vol. iii. p. 9. XCIII.—*International Critical Commentary*, vol. ii. p. 296. XCIV. 9.—J. Keble, *Sermons for Septuagesima to Ash Wednesday*, p. 65.

THE PRIMAL CONSCIOUSNESS

'He that planteth the ear, shall He not hear? He that formed the sight, shall He not see? He that chastiseth the heathen, shall He not correct? He that teacheth man knowledge, shall He not know?'—Psalm xciv. 9, 10.

These verses assert that in due time God will act, for He cannot be otherwise than a God of knowledge, deep in whose heart counsels of inviolable righteousness lie hidden. He is always cognisant of what goes on in the world, and especially heedful of the cries and supplications of His own people. These acts of oppression, done to the fatherless and the widow, do not elude His notice. Drop by drop He counts the innocent blood that falls upon the green world He has made and bends His ear to each sigh of the down-trodden. There is a spiritual property in every sense with which the human body is informed, and that property has its immeasurable counterpart in the nature of the Godhead.

I. These words imply that if man possesses the attributes of personality, man's Maker must also possess them in an enhanced degree. Hence arises the sure confidence that a Divine judgment draws nigh which will banish the wrongs under which the faithful groan. It has ever been so in the past. Righteous acts that are not the outcome of a living and a righteous personality are inconceivable. The power that makes for righteousness must see and hear and know, and then set itself to unflinching judgment.

II. The Psalmist affirms that the distinction between right and wrong which God imprints upon the nations through the providences of history has its primal type in the mind of God Himself. The age-long discipline of the generations is the sign of an intense moral life in the Great King of the earth which vitalizes that discipline. Many of us habitually disregard the conscience, and yet at the same time feel that it is the truest and most trustworthy of all the faculties with which our beings have been equipped.

III. We need to indoctrinate ourselves with the argument of the Psalmist, for there is a tendency to depersonalize God, sometimes on grounds directly opposite to those which influence the advocates of a materialistic philosophy. Many thinkers assume that the special attribute of personality is here in the body rather than in the spirit, and that we make God less than infinite by adopting these anthropomorphic modes of speech. It is true our knowledge of God is approximate, but if we negative our approximations by saying that God is neither personal nor impersonal, we make the conception absolutely powerless, futile as a random guess. The lowliest and most limited creature into whom the qualities of personality have come is greater than galaxies of impersonal suns.

IV. The man who has become honestly and intelligently possessed with the truth that God is a person will find every subsequent article of the Christian Creed comparatively easy of acceptance. We cannot go far wrong in our theology if we hold that God is a person, and he who thinks the world can do without theology is a trifler whose folly is beyond ordinary expletives. Not a little obscurity has its beginnings in looseness upon this cardinal subject. Admit that God is a free, conscious, intelligent, self-determining person, and if you have the logical outlook, it will soon be evident that you have committed yourself to the sum and substance of the Christian faith.—T. G. Selby, *The God of the Frail*, p. 22.

Psalm xciv. 9, 10.

'He that planted the ear, shall He not hear? He that formed the eye, shall He not see? He that teacheth man knowledge, shall not He know?' These verses made a strong impression on the mind of Sophia the Electress of Hanover, a woman of decided mental power, and were adopted with approbation by her friend the philosopher Leibnitz in his opposition to Atheism. The principle on which he reasoned was, that as the stream cannot rise above its fountain, intelligence in man implies an intelligent source. Thought must come from thought. Descartes had already given expression to the same idea in his *Meditations*, III.: 'Now it is manifest by the light of nature that there must be as much reality in the efficient cause as in the effect; for whence could the effect draw its reality but from the cause? And how could the cause communicate the power to it, if it had it not in itself? And from this it follows, not only that nothing can be produced from nothing, but also that what is more perfect cannot be a result of, and dependent on, what is less perfect.'—J. K.

References.—XCIV. 12.—J. Budgen, *Parochial Sermons*, vol. ii. p. 219. Bishop Temple, *Rugby Sermons* (2nd Series), p. 39. XCIV. 16.—J. Budgen, *Parochial Sermons*, vol. ii. p. 219.

THE CHRISTIAN'S HIDDEN SOURCES OF DELIGHT

'In the multitude of my thoughts within me Thy comforts delight my soul.'—Psalm xciv. 19.

Our thoughts form the hidden sources of our lives, whether for good or for evil.

I. I am sure it will be good for us if we can find the track along which ran David's thoughts which gave him such great power and such sources of delight that his wonderful career was possible. The first of these thoughts of David he makes very clear to us in this Psalm. It was the thought of an immanent God in the world, one who hears and sees and cares. 'He that planted the ear, shall He not hear? He that formed the eye, shall He not see?' Here is the starting-point of David's hidden source of joy. God is in his world. He made it and He rules it. Here is the source of courage that will never grow weary.

II. Another thought that was a constant source of delight to David was the conviction that God was the defender of those who trusted Him. He cries out in this Psalm, 'The Lord will not cast off His people, neither will He forsake His inheritance. But judgment shall return unto unrighteousness: and all the upright in heart shall follow it.' And in another one of his great Psalms, having this same thought in

mind, David says, 'The Lord shall keep thee from all evil; He shall keep thy soul'.

III. Another thought that gave David great delight was his discovery that much of the sorrow and trial which he experienced was not punishment, but chastening and discipline. David had got hold of this great thought of God's chastening love, and it was a source of delight to him; and it cannot help but be a source of perpetual delight to us if we will treasure this thought in our hearts and keep it to live by day and day.

IV. Another thought that gave David delight in his hour of darkness, so far as his outward circumstances were concerned, was the thought which he cherished that in the time of great emergency he could depend upon God's mercy. His heart rejoiced in the mercy of the God who comes to the rescue of the man in peril, whose feet have slipped and will go to disaster without help. It is the glory of our Christianity that it has a word about mercy to the man whose feet have slipped.—L. R. Banks, *Sermons Which Have Won Souls*, p. 231.

THE CURE FOR CARE

'In the multitude of my thoughts within me Thy comforts delight my soul.'—Psalm xciv. 19.

This Psalm is a cry for help against the insolence and cruelty of Israel's oppression, evidently at a time when the nation has been under the heel of heathen conquerors. There is a Divine purpose to be wrought out through all the struggles and the sorrow, a purpose of moral discipline.

I. The Psalmist questions his soul by his comforting faith. With spiritual insight he sees something of the meaning of discipline, and sees the hand of God in the dark passage through the cloud as well as in the brightness of the ultimate deliverance. He sees that if the Lord had not been his help all would have been ended long since. 'When I said, My foot hath slipped, Thy mercy, O Lord, was holding me up.' It is a vivid figure of compassing grace. Amid wickedness, rampant and triumphant, enmity without and trouble within, he entered into peace through the assurance of God's presence.

II. Times alter and circumstances change, but the essentials of life remain, and this cry of a wounded heart is the human cry, and we can interpret the Psalm for our own individual needs and personal situation. The way to peace for us to-day, as in this echo of a long past time, is in the assurance of God. This is the one need of man's heart. There can be no abiding consolation and no complete solution of the riddle of life, no safe refuge, except somewhere within where the soul can find rest. If life is meaningless, empty of any spiritual purpose, the world is a place of despair as much to us as the terrible situation depicted by the Psalmist of old. We, like him, and as much as him, need the comfort of God's love for the multitude of our cares. There is nothing the heart of man needs more than a message of courage and hope and confidence. And where is such a message possible except as a message of faith? The world is built as if for discipline, and its one need is comfort of some sort.

III. The only cure for care is the cure of faith. What is this faith which has such magical power? It simply means to fall back upon God, to trust to His love and live in the secret of His presence. We learn to cast our care upon God when we know that He cares for us, and this is the meaning of our Communion. It has many a message and many a lesson, but its deepest message and sweetest lesson is that of comfort. The deepest lesson of Holy Communion, however we interpret it, is the Real Presence of Christ. What trouble or distress is there in life that will not be dissipated by the light of that faith? The remedy for care is to know the love of God in Christ, and that remedy is open to us, not fitfully and casually, but always and everywhere.—Hugh Black, *Christ's Service of Love*, p. 42.

References.—XCIV. 19.—A. Tucker, *Preacher's Magazine*, vol. xix. p. 510. J. Bunting, *Sermons*, vol. ii. pp. 214, 229. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xv. No. 883. *Ibid.* vol. xix. No. 1116. J. S. Boone, *Sermons*, p. 23. J. Thomas, *Myrtle Street Pulpit*, vol. ii. p. 305. XCIV.—*International Critical Commentary*, vol. ii. p. 287. *Expositor* (2nd Series), vol. vi. p. 273.

Psalm xcv.

This Psalm, the *Venite exultemus Domino*, 'O come, let us sing unto the Lord,' was the chant of the Templars, the Knights of the Red Cross, when during the Crusades they entered into battle with the Saracens for the conquest of Jerusalem.

In a different spirit the great missionary, Christian Schwartz, took the 6th verse, and put it over the entrance of his new church in Tranquebar: 'O come, let us worship and bow down: let us kneel before the Lord our Maker'. He called the church Bethlehem, as his predecessor, Ziegenbalg, had built one with the name Jerusalem, which was filled with native converts.

A SEASIDE SERMON

'The sea is His, and He made it.'—Psalm xcv. 5.

When we remember that the extent of the sea may be roughly estimated at 146,000,000 English square miles, or nearly three-fourths of the whole surface of the globe, and when we recall the fact that the Bible abounds in illustrations from nature, we might well be astonished if there were no reference to this sublime portion of creation. Until recently, little was known of the physical aspects of the sea, and therefore the allusions to the ocean in the Word of God are such as would occur to any thoughtful observer entirely ignorant of modern science. For example, the silent but mighty force of evaporation is one of the chief features of the sea system, and the wise man thus refers to it: 'Unto the place from whence the rivers come thither they return'. Again, the Psalmist says, 'He layeth up the deep as in a treasure-house'.

Consider the ocean as emblematic of three things: (1) of the unrest and instability of human life; (2) of national anarchy and revolution; (3) of mystery.

1. *The sea, in the Bible, is a symbol of the unrest and instability of human life.* This feature of the ocean has been the natural thought of men in all ages. It is true that there is no mention of the tides in the Bible, as is natural. The Mediterranean is not a tidal sea. This unrest of the ocean surface caused by the tides, the winds, the influence of rivers, the mighty currents which are ever exchanging the heavier and colder waters of the polar seas for the lighter and warmer waters of the tropical ocean, and again reversing the action, cause the sea to be 'ever restless'. There need no words of mine to speak of the constant changes of 'our life's wild restless sea'. The experience is universal. As unconscious infants received 'into Christ's holy Church,' the prayer went up for us that 'being steadfast in faith, joyful through hope, and rooted in charity,' we might so 'pass the waves of this troublesome world that finally' we might 'come to the land of everlasting life'; and in that service which will be read over each one of us, unless the Lord come first, to which the heart of every mourner will respond, will be heard words that speak of the recurring changes of human life: 'Man that is born of a woman hath but a short time to live, and is full of misery. He cometh up, and is cut down, like a flower; he fleeth as it were a shadow, and never continueth in one stay.'

This unrest of the sea is more than superficial. It is not only outward but *inward*. There is a constant oceanic circulation necessary to its salubrity. The silent action of the sun, ever absorbing and ever increasing the specific gravity of the surface waters, causes a vertical action. The heavier waters above are ever sinking below, and the lighter waters below are ever rising above. Again, many of the sea currents influence the lower waters—the Gulf Stream, e.g., is more than 300 feet deep as it crosses the Atlantic. Besides this, every single mollusc or coralline secretes solid matter for its cell which the sea holds in solution; and that very act of secretion destroys the equilibrium of the ocean, because the specific gravity of that portion of the water from which the coralline abstracts the solid matter is altered. In the remembrance of such facts as these, how true and forcible are the words of Isaiah: 'The wicked are like the troubled sea when it cannot rest'. 'There is no peace, saith my God, for the wicked.' If the surface disturbance of the ocean pictures the changing nature of our outward life, the hidden and unseen restlessness of the sea, even when its surface seems most calm, portrays the inquietude of hearts which have not found rest in Christ. 'The wicked are (1) outwardly restless, and (2) their souls are ever ejecting ungodly and unlovely thoughts.'

II. *The unrest of the sea is used in the Bible as a striking emblem of national anarchy and revolution rising beyond the control of established governments.*

III. *The sea is the one object in nature which is most emblematic of mystery.* I cannot recall a single instance of any well-known writer on the ocean who does not refer to this aspect of its being Schleiden has drawn a charming but imaginary picture of the ocean depths from a number of individual objects brought up, but this description is a 'fancy sketch of the unknown'—'fiction founded on fact'. Deeply interesting as are the records of deep-sea soundings, each product which adheres to the tallow 'arming' of the sounding lead is, for the most part, to use the figure of Mr. Gosse, 'like the brick which the Greek fool carried about as a sample of the house he had to let'. The sea, like a thick curtain, hides the secrets of nature from the ken of man.

The sea is a striking emblem of the mysteries which must ever meet and surround the finite in contemplation of the infinite. The student of nature is brought face to face with mystery at every turn. The profoundest men of science have confessed that, in proportion to their acquisition of knowledge, they have discovered a never-ending area of mystery—as in the night, the further a light extends, the wider the surrounding sphere of darkness appears.

The Divine Being retires within Himself. He 'holdeth back the face of His throne, and spreadeth His cloud upon it'. He 'leadeth the blind by a way that they know not'. The operations of an Infinite Being must of necessity be as a 'great deep' to our limited apprehensions.

And this very mysteriousness, this making darkness His secret place, this inscrutability of counsel, is calculated to call forth a degree of reverence, and to develop in His people a childlike trust and confidence, which could be evoked in no other way. The danger of the theology of the present day is the seeking to eliminate all mystery from God. An Egyptian who, carrying something in a napkin, being asked what it was, answered that it was covered that no man should see it. We may well pray with good Bishop Hall, 'O Lord, let me be blessed with the knowledge of what Thou hast revealed; let me content myself to adore Thy Divine wisdom in what Thou hast not revealed. So, let me enjoy Thy light that I may avoid Thy fire.' 'What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter.' In heaven 'there shall be no more sea'—no more dark and painful mysteries, no obscurity, no misconception. There difficulties will be solved and parables will be interpreted. 'Now we see through a glass darkly, but then face to face; now I know in part, but then shall I know even as also I am known.' If, with reference to the mysteries of Providence, we acknowledge with the Psalmist that 'clouds and darkness are round about Him,' the more we study *Revelation* the more we realize that God is a Being who covereth Himself 'with light as with a garment'.—J. W. Bardsley, *Many Mansions*, p. 128.

References.—XCV. 4.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons on Passages of the Psalms*, p. 216. XCV. 6.—R. E. Hutton, *The Crown of Christ*, p. 319. H. R. Heywood, *Sermons and Addresses*, p. 105. J. Vaughan, *Preacher's Magazine*, vol. xix. p. 417. F. W. Farrar, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxv. p. 369. XCV.

7, 8.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxvi. No. 1551. XCV. 8.—J. T. Bramston, *Sermons to Boys*, p. 80.

O come, let us worship, and fall down, and kneel before the Lord our Maker.'—PSALM XCV. 6.

THESE words contain a spirit-stirring call to sing God's praise.

I. Who that has any true piety in his heart will not in his first moments of waking bethink him of the great Power who has watched over him, and kept him alive, and desire to make some acknowledgment of His goodness?

II. The contemplation of God's works seen in the creation is calculated to fill our souls with noble and worthy thoughts about God. It is calculated to make us humble in our estimate of ourselves, as forming a small part in the mighty whole.

III. And these two things—high reverence for the Holy God, coupled with a sense of our own unworthiness, help to make accepted worship.

IV. When we come to present ourselves before God, let us remember the amazing difference and distance between ourselves and the object of our worship.—R. D. B. RAWNSLEY, *Village Sermons* (3rd Series), p. 176.

WRONG IN THE HEART

'It is a people that do err in their heart.'—PSALM XCV. 10.

WE must get at the notion that people, including ourselves first and foremost, are in the sight of God wrong at the heart. It is there that revivals take place. A revival is not a reformation; a true spiritual revival is not a universal washing of face and hands. There are many who have doubts and hesitations about what theologians are disposed to call the Fall; I will not discuss that question; my business is not with the Fall, but with the fallen, the living fact, the putrid humanity that is about me and in me.

I. So many people would make the inner life a mere question, as it were, one among a thousand. It is in reality a fact by itself; it is without parallel, it is a solemn loneliness; it is the soul face to face with its own immortality. In the text we seem to have gotten down upon the very rock of this whole question. We must have done so, because the text is an utterance of the Divine lips. The text is, 'It is a people that do err in their hearts,' in their very soul, in their very blood.

II. Many persons look upon society as if it were merely cutaneously affected, something the matter with the skin, with the surface of things, but the Great Healer, who hails from Gilead and brings balm with Him, says, Stand aside: this is not a question of the skin, but of the heart, of the very source of the blood stream; this is a case of blood-poisoning, life-poisoning.

Whatever the application is, it must be fundamental, internal, spiritual, complete. Where do you find that remedy? Only in one place. 'The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin.'

III. There again and again and evermore we are thrown back upon the Divine and the eternal. This is a great tribute to the majesty of man. He never is anywhere so eulogized, if the expression may be allowed, as in the Bible; never is he so humiliated, never is he so recognized and praised, as in the Bible. How great must he be who can be cured only by God! We start at our humiliations, and thence we proceed by the help of the Holy Ghost to see how besotted and befooled we are, and then we are led to the fountain opened in the house of David for sin and for uncleanliness.—JOSEPH PARKER, *City Temple Pulpit*, vol. v. p. 222.

REFERENCE.—XCV.—*International Critical Commentary*, vol. ii. p. 292.

A NEW SONG

'O sing unto the Lord a new song: sing unto the Lord, all the earth.'—PSALM XCVI. 1.

WHAT does a 'new song' mean?

I. A living experience. There never has been an age of great poetry which was not first an age of great action, great thought, great living. We shall never sing a new song till we have lived a real, pulsing, genuine new life of our own, not the pale shadow of other and greater lives. Whatever songs and Psalms come echoing down the ages, we must hear God's voice with our own ears.

II. A bright outlook and bold spirit. The faith that has no future has no song on its lips, for there is no hope in its heart. History never 'repeats' itself; every nation has a new rôle to fill, a new destiny to attain, a future of its own to mould and conquer. God has given us a new time and a glowing future, and He looks that we should sound out of this new time a new song.

III. What shall be the keynote of our new song to God in this generation? Shall it not still be Jesus? The highest genius may well lay its brightest tribute of rhythm and melody at His feet, and the lowliest voice may acceptably sing it. A songless faith is a dying faith. A faith that has a true song in it has the future before it, and heaven at last, where the multitude who no man can number will sing the song of Moses and the Lamb, ancient as time, yet new as the morning.—W. R. INGE, *Christian World Pulpit*, p. 290.

REFERENCES.—XCVI. 9.—J. Bolton, *Selected Sermons* (2nd Series), p. 159. XCVI.—*International Critical Commentary*, vol. ii. p. 303. XCVII. 2.—G. W. Brameld, *Practical Sermons*, p. 304. H. Melvill, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 2603.

THE INSTINCT AFTER RISING

'O ye that love the Lord, see that ye hate the thing which is evil.'—PSALM XCVII. 10.

WHY is it that the study of human life in the Bible is so striking and helpful? Is it not because, as we close the book, we cannot help forming a moral judgment of the man himself? Take, for example, the life of Saul. We do not pass judgment upon him as a warrior or as a great leader, but we pass judgment upon Saul as a whole. David did much darker deeds than ever Saul did, and yet our judgment on the whole is in favour of David and against Saul.

Why is it that, on the whole, we regard the life of Saul as the life of a man who has failed? Is it not because, underneath all his brilliant achievements, we cannot help noticing a moral deterioration?

I. The truth is that Holy Scripture teaches us that the outcome and the end of life is not what a man has done, or what a man has said, but it is what life has made of the man. Not so much what man has made of the life, but what life has made of the man. Life is a machinery with its complicated system for the working out of character, and at the end the soul comes out beaten upon by all the manifold forces and influences of life; the soul comes out of all those forces which baffle analysis, and there is your man. Holy Scripture says that the outcome of life is the formation of character, and that, compared with this, nothing else in the world matters.

Now we feel this, I think, when we see a young man, for example, whose whole theory of life seems to be to cull all the good things he can get; and we see him shirking difficulties and escaping troubles—not rising—refusing to become great, and we condemn him. Sometimes we say, 'Well, all the suffering that that man endured, all the struggles he underwent, were worth while, for see what a character has been evolved'. Or we say, 'All that luxury, all that ease and comfort, were not worth while, for the man has gone down'. Sometimes we see a man who has been raised from poverty up to wealth, and we say, 'I liked that man better when he was poor, for when he was poor there seemed to be a splendour of character about him, which has now been overlaid by all this comfort and luxury and ease'. Here is a fine lady who is lying upon her death-bed. She has had her day, and she has had her sway, and she has done her acts, and she has said her words, and she has had her receptions, and, as you her friends stand by her bedside, why is it that you do not feel any of that triumph which comes from a sense of strength and power? It is because you know, who knew her well, that, underneath all, her character has deteriorated, and she has become small instead of great. Or, once more, you stand by the coffin of your dead friend. You have crossed his hands in calmness and peace, and closed his eyes. Why is it that, in spite of all he has done—and he seems to have done great things—why is it that you are unhappy? It is because you know that, underneath it all, his moral nature has worsened. He has become a poorer character than he was.

II. Well, but then, you say, how shall we define character?

Character is defined by one of two movements of the human will. That man is a good man, whatever his creed may be, who is always striving after what he thinks is the best. And that man, whatever his creed may be, is not a good man who, when he sees the good, deliberately turns away from it. That man is not good who, seeing the best, gropes after what he likes, and not after what he ought to like, who aims not at the high but at the low. That man is not a good man who does not aim at what he thinks to be noblest and the purest and the best.

Now, remember, I do not say that a man is a good man who always does right, for I fancy that none of us then would come under the category of goodness at all. But I say that man is a good man who, in spite of piteous failures, is always striving after what he believes to be best. For, underneath all the variety of nationality, race, and religion, underneath all variety of these things that change and give colour and tone to life, underneath all is this distinction between men good and bad. 'I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God'—the dead, morally small, intellectually small, morally great and intellectually great—'I saw them stand before God, and I observed a division'; and what was the cause of that division? One man could say with truth, 'Lord, when saw I Thee in prison, or sick, and did not try to help?' And the other man saw good and turned away; saw light and turned away; saw moral rectitude and chose moral evil.

III. Here is the key to human life. You tell me about a man. He may be a great public character, and you say to me, 'He is a man of great gifts and great wealth'. And I say to you, 'Tell me something about the man'. And you say, 'He is a man of extraordinary fascination and wonderful power of influence'. I say, 'Tell me something about the man'. You say, 'He is a man of wonderful power of mind and body and reason'. I say, 'I do not know the man yet; tell me something about the man'. And then you say, 'And all these powers of influence and fascination and wealth he used for his own ends'. Now I know your man. That one act of the will is the secret of that man's life, and all the rest is only a setting to the picture.

But, further, you may say, 'Well, but I cannot feel that I am perfectly free. I cannot feel that my will is absolutely free.' No man in his senses will ever say to you that at any given moment of your life you are free from anything that you have done in the past. Remember this, that habit works by a very vigorous law, and the law of habit is this—that the oftener you do anything, the more you deprive yourself of freedom, until at last you say, 'I cannot do the things that I would'. Now it is in the power of every man to work himself out of bad habits. He can get free by struggle, hard struggle. Not to-day, not to-morrow, it may be, not for a year perhaps, but he can get free if he will struggle in the light of God, and in the power of God's might he can get free, and at last he will sing with joy and peace, 'The snare is broken and I am delivered'.

That instinct after rising is the truest expression of your nature. Freedom of the will does not mean that at any moment you are free from the trammels of the past, but it does mean that there is a fountain of strength within you, and a power of good without you, by virtue of which you can regain your moral liberty.

And now, how shall these things be? I find that

I seem to have two wills. 'I am,' you say, 'a man of strong purpose, and yet, when I come to things moral, I seem to be powerless. What am I to do?' St. Paul says that behind your conscience, and behind your reason, you can set a person, a person whom you love. And now supposing that you set the greatest and the dearest of men, Jesus Christ, and supposing you learn to love Him, and supposing that you hear His Voice, the Voice of One who died for the honour of God and for the sake of men, the Voice that called the Magdalene to His feet. Suppose you hear that Voice sounding through your conscience, will not at length devotion to Him, the love of Him, draw all your passions, one by one, upon the side of right as against wrong? 'O ye that love the Lord, see that ye hate the thing that is evil.'

There are many things that society hates. It hates being dull, it hates being bored, it hates badly fitting clothes, it hates long sermons, it hates being found out. It hates evil when evil touches its pocket or injures its character in the face of men, but it does not hate evil as evil. Ye that love the Lord, see that ye hate above all things the thing that is evil. And as you learn to love the Lord, as you learn to hate evil, you will learn to love good, until at length stealthily, quietly, in moments unknown and unmeasured, one by one, all your errant desires will come back from the side of wrong and take their place on the side of right, until at last your whole nature is brought into submission, and your whole heart flung down at the feet of God.

References.—XCVII. 10.—J. T. Bramston, *Sermons to Boys*, p. 87. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. iv. No. 208.

SOWN LIGHT

'Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart.'—Psalm xcvii. 11.

Consider these words as speaking: (1) Of the future of the believer; (2) of the life of the believer in this present time; (3) as prophetic of the death and resurrection of Christ.

In applying the words 'Light is sown for the righteous' to the *future* of the believer, I am but following the thought of the Psalmist and the principle contained in the figure which he employs.

I. *This world is the seed-time: the harvest is in the world to come: in other words, the prosperity of the righteous is future.* The believer has light now, but it is only sown. The promised immortality is but the full unveiling of that sun by whose clouded light the believer walks on earth.

II. The expression 'Light is sown for the righteous' is figurative of *the spiritual life of the believer in this present time.* The idea of 'sown light,' or light diffused and scattered abroad, is common to poets in all ages. It is used by both Virgil and Lucretius. The latter says:—

> And the sun from mid-heaven sheds his heat
> On every side, and sows the fields with light.

While our own Milton adopts the same figure—

> Now morn her rosy steps in the Eastern clime
> Advancing, sowed the earth with orient pearl.

What is night, but the turning of the earth on its axis from the sun? What is day, but the turning of the earth towards the source of light? What is spiritual darkness, but the turning of the heart from God? What is conversion, but the turning of the soul towards the 'Light of the world'? From the moment that the day breaks and the Sun of Righteousness dawns upon the soul, light is strewn upon life's way: so that the righteous man advances step by step in the light. 'The path of the just is as the shining light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day.' *Progressiveness is the law of spiritual growth.* 'First the blade, then the ear, and after that the full corn in the ear.'

III. The sentence 'Light is sown for the righteous' is, I believe, *prophetic of Christ.* In the Prayer Book version the words are rendered, 'There is sprung up a Light for the righteous'. Was He not the Light? Was He not sown? sown in the darkness of the grave? 'Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.' Whilst the Light was hidden in the sepulchre the disciples were sad. It was but sown. After His resurrection the Sun of Righteousness scaled the heavens, and now shines with healing in His wings.—J. W. Bardsley, *Many Mansions*, p. 251.

References.—XCVII. 11.—M. Biggs, *Practical Sermons on Old Testament Subjects*, p. 209. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xiv. No. 836. XCVII.—B. F. Westcott, *The Incarnation and Common Life*, p. 41. XCVII.—*International Critical Commentary*, vol. ii. p. 305. XCVIII.—*Ibid.* vol. ii. p. 307.

A NEW SONG

'O sing unto the Lord a new song.'—Psalm xcviii. 1.

In some half-dozen of the Psalms, in Isaiah, and in the Apocalypse there is mention of a New Song, and in this weary world, where many are feeling very old, and in an age that is straining after novelty, it may be helpful to meditate awhile upon Jehovah's New Song.

I. **A New Heart Sings a New Song.**—First, then, it may be a new song, not because the words are new, for they may be the most familiar words to us, nor because of the originality of the sentiment, but because the song wells up from a new heart, from a heart renewed by the Spirit of the Lord. Old themes, old thoughts, old facts are touched with fresh light, and brighten with unwonted lustre.

II. **New Mercies Demand a New Song.**—But this leads us to think about another kind of occasion, for which there must be a new song. It is when there are special mercies to acknowledge, and particular and signal deliverance to celebrate. In the abounding gratitude of the moment for extraordinary favour vouchsafed the soul asks a special measure, and fits new words of rapture to new music. It is only a jaded voluptuary who could interpret in a dreary sense the text that 'there is no new thing under the sun'; there are still crises of unusual blessing—providential interventions which the believing heart will

thankfully recognize. Wherefore, we would ask, shall joy succeed mourning without being mentioned in a hymn to God? Shall we be relieved from sharp passages of anxiety, and not offer our Deliverer supreme acknowledgment? We are poor beggars at the gate of His bounty, if when we cry for bread, and have our wants supplied, we scant our thanks to Him. We have but praise that we can offer. It is our solitary gift; shall we stint it? Nevertheless, it will be proportioned partly to the loving spirit which He has infused into us, and partly to our sense of His benefits. Therefore, when we realize cause of more than wonted gladness, we must wake within us our most fervent notes of praise.

III. We Need to be Stimulated to Praise and Thanksgiving.—We have a faculty for pressing our eyes towards the gloomy portions of the picture. We are often tempted to grumble and to murmur. The many Christian privileges we enjoy are occasionally the reason why we are so speedily sensible when we miss any of them. But were our lot never so obscure and inhospitable, even in such case we were the more in fellowship with our suffering Saviour; and these light afflictions, they are precursors of abundant felicity by and by. Therefore let us cheer one another with the gladsome prospect, and be determined not to be dismal Christians. Instead of the old habitual grumble, let there be the New Song; instead of lamenting our few advantages, let us bewail our little use of those which we do possess—in short, instead of thinking so much about ourselves, let us meditate on Christ. That will be a talisman of joy for us, that will unlock our lips and enrapture our tongue. There is plenty of music in life for those who choose to sing; there is melody everywhere for those whose ears are attuned to it. For every saint there is a harp, and for every ransomed child of God a New Song.

THE RELATION OF SEVERITY TO PARDON

'Thou wast a God that forgavest them, though Thou tookest vengeance of their doings.'—PSALM XCIX. 8 (R.V.).

I. THERE is a great confusion of thought on the subject of retribution. It is supposed that when a man suffers for his fault it indicates that God is angry with him. The notion is that God may forgive him after suffering his penalty, but that the receiving of the penalty implies Divine displeasure. The Psalmist's view is just the opposite. He says that in dealing with His people God forgave first and punished afterwards. 'Thou wast a God that forgavest them, though Thou tookest vengeance of their doings.' The idea seems to be that when God forgives a man, part of his forgiveness consists in the reparation of his wrong.

II. You will observe that God's vengeance is here said to fall on acts—not on persons. The more I love a wrongdoer and the more perfectly I forgive his wrong, the more shall I be eager to have it counteracted, expiated. If I have a son whose fast living has involved him in deep debt, my enmity to the debt will only be increased by my reconciliation to himself. If I had cast him off, I might wash my hands of his disgrace. But, as I have received him back, his disgrace pains me, revolts me. I appropriate it as in part my own. I feel that his creditors lie at my door. I feel by the very love I bear him that his deed has left a stain upon my own garment which both in his interest and mine must be rubbed out. The debt must be paid if possible with his co-operation, certainly with his consent. The blotting out of the debt is my paternal vengeance upon his deed, and it comes from the very heart of my fatherhood. It is the voice not of my anger, but of my love. It is the product of my pardon, the ground of my forgiveness, the result of my recognition, the retribution would never have been desired by me unless the song had first sounded in my soul, 'This my son was dead and is alive again, was lost and is found'.

III. Lord, let me not faint when my deed is rebuked by Thee; let me not say 'I am rejected of heaven'. I plant a tree of evil and ask Thy pardon: by and by the tempest comes and tears it down. Shall I say it is Thy vengeance upon me? Nay; it is only Thy vengeance upon my tree. The tearing down of my structure is itself the sign of my pardon. If Thou hadst loved me less, Thou wouldst have let it stand. It is not Thine anger but Thy love that demands atonement. After spiritual death is passed the judgment comes. Teach me that the judgment is a sign of life, not death. In my chastisement let me read Thy charity. In my correction let me recognize Thy Christ. In my retribution let me detect Thy radiance. In my pain let me feel Thy pity. In my forfeiture let me behold Thy favour. In my remorse let me discern Thy reconciliation. In the sharpness of my visitation let me hail the shining of Thy visage. There is no proof of Thy Fatherhood like the scourging of my sin.—G. MATHESON, *Messages of Hope*, p. 105.

PARDON WITH PUNISHMENT

'Thou wast a God that forgavest them, though Thou tookest vengeance of their inventions.'—PSALM XCIX. 8.

PARDON and retribution are ever united: they spring from one source of holy love, and they ought to become to us the occasions of solemn and thankful praise.

I. Forgiveness is, at bottom, the undisturbed communication of the Love of God to sinful men. We are far too apt to think that God pardons men in the fashion in which the sovereign pardons a culprit who has been sentenced to be hanged. There need be neither pity on the one side nor penitence on the other. Such inadequate notions of the Divine forgiveness arise, among other reasons, because so many of us have false notions of the true punishment of sin. And still further the true idea of forgiveness is to be found, not in the region of law only, but in the region of love and fatherhood. The forgiveness of God is over and over again set forth in Scripture as being a father's forgiveness. The blessing of forgiveness is

not fully comprehended when it is thought of as shutting some outward hell or the quenching of its flames. It goes much deeper than this, and means the untroubled communion of love and delight between the reconciled father and the repentant child.

II. But still further, this being so, let me remind you that such pardon does necessarily sweep away the one true penalty of sin. What is the penalty of sin? 'The wages of sin is death.' What is death? The wrenching away of a dependent soul from God. How is that penalty ended? When the soul is united in the threefold bond of trust, love, and obedience. The communication of the love is the barring of the hell.

III. Then there comes a third thought, viz. the one which is most prominently expressed in the text, that the pardoning mercy of God leaves many penalties unremoved. Forgiveness and punishment both come from the same source, and generally go together. There is an aspect in which it is true that the very greatness of the previous sin may become the occasion for the loftiest devotion and the lowliest trust in a pardoned man. The effects may be so modified as to contribute to the depth and power of his Christian character. But even when the grace of God so modifies them, they remain. And though in some sense it be true that pardon is better than innocence, the converse is true, that innocence is better than pardon.

IV. Pardoning love so modifies the punishment that it becomes an occasion for solemn thankfulness. The outward act remaining the same, its whole aspect to us, the objects of it, is changed, when we think of it as flowing from the same love which pardons. The stroke has now ceased to be a mere natural result of our evil. We see that it is no sign of anger, but of love. Whatever painful consequences of past sin may still linger about our lives, or haunt our hearts, we may be sure of two things about them all—that they come from Forgiving Mercy, that they come for our profit. The stroke of condemnation will never fall upon our pardoned hearts. That it may not the loving strokes of His discipline must needs accompany the embrace of His forgiveness.—A. Maclaren.

FORGIVENESS MINGLED WITH JUDGMENT

'Thou wast a God that forgavest them, though Thou tookest vengeance of their doings.'—Psalm xcix. 8.

Mercy and judgment must be harmonized. A magnanimous pardon worthy of God's Fatherhood and a scrupulous honour for law worthy of the Judge of all worlds, must meet together in God's providential government. We sometimes assume that forgiveness and judgment exclude each other, and that the climax of clemency is to release from pain rather than to produce sympathy with righteousness. But that is unscriptural and untrue. The forgiven suffer sometimes even beyond the average lot of their fellows. Many reasons can be assigned for this intimate association between judgment and forgiveness.

I. God joins pardon with impressive correction to guard us against mean utilitarian views of grace, and to train us into a true appreciation of the inwardness of His saving work. In the beginning of a soul's return to God it is often moved by selfish, superficial fear. The unhappy effects that follow after sin stir up loathing, trepidation, mental distress, outward amendment and prayer. But these initial motives are intended to be temporary and transitional only, and that man has not tasted the deepest secret of forgiveness who looks upon the grace as mere security against the portentous suffering in which the Divine wrath manifests itself.

II. Our surviving imperfections require that the forgiveness of the past shall be associated with a rigid judgment of its lapses. The fact that we look upon our oft-repeated delinquencies as trivial in their import shows that we need an admonitory discipline of sternness as well as a generous and compassionate absolution. Again and again are we tempted to a presumption which would pervert the grace of God. And the more closely God takes us to His favour and friendship the more urgent is the necessity for the providential lesson.

III. This union of judgment and mercy in the Divine dealings with us is designed to show that the law of retributive righteousness never ceases to operate in our lives. It is immanent as God Himself, for the law is the form assumed by His personal activity. Our deceitful hearts tempt us to imagine that the government which frees us from condemnation must be weak, shifty, vacillating in its foundation principles. In the dawning hours of our release from fear moods arise when we incline to think that grace is some clever surreptitious process to disburden us from our bonds and obligations, and following upon that we fall into an unconfessed and inarticulate antinomianism.

IV. This association of judgment and mercy makes the public declaration of Divine forgiveness possible. Escape must not be too easy for the man who is liable to fall away and repeat his offences. As private citizens even we can hold no relation with the man who seeks to shirk the just pain and penalty of his transgression. We might be suspected of condoning delinquencies, and when those delinquencies are felonious, to do so might carry with it serious consequences.

V. These chastisements are intended to illuminate the character of God, and to give an assuring insight into the dispositions of those upon whom they fall. Although infinite love associates itself with infinite holiness, that holiness is exacting to the last degree. It is no light thing to come short of Divine glory. Not only does the Divine government compel a judicial reckoning with the lapses of God's people, but something in the Divine character likewise insists upon it. He who experiences no inward quickening cannot be absolved from condemnation, and to that inward quickening temporal chastisements are contributory.—T. G. Selby, *The God of the Frail*, p. 54.

References.—XCIX. 8.—*Expositor* (1st Series), vol. ix. p 150. XCIX.—*International Critical Commentary*, vol. ii. p. 308. C. 2.—Spurgeon, *Evening by Evening*, p. 9. C. 5.—Spur-

geon, *Sermons*, vol. xxi. No. 1265. C.—*International Critical Commentary*, vol. ii. p. 310. CI. 1.—H. Alford, *Quebec Chapel Sermons*, vol. ii. p. 107.

'It is He that hath made us, and not we ourselves.'—Psalm c. 3.

This text is closely associated with the personal history of Melanchthon, but the facts are quite wrongly given by Dr. John Ker in his book on the Psalms. Dr. Ker supposed that the use of the verse related to a bereavement which took place shortly before the Reformer's death. It was, on the contrary, a passage which accompanied him in thought from the year 1529, when at the age of thirty-two he lost his baby son George, who was born at Jena on 25 November, 1527. Luther, writing to Jonas on 17 August, 1529, tells of this bereavement, and says that Melanchthon was suffering under it the more severely, because he had no previous experience of such a loss. Luther wrote: 'Hic cogitare potes, quid nobis sit operæ et curæ, ut hunc hominem tenerrimi et patheticissimi cordis solemur. Scis, quanti referat hunc hominem vivere et valere. Nos omnes cum eo ægrescimus et mœsti sumus' (Enders. Luther's *Briefwechsel*, vol. vii. p. 147). In letters of the time Melanchthon told his friends of the loss of little George, who was a child of rarest promise. He calls him 'suavissimus puer,' and we may conjecture that this child was all the dearer because the elder boy, Philip, who grew up and lived to old age, was delicate in body and dull in intellect. On 2 September, 1529, Melanchthon wrote to Myconius: 'I have lost my younger son, a very sweet boy'. His letters of the time are full of expressions of grief. 'Nothing in life was ever dearer to me than that little boy. There shone in him some rare gifts of mind. No words can tell anything of the wound I received when I lost him.' Not for years afterwards did Melanchthon venture to write of the passage which had comforted him in sorrow. After his own almost fatal illness at Weimar in 1540, he was attempting to comfort a friend in bereavement, and we find this passage: 'At the time of my son's death these words, "*Ipse fecit nos, et non ipsi nos*," brought me wonderful comfort when they came suddenly before me as I was looking through the Psalms' (*Corpus Reformatorum*, vol. iii. p. 1069).

In later years we find allusions to the same text in his letters of consolation. Thus, in July, 1549, he wrote to an acquaintance in Hamburg:—

'I remember that a certain friend of mine, who was in deep grief because of the death of his son, came by chance on a journey, while his sorrow was still fresh, on that passage in the Psalms, "*Ipse fecit nos, et non ipsi nos*". This admonition of providence so penetrated his thoughts that it was, he said, as if some Divine flame had been suddenly kindled in his heart while he was reading that text, and afterwards he became much more resigned.'—*C.R.* vol. vii. p. 429.

The text was chosen by Edward FitzGerald for his tombstone.

RELIGION AT HOME

'I will walk within my house with a perfect heart.'—Psalm ci. 2.

The ultimate basis of human society is the home. Out of this primal bond arise our highest virtues and our most sacred claims.

I. Thus it must needs be a primary instinct with a Christian to say, 'I will walk within my house with a perfect heart'. Unless we can please God in our own family and among our own kinsfolk, we may despair of succeeding among strangers or on public platforms.

II. Many young men and women are apt to dream that if they had a household of their own they could order it in the love and fear of God. But at present they are only members of a family where it is their duty not to give orders but to obey. Religion, if it be genuine, will make a good son and a good daughter all the more reverent and considerate and sympathetic and tender toward their father and mother.

III. The tie between brothers and sisters involves a relationship and a duty which are different though hardly less serious. The Bible is full of instances of its obligation, and of how fatally that obligation may be broken and denied.

IV. Often a modern household includes servants, and our domestic religion must embrace them also in its circle. We preach Christ to our servants when we treat them with the same fairness and gentleness and deference and courtesy and consideration which we ourselves should desire if we were in their places. People complain about bad servants; but in the long run they generally get the kind of service that they deserve to get.—T. H. Darlow, *The Upward Calling*, p. 326.

References.—CI. 2.—J. J. Bourdillon, *Plain Sermons for Family Reading* (2nd Series), p. 202. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxi. No. 1230. CI. 11.—J. Keble, *Sermons from Easter to Ascension Day*, p. 323. CI.—*International Critical Commentary*, vol. ii. p. 313. CII. 15.—G. S. Barrett, *Old Testament Outlines*, p. 132. CII. 17.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xix. No. 1411. CII. 18.—Archbishop Alexander, *Bampton Lectures*, 1876, p. 105.

AN UNFINISHED LIFE

'I said, O my God, take me not away in the midst of my days.'—Psalm cii. 24.

I. The inscription of this Psalm is unique. It describes the inner subject of the Psalm and makes a very beautiful heading. A prayer of the afflicted when he is overwhelmed and poureth out his complaint before the Lord. The afflictions are those of the nation and of the Psalmist himself, who added to his own sorrows the sorrow of his people. The elegy moves with mournful strain as he describes the bitterness of his pain. He has eaten ashes like bread, and mingled his drink with weeping. His days are shortened, his strength wasted, and death has crept up close to him, so that he is withered like grass. It seems to him so untimely, so premature that he should be taken, for he is assured that God is about

to remember Zion and to have mercy upon her. To have gone through all the pain and tribulation without tasting the ultimate joy, to have borne all the toil and the burden without sharing in the harvest and in the joy of the harvest-home, to have taken part in the long weary strife and to fall in the hour of victory, that eyes which had seen all the desolation and been salt with tears through many a sorrow should be closed in death as the new era breaks—that is the dreadful pathos of the situation.

II. We, too, have often a similar feeling about what we call unfinished lives and untimely deaths; we have this sense of pathos not for the victor of a hundred fights, but for the soldier who falls in his first campaign, not for the statesman who passes away laden with years and honours, but for the promising novice who was just earning his first laurels, not for the man who could say after a long and strenuous life, 'I have fought a good fight, I have finished the course'. Pity to him is an insult. He has lived out his life and done his work, and entered into his rest. We are oppressed with the thought of the irony of human life and of the vanity of human wishes at the sight of all unfinished work. The manuscript with the sentence broken off where the pen fell from the fingers, the picture with here and there a figure only sketched in charcoal, the statue with only suggestions of the beauty that was designed by it. But unfinished work can never be half so sad as unfinished lives. We pass by the unfinished work to consider the work actually accomplished. But an unfinished life has no such other reference to offer. It is a crop blighted before the harvest.

III. In all this natural train of thought we are liable to fall into a great and grievous error. We may have a wrong standard of judgment as to what is a finished life. We mostly think of it as length of days, the telling of a long tale. A long life may be an unfinished life, though it has run out to the last sand undisturbed. It may never have grasped for one moment the real purpose of living so that to all intents it is cut off in the midst of its days though the days were as the days of Methuselah. Human life cannot be judged by its years nor even by its work, but must be judged by its spirit, not the palpable and outside, such as the years passed or the deeds accomplished, but what is attained through the time and through the deeds, the true set of the character, the bent of life the discipline of the heart, the culture of the soul. Early or late, young or old, that is a finished life when the true end of life is apprehended. If a man has learned to love God and obey Him, if he has submitted his will to the will of God, if he has linked his life to the Eternal life and his love to the Eternal love, his life is not unfinished, though it seems taken away in the midst of his days. There can be nothing untimely when his times are in God's hands. Nothing can happen too early or too late.—Hugh Black, *University Sermons*, p. 131.

References.—CII. 24.—*Expositor* (3rd Series), vol. iv. p. 377. CII. 25-27.—J. J. Blunt, *Plain Sermons* (2nd Series), p. 114.

THE PERMANENCE OF SPIRIT IN THE FLEETINGNESS OF NATURE

'They shall perish, but Thou shalt endure: yea all of them shall wax old like a garment: but Thou art the same.'—Psalm cii. 26, 27.

I. The sentiment of this passage is to my mind unique in literature. The common sentiment of men in looking on the face of nature is the contrary. You gaze upon a field which you trod in childhood: and almost with bitterness the thought comes over you. Why is matter so much more enduring than spirit? You think of the multitude who are dead since first you trod this field—this field which seems to stand as fresh and green as of yore. It is such a sentiment as this which Tennyson expresses when he makes the brook sing 'Men may come and men may go, but I go on for ever'. It is such a sentiment as this which Byron expresses when he surveys the sea and cries, 'Time writes no wrinkle on thine azure brow'. It is such a sentiment as this which we all express when we speak of 'the everlasting hills'; we are contrasting the permanence of nature with the transitoriness of spirit.

II. In this outpouring of the Psalmist we have exactly the opposite idea; here, nature is the perishable and spirit the permanent. He looks at the field, at the sea, at the hills, and cries, 'They perish but the great Spirit remaineth'. It is the inversion of Tennyson's song—'Brooks may come and brooks may go, but soul goes on for ever'. And there is no doubt, even from a literary point of view, that the Psalmist is right. Even in this world the most abiding thing is a soul. The brook could never say 'I,' because it does not remain the same brook for two minutes. So far from going on for ever, it needs to be renewed every instant. The drops are new each moment. They only seem the same because my spirit is the same. It is my spirit which says 'I'—not the brook. The Psalmist saw this. He saw that the permanence attributed to each natural form is an illusion cast by the shadow of the soul's own immortality. The bloom of the flower is not a single bloom; it is a momentarily repeated colour. The water of a stream is not a single water; it is an ever renewed liquid. The strength of the mountain is not a single strength; it is a constantly replenished force coming from the play of atoms. The spirit alone abides; the spirit alone says 'I'.—G. Matheson, *Messages of Hope*, p. 65.

References.—CII. 26.—H. J. Wilmot-Buxton, *Waterside Mission Sermons* (1st Series), p. 44. CII. 27.—W. Baird, *The Hallowing of Our Common Life*, p. 1. CII.—*International Critical Commentary*, vol. ii. p. 316.

Psalm ciii. 1-6.

We have here a succession of scenes: (1) We are introduced to the law court, and we have a graphic picture of the condemned sinner brought before the bar of God and forced to plead guilty. The great act of Justification—'Who forgiveth all thine iniquities'. (2) We are taken to the hospital ward—'Who healeth all thy diseases'. Sin as a disease dealt with by the Great Physician. (3) The slave market—'Who re-

deemeth thy life from destruction'. (4) The throne room—'Who crowneth thee with loving-kindness'. (5) The banqueting hall—'Who satisfieth thy mouth with good things'; and (6) the heavenward flight—'Thy youth is renewed like the eagle's'.—Alexander Whyte.

BUNDLES OF BENEFITS

'Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits: who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases; who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with loving-kindness and tender mercies; who satisfieth thy mouth with good things.'—Psalm ciii. 2, 5.

The Psalmist set himself one day to count up the benefits he had received from God. He had not proceeded far when he found himself engaged in an impossible task. He found he could not count the blessings he had received in a single day, so set himself to find a help to memory. He took those benefits which he desired not to forget, and he tied them up in bundles. He shaped the bundles into a song. Let us open the bundles and examine them. There are five of them; we see that they are divided into three and two. The first three are bound together by a common reference to sin, and the consequence of sin. The last two reveal how God would deal with His people if sin were taken out of the way.

I. Who Forgiveth All Thine Iniquities. — The forgiveness of sin is one of the greatest wonders of Christian experience. It tells us that a man may turn over a new leaf, that his future may not be a copy of his past. The forgiveness of sin is possible, for it is one of the surest facts of real experience.

II. Who Healeth All Thy Diseases.—Sin has its consequences and one of them is disease. Sin then makes disease, and God's relation to disease is described so fully that it gives a distinctive name for God—Jehovah the Healer.

III. Who Redeemeth Thy Life from Destruction.—On the one hand, the final outcome of sin is destruction; on the other hand, the culmination of God's action in relation to sin is redemption. Not a redemption of the soul, but of the body, it is the redemption of both, of the whole man.

IV. Who Crowneth Thee with Loving-kindness and Tender Mercies.—These words are about the most musical and poetic in the whole Bible. God crowns with loving-kindness and tender mercies, and these are the highest expression of the loving interest which God has in His people.

V. Satisfieth Thy Mouth with Food.—The note of Christianity is that no human needs are left unsatisfied. Satisfied with food, so that every need shall be met, this is the promise. Thus in this fifth bundle there are many things for which the Psalmist might well be grateful not only for what is expressed in it, but for the promise of large blessings yet in store for us in the days to come.—J. Iverach, *The Other Side of Greatness*, p. 119.

References.—CIII. 3.—W. G. Horder, *Christian World Pulpit*, 1891, p. 374. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxv. No. 1492. CIII. 3, 4.—H. Drummond, *The Ideal Life*, p. 145.

RECOVERED YOUTHFULNESS

'Who satisfieth thy mouth with good things; so that thy youth is renewed like the eagle's.'—Psalm ciii. 5.

The great lesson is that those whom God forgives, crowns with favour, and feeds with spiritual bounties, possess the secret of perpetual youth. The life that God nurtures will always rejuvenate itself and escape the weariness and humiliation of age.

I. We find the process of waste and repair going on in connexion with the common experience of life. Great troubles come to men in sad and obstinate succession, so that they break down utterly; hope exhausts itself, and they are unable to expect anything besides new troubles or the stated recurrence of the old. And then brighter days come. The cloud breaks and the tension is overpast. They are like the man who goes down into the troubled pool a wreck and comes back with the bloom of a child on his face. Youth has renewed itself.

II. Youth is a symbol of the flowing tide of life, and in the natural order of things, age stands for its ebb. If God renew our youth like the eagle's we shall face without a single hurt the storms and conflicts and testing times of our earthly pilgrimage. Religious life never ought to be old. He whom God thus revives and inspires is able to forget his sorrows and to disburden himself of cares.

III. Many experiences remind us that the attritions in our daily lot tend to wear out religious life itself, and if we neglect the superhuman sources of repair it must wane and perish as surely as an over-pressed physical life. The spirit of the world, which looks everywhere with the suspicious eye, and affirms that the only law observed by the individual and the race is the law of selfishness, has taken possession of us, and every early enthusiasm is black with frostbite. Perhaps it is better we should stand aside and make way for the young, for we are stale, hypercritical, fertile in doubts and misgivings, prone to unhappy forecasts; and the work of the hour can only be done by those whose hearts are warm and eager. But surely that need not be. Religion brings the promise of rejuvenation to the mind, and the temper that has mastered us indicates that we are in closer intimacy with the world than with the God who renews the youth of His servants like the eagle's.

IV. The temper of old age sometimes steals upon men in their corporate life and influence wanes till final eclipse is reached. It is the decay of faith which disintegrates and topples down dominant nations and conquering empires. The frictions of toil, the fever of overwrought civilizations, the burdens and responsibilities of empire will wear a nation down into weakness, decrepitude, weariness, and despair unless its life be continually revived at the everlasting springs.

V. The recovered youthfulness is in itself meetness for immortality. We need not be appalled at the thought of spending an endless existence in God's presence, if in the Divine fountain of life we receive renewed baptisms into virginal freshness and vigour. The nature whose youth is here renewed like the

eagle's will be invigorated there for ever-ascending flights. The progress to which we are beckoned is towards an ideal of perpetual youth.—T. G. Selby, *The Unheeding God*, p. 216.

References.—CIII. 5.—S. A. Brooke, *Christ in Modern Life*, p. 351. CIII. 9.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xx. No. 1171.

DO OUR SINS ALWAYS FIND US OUT?

'He hath not dealt with us after our sins.'—Psalm ciii. 10.

If there be any one truth which holds the modern mind with a more relentless grasp than any other, it is that sin is followed inevitably and inescapably by its due penalty.

This solemn assurance is bound upon our minds by quoting some of the most emphatic sentences of Scripture. 'The soul that sinneth it shall die.' 'They have sown the wind, and they shall reap the whirlwind.' 'The wages of sin is death.' 'Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.' 'Sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.' These teachers strike us with a silent dread as they summon up the conspicuous sinners and make them pass in a procession of shame. Esau finds his profane word fastened as a doom on his spirit. Jacob is driven by his sin into exile, and compelled to reap its reward many years after, both in his own anguish and in the sins of the children. Saul becomes a madman and a suicide. David walks in the streets of his city with men's eyes condemning him, and sees his iniquity blighting his home and undoing the work of his unstained manhood. Solomon's voluptuous day ends in a corruption whose penalty he himself begins to bear. And so name after name is summoned up, down to Judas rushing on death in his despair, to show that each man receives the full reward of his iniquity.

Now of the element of truth in this teaching no one need have any doubt, but it is a truth so much overstated, and sometimes set down so nakedly, and without relation to other truths, as to be almost a lie. It is not the whole truth and nothing but the truth. It is not true that every sin is visited by its due penalty. It is not true that a man's sin always finds him out. It was true that if those Israelites to whom this sombre message was spoken had selfishly remained on the farther side of Jordan, and been content with their own portion, a severe penalty would have fallen upon them. Theirs would have been one of those modern sins for which a man suffers more surely than he knows. It is the sin of the man who selfishly and indulgently 'cultivates his garden'. But it is not true that a man always pays the uttermost farthing. The man who says so forgets that no single law is unlimited in its scope and power. He ignores the facts of life. He knows nothing of Christian experience. He forgets that law is not supreme and dominant. And he leaves out of account this imperial truth, that there is in the world and over the world a great will, a tender heart, and an infinite power. He forgets that this will uses and controls law. In a word, this grim and crude and unchastened teaching leaves out—God. The Psalmist saw the truth steadily, and he saw it whole when he wrote, 'He hath not dealt with us after our sins'.

Two boys were playing on a narrow ledge, worn smooth by adventurous feet, in the face of a seaside cliff. They had come along the path from the mill, which was set beside the neighbouring stream. Some twenty feet beneath the deep sea-green water lapped against the rock. One of the boys was the miller's son—a bold, lawless spirit. He had been warned again and again of the peril of the path. He had been caught and chastised. His defiant spirit loved the danger. This day a careless step to the edge paid its penalty, and he fell into the smooth deep water below. Death seemed to be his just fate. But his keen cry was heard in the mill, and his father ran out with anger on his face. But when he saw his son struggling with death the frown became a spasm of anguish, and at the risk of his own life he plunged in and rescued him. As that boy lay in his exhaustion, tended by loving care, he knew how far it was true that our sin finds us out. He understood this Psalmist's profounder word, 'He hath not dealt with us after our sins, nor rewarded us according to our iniquities'. He knew that the world, which seems to be all law, is really all love, and that mercy rejoices against judgment.

Let me illustrate this truth to you, looking at it along the broad lines of God's dealings with us.

I. Look, in the first place, along *the line of God's providence*. When a man's sin should find him out God's providence often interferes to avert the penalty and to hide the shame. A man has bowed his head for the stroke, but all that he has felt has been the touch of God's hand in mercy. Paul taught that 'whatsoever' a man soweth, that, and nothing different from that, shall he reap. If a man sow oats, he shall reap oats and not barley. If he sow figs, he shall not reap thistles. 'He that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.' But between the sowing and the reaping there come in other laws. There lies the whole providence of God. A man may sow and never reap at all. A man may reap where he has not sown, and gather where he has not strawed. And so between a man's sin and his finding out there comes in the providence of God. It is written in many a scripture, 'He hath not dealt with us after our sins'.

II. Look, in the second place, along *the line of God's law*. Men sometimes speak as though this law of penalty were the one dominant and overruling ordinance. They speak as though the consequences of a man's sin must sweep on like a grim and unresting fate, must pursue him as a Nemesis with the steady foot of inescapable vengeance. It is a terrifying truth that our sin sets in motion blind forces of retribution. Every man is aghast when he realizes how wide and far-reaching is the range of a single evil deed. But God uses His law to conquer law. God enlists the higher law of mercy to repel the

lower law of judgment. God counterworks the law of retribution by the law of repair.

III. Look, in the third place, along *the line of God's grace.* Clearly God deals with infinite mercy in His providence and in His law. But there is an inner world where, at first sight, a man's sins find him out ruthlessly. God's providence may prevent the direst consequences. God's law may renew the life and bring out the fair blossom of many an outward grace. But there are what Newman calls, in the noble title of his overdrawn sermon, 'The moral consequences of single sins'. There are those moral and spiritual issues and effects which are the curse of the soul. The profligate may sit 'a sober man among his boys,' but he cannot undo the past. He cannot cleanse his memory, he cannot be wholesome in thought. The events of a man's wilful years may be left behind him, but in the disability of his conscience, the defects of his character, the torture of old desires, and the indelible hues of sin and error with which his mind is dyed, he shows that his sin is finding him out. And deepest of all there is the sense of things done which cannot be undone, the unanswerable accusation of the past, the breach between the soul and God. We need something more than sweet providence, and something more than correcting law. We need grace. We need that forgiveness and renewal which are proclaimed in the Gospel and wrought out in the Cross of Christ. We need something more than the working of a providence which may interpose between us and our due reward. We need something more than laws which may order and direct new forces. We need to have the breach closed between God and the soul. We need the guilty conscience cleansed. We need the most awful and most desolating consequence of all removed from us, our fearfulness of God and our alienation to Him. These are given us by the Cross. —W. M. Clow, *The Cross in Christian Experience*, p. 167.

THE INFINITE FORGIVENESS

'As far as the east is from the west, so far hath He removed our transgressions from us.'—Psalm ciii. 12.

The writer of this Psalm groups his thoughts under three clearly defined heads. He speaks in the opening verses of personal forgiveness and the blessings which cluster round it. He next dwells upon the forgiveness which God has extended to His people in their covenant life, as illustrated in past history and the present outlook. And he fittingly closes his meditations with a tribute of praise to the power and sovereign dominion of the God whose mercy reaches to all generations. Our text belongs to the second division, and in terms of inspired rhapsody extols God's pardoning compassion to the race He had called into His covenant.

I. The average Jew acquired his sense of the Divine forgiveness by remembering that he was an organic part of a redeeming community. God had pitied and pardoned, in significant ways, the race to which he and his forefathers belonged; and whilst affirming from time to time by the prescribed forms his covenant birthright, he was under little or no temptation to regard himself as an outcast.

II. The hope of salvation which some men in modern days entertain because of their affiliation to the Church is a part of the same idea, and is a *doubtful* survival from Jewish times. God deals with men in racial and confederated aggregates, and is it not well to be identified with an accredited body to which His mercy is pledged? But another idea was emphasized in the ministry of Jesus Christ. His message was a message of condemnation to the body politic but of absolution to the separate penitent. He taught that the Divine Father dealt with the individual, that responsibility was first personal and afterwards corporate, and that men must be saved apart before they are gathered into elect communities.

III. It is the prerogative of a personal God to forgive, and where the Divine personality is either denied or relegated to an obscure background, no place can be found for this cardinal doctrine of the evangelical creed.

IV. The Psalmist's rhapsody is in no sense exaggerated and the disabilities of our sin do not follow us a day longer than we need their lessons. God's mercy brings a sweet oblivion of the shame and selfishness of misspent years. In the check put upon our natural and spiritual strength by the errors of the past, in the shrunken opportunities of which our half-maimed lives are made up, in the less splendid honours that beckon us forward, there may be plain marks of a disability entailed by early unfaithfulness and transgression; and yet God in His love has come so near to us that His immeasurable Being is interposed between our souls and past sin.

V. But the Psalmist implies in his magnificent metaphor that human transgression is dealt with by an act of superhuman grace and power. 'As far as the east is from the west.' The terms were of unknown range and unlimited elasticity. These figures of the firmament meant for him just as much as they mean for us with our larger knowledge. All the dimensions of space are used to illustrate this hymn of the Divine mercy through every line of which there murmurs the exhilarating breath of a spiritual springtide. No term can be put to the compassions of Almighty God.

VI. Although the Psalmist speaks in such bold and uncompromising terms of God's forgiveness, we must not assume that there is any strain of indifference to moral distinctions in the magnanimous act he celebrates. To pardon implies a vast constraint of pity, an indescribable sacrifice, the cost of which men only began to learn centuries later, and the immensity of which is still a mystery to us.—T. G. Selby, *The God of the Frail*, p. 39.

Reference.—CIII. 12.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xix. No. 1108.

THE FATHER AND HIS CHILDREN

'Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him.'—Psalm ciii. 13.

The life of each man may be looked at from two very different points of view. He may be regarded as an individual or as a member of society. Each of these two aspects brings into sight its own particular gifts and opportunities and obligations and advantages.

Our Lord's parables are divided into two classes according as they treat of this social general aspect of man's life or of his particular and individual life. Some of those which begin to tell us about the kingdom of God deal with social aspects of human life. Others, such as that of the Prodigal Son, are altogether occupied with the life of each individual. All these individualistic parables start with the great assumption that each man is related to God in a particular manner.

I. God is Your Father, and Because He is so, you have a Claim Upon God.—He wishes us to understand that the obligations of Fatherhood are distinctly upon Him. He draws a parallel: 'If ye, then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask Him?' He not only acknowledges that the claims of Fatherhood are upon Him but He acknowledges it in a way with which we are familiar and on grounds which we can thoroughly understand. God cannot neglect you nor forget you, nor refuse to hear your prayer. He asks you to believe that. This is the great primary act of trusting God which your heavenly Father asks of every heart of man.

(*a*) *We learn it not from Nature.*—If this demand upon our faith were made simply in the face of what we call the common course of Nature it would be practically impossible for us to respond to it.

(*b*) *But from Redemption.*—As we look out into the world and its history we see One hanging on Calvary. He claims to be God Himself, and if He is then, of course, the sight of Jesus of Nazareth, God Himself, hanging on the cross of pain and shame does not relieve all our doubts and all our difficulties, it does not tell us how this sad state of things came about or why it is allowed to go on, but it does tell us how God cares.

And this leads us to a further consideration.

II. Fatherhood Means that God has a Claim on Us.—He has a claim on our life and our obedience, and a claim on our service. It is always the service of sons. If you find yourselves engaged in anxious and strenuous work, you are there because God has said, 'Son, go and work to-day'.

A poor lady found in her son's coat when he came back from school three of the letters which she had written to him unopened. Poor lady! She said, 'My boy had the first claims on me, and I put everything aside to write to him every week,' and this was the result, and you can gather how she felt.

So God feels to-day over your unopened Bible and your unsaid prayers. Remember that we are not neglecting a tyrant but wounding the God Who loves us and Whose heart cries out for us all the time.

'Like as a father pitieth his children.'—Psalm ciii. 13.

Dr. Dale says on this text: 'Years ago when death came to me first and took a child, the anguish was great. Watching her while she lay dying, I learnt for the first time what is meant by the words, "Like as a father pitieth his children". Only so could I be taught the pity of God. And I learnt, too, at the same time, what God must feel at the loss of His children. What are all these passionate affections but parables of Divine things. Shall God suffer and not we?'

References.—CIII. 13.—J. Vaughan, *Fifty Sermons* (9th Series), p. 186. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxviii. No. 1650.

THE GOD OF THE FRAIL

'Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him. For he knoweth our frame: He remembereth that we are dust.'—Psalm ciii. 13, 14.

Our text directly asserts that God pities us because of the pains and vicissitudes to which this fragile framework of our passing lives condemns us. It also indirectly suggests that He blends mercy with His judgment because of the limitations under which we have to pass our probation upon earth, and because also of the obstructions presented by the flesh to our best thought and service, as well as to the great destiny which is already asserting its promise within us.

I. These words remind us that the pathos of our mortality enlists the pity of the Eternal. God's survey takes in the final picture of our weakness and all the scenes of pain and humiliation which lead up to the last, sad, tear-bathed page of our earthly history. Is not His scrutiny mollified by the remembrance of everything we may have to endure? That principle is the clue to many enigmas in God's dealings with the children of men. But for the infirmities of the flesh we might never taste the sweetest springs of God's tenderness. It is not without a far-reaching reason that God has fashioned us of a weak, sensitive, perishable material. It is the children of the dust who are destined to know at last the deepest secret of His heart.

II. These words imply that this brief life man spends in the flesh enlists the Divine compassion, because great spiritual issues turn upon a right use of its opportunities. The issues of a stern probation intertwine themselves with the textures of our earthly lives.

(*a*) This probation is not only limited in its appointed term, but hampered by the desires engendered within the bodily framework. But in His merciful judgment God penetrates through what is apparent and avoids our pitiable confusions between moral and physical causes.

(*b*) These words seem to imply that we are the objects of pity because the flesh puts a drag upon our holiest aspiration and service. The Divine Father remembers that we are compassed with frailty and hemmed in by disqualifications. Whilst waywardness must be corrected and moral deformity in all its aspects must be removed, He has taught us that infirmity is distinguished from sin, and, through the mission of One who was tempted like unto His brethren, has assured us of exhaustless compassion.

(*c*) The flesh obscures the vision of spiritual things, and these words imply that the Father of light looks graciously upon those who are peering through the imprisoning gloom of the senses in the hope that they will yet see His face. The splendour in which God dwells is filtered of its overpowering brightness by the dullness of the flesh, and we may strain our spiritual senses in vain to see it as it is. God ordained this when He made man of the dust of the ground, and for our constitutional limitations has ready an apologetic, tender, magnanimous final—'He remembereth that we are flesh'.—T. G. Selby, *The God of the Frail*, p. 1.

References.—CIII. 13, 14.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xvi. No. 941. CIII. 15, 16.—J. Aspinall, *Parish Sermons* (1st Series), p. 55. CIII. *International Critical Commentary*, vol. ii. p. 323. CIV. 1.—J. Vaughan, *Fifty Sermons* (9th Series), p. 257. CIV. 13, 14.—T. Barker, *Plain Sermons*, p. 93. CIV. 16.—T. Sadler, *Sermons for Children*, p. 141. CIV. 19.—E. A. Askew, *Sermons Preached in Greystoke Church*, p. 132. CIV. 19-23.—H. M. Butler, *Harrow School Sermons*, p. 176.

Psalm ciii.

This Psalm was read once a day in the family of John Angell James, of Birmingham. When his wife died he was asked if it should be read. 'Yes,' he said, 'it is as full of comfort as of thanksgiving.'

Psalm civ.

The 104th Psalm was a favourite with Alexander von Humboldt. After speaking in his *Cosmos* of the exalted views of nature given in the Old Testament, as the living expression of the omnipresence of God in the visible world, he refers specially to this Psalm: 'We are astonished to find, in a lyrical form of such limited compass, the whole universe, the heavens and the earth, sketched with a few bold touches. The toilsome labour of man, from the rising of the sun to his setting, when his daily work is done, is contrasted with the moving life of the elements of nature. This contrast and generalization of the action of the natural world, and this vision of an omnipresent invisible power which can renew the earth or crumble it to dust, are not so much a glowing and gentle, as a solemn and exalted conception of creation!' Humboldt names Psalms lxv. 6-13, lxxiv. 15-17, as having similar features in softer form.

Verses 19-24 are the Evensong of the Russian Church.—J. K.

THE POWERS OF NATURE

'Who maketh His angels spirits; His ministers a flaming fire.'—Psalm civ. 4.

When we survey Almighty God surrounded by His holy angels, His thousand thousands of ministering Spirits, and ten thousand times ten thousand standing before Him, the idea of His awful Majesty rises before us more powerfully and impressively. We begin to see how little we are, how altogether mean and worthless in ourselves, and how high He is, and fearful. The very lowest of His angels is indefinitely above us in this our present state; how high then must be the Lord of angels! The very seraphim hide their faces before His glory while they praise Him; how shamefaced then should sinners be when they come into His presence!

It is a motive to our exertions in doing the will of God to think that, if we attain to heaven, we shall become the fellows of the blessed angels. Indeed, what do we know of the courts of heaven, but as peopled by them? and therefore doubtless they are revealed to us that we may have something to fix our thoughts on when we look heavenwards. Heaven, indeed, is the palace of Almighty God, and of Him doubtless we must think in the first place; and again of His Son our Saviour, who died for us, and who is manifested in the Gospels, in order that we may have something definite to look forward to: for the same cause, surely, the angels also are revealed to us, that heaven may be as little as possible an unknown place in our imaginations.—J. H. Newman.

THE DAY'S WORK

'Man goeth forth to his work and to his labour until the evening.'—Psalm civ. 23.

I. What are we in the World for?—Why are we here and what for? He is a little man in a little world who thinks he can give a complete answer to this question. This mystery is great, but it is plainly the purpose of the mystery to challenge our courage and to lead the human mind onward step by step to the conquest of the unknown. We are here, must it not be? as parts of this great creation, to fill our place in it as faithfully as we can; to contribute to the development of its purpose by bringing our individual life with all its peculiar endowments and opportunities, relations, and interest into correspondence with that purpose; to work in harmony with the power, the wisdom, the goodness which most manifestly pervade the world, and are slowly building it up into strength and beauty.

II. Man's Creative Power.—We are here to share the work of God in creating the world—called not only to subdue and control but to create. Creation is not finished but is always proceeding. And in this continuous and never-ceasing work of creation man can help or hinder, develop or retard, the creative purpose and process. The one great teaching of modern knowledge is that not anything above a certain low level of excellence comes by natural law unaided by man. That all best things in the world

of nature to-day are the result of his thought and toil. Man is not only a factor in evolution but an instrument. He has his contribution to make toward the finishing and perfecting of the material universe.

III. Man's Share in Making Himself.—In his own making and saving, in the development of personal faculty and character, man is called to work and to labour until the evening. What he can do for the earth and for the creatures and things which live upon it he can do for himself, fulfil and finish the Creator's purpose and plan. God makes nothing right away and perfect at once. Like the rest of His work man was left unfinished that man himself might complete what God began. We can do nothing ourselves without co-operation. To an extent practically unlimited we can make or mar ourselves. We cannot be passive recipients of the Divinest blessing of life. The salvation that costs us nothing is worth nothing, an unreal rescue from an unreal danger. God needs our co-operation or He will fail of His saving purpose.

IV. Man's Share in Christ's Work.—In redeeming the world even more than in creating it God works through men and in human ways. God the Saviour must be helped even more than God the Creator. It is through men God helps and saves men and creates His new heaven and His new earth. They are the hiding-place of His power, and through their hands He reaches forth to save and heal His wandering children.

THEOLOGY AND SCIENCE

O Lord, how manifold are Thy works! in wisdom hast Thou made them all: the earth is full of Thy riches.'—PSALM CIV. 24.

THIS Psalm is a beautiful poem on Natural Theology. Natural Theology (by which is meant the knowledge of God to be obtained from the study of nature) was in much *worse* favour during the first half of the nineteenth century than it has been since. When, however, the science of geology became developed, the system of Natural Theology which has been so popular, received a rude shock. It was shown by the geological records within the rocks, i.e. by the fossils there preserved, that the world instead of being as chronologists had supposed only about 6000 years old, must have existed untold ages, and that instead of the work of creation being confined to six literal days, life has existed upon the earth for many millions of years. The result of this revelation on the part of natural science led many good people to denounce it as being contrary to the revelation in God's word. For some twenty or thirty years the battle was hot between the theologians and scientists. Of late, however, the noise of battle has grown less loud. We have come to recognize the fact that revelation and nature are two parts of one whole: that both books are written by God Himself: and that He does not contradict in one what He has written in another, but one is the compliment of the other—the other part—without which it cannot be fully understood. Nature without the Bible is certainly not complete: and the Bible in many respects becomes a much more intelligible book when it is read in the light which a knowledge of nature gives. Let me give an example on both sides.

I. First, on the need of revelation to supplement the teaching of nature. From none of the records in the book of nature do we gain any light whatever on the origin of matter, or of life in the first instance. We see as it were the working of the machinery but do not see or understand the motive power. There must be, as even Mr. Herbert Spencer freely admits, a power behind all the operations of nature, the existence of which the man of science cannot ignore, although he cannot find out by his science what it is. Now here comes in revelation with the explanation which nature does not give. Here God reveals Himself as the Power, the Force, whose existence the man of science admits. He is the first great cause. Here then in the teaching of this book we find the counterpart of nature.

II. Now on the other side, let me give an example of the advantage which the believer in revelation may derive from the study of nature: how it helps us to interpret and to understand the Bible. So far from Scripture and physical science being at variance, we shall find that the two harmonize most perfectly. Just as modern researches into the history of ancient nations—such as Assyria, Babylon, Egypt—are continually throwing new light upon Bible history and prophetic teaching, so also the researches of our scientific men are constantly helping us better to understand the Scriptures. Instead of warning young people against the study of physical science lest it should lead them to scepticism and agnosticism, I would advise all who can to study nature. Accept the fact that the force, which as Herbert Spencer admits, lies behind all phenomena is the great God; believe that in His infinite mind the conception of nature existed before the facts of nature were wrought out, even as the conception of a piece of machinery exists in the mind of the inventor before it is formed. Study nature in this reasonable spirit, and everywhere you will see more and more clear evidence of the working of an intelligent, omniscient mind; and you will be constrained to say, 'O Lord, how manifold are Thy works! in wisdom hast Thou made them all: the earth is full of 'Thy riches'.—S. J. WHITMEE, *British Weekly Pulpit*, p. 217.

REFERENCES.—CIV. 24.—W. F. Shaw, *Sermon Sketches*, p. 30. A. Jessopp, *Norwich School Sermons*, p. 64. T. Sadler, *Sermons for Children*, p. 155. G. S. Barrett, *Old Testament Outlines*, p. 140. C. Kingsley, *Village Sermons*, p. 1. CIV. 26.—J. D. Burns, *Christian World Pulpit*, 1891, p. 314. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxi. No. 1259. CIV. 28.—G. A. Sowter, *Sowing and Reaping*, p. 37. CV 1, 2.—B. F. Westcott, *Village Sermons*, p. 333. CV. 17.—H. J. Buxton, *God's Heroes*, p. 20. CV. 17-19.—G. Trevor, *Types and the Antitype*, p. 71.

THE SPIRIT OF THANKSGIVING

'Thou openest Thy hand. . . . I will sing unto the Lord.'—PSALM CIV. 28, 33.

THE intention of Providence includes a response as well as a gift—an appeal or a claim made on us as

well as the meeting our appeal. Providence towards mankind requires a personal and kindred return from men. It is not satisfied by some recognition in the way of religious routine, or by men in believing that it is Divine and benevolent. 'Lord, Lord,' is not enough. Nothing is enough unless God hears His bounty answered by the Spirit of His Son saying in our hearts, Abba, Father, and unless He receives the service of our redeemed.

I. Life and Duty.—Religion is practically two things: Life and Duty. It comes from God as Life. It goes to Him still alive—'a living sacrifice, acceptable to God, a reasonable service'—as Duty. In the power of the life that it receives it keeps the Commandments, it obeys and tends to sympathize with the Divine purpose and intention. The Spirit of Christ speaking through its heart says, 'Abba, Father'. The same Spirit, working in its life, does the Father's will. And so keeping the Commandments it becomes more than a recipient of life and a pensioner on bounty; it 'enters into life,' it exercises the citizenship of the kingdom of heaven. How much good there is in the world that seems to miss completion and life because it keeps out of this great vital cycle. God is ceaselessly pouring upon our lives and out of His open hand and yearning heart stimulus and opportunity and cheer. And we only occasionally allow the life that He is giving to go back to him in communion and service. Truth springs from the earth and righteousness looks down from heaven. But the truth sinks back to earth again, failing of contact with that which claims it from above and could alone complete it. On all sides we can see so much that is so good accomplishing so little because it does not go up alive to God—repentances that stick fast in the mire; strength that beats the air or builds on sand; sacrifices that are mainly losses; faith that sings no songs. And for this great sad fact of wasted goodness and exhausting effort there is but one sufficient explanation—the absence or the lack of life.

II. The Cycle of God's Providence.—Nothing surely can make our lives satisfactory outside the cycle of God's loving Providence, and nothing can really frustrate them if they be making their true answer to God, uttering their Abba, Father. This is the purpose of our being and of that Father by Providence which works continually to bring us into harmony, communion, fellowship with God. If we will consent to it, and come willingly into its cycle of blessing, nothing can stay us from singing to the Lord. For underneath all our singing will be the gladness of a speech that must for ever make for praise—the voice of the Spirit in our hearts, saying Abba, Father.

References.—CIV. 30.—J. M. Neale, *Readings for the Aged* (4th Series), p. 122. *Ibid. Sermons Preached in Sackville College Chapel*, vol. i. p. 382. J. E. Vaux, *Sermon Notes* (4th Series), p. 52. J. Keble, *Sermons for Ascension Day to Trinity Sunday*, p. 164. CIV.—*International Critical Commentary*, vol. ii. p. 329. *Expositor* (2nd Series), vol. i. p. 174.

THE TRIAL OF JOSEPH

'Until the time that His word came: the word of the Lord tried him.'—Psalm cv. 19.

The career of Joseph is of the kind to which we give the name of romance. That word is a vague one, and it would cost us some pains to define; but we all think we know a romance when we hear it, and the tale of Joseph is one. A boy of genius, hated by his brothers because he was a genius and knew it, led through startling vicissitudes of fortune, from a father's partial love to the estate of slave, from the black arch of a dungeon to the splendour round a throne; then the marshal of a drama of poetic justice, apt almost beyond the devices of fiction; last in a scene of rarely equalled pathos binding up again the ruptured bond of home, and crowning the boy's dream of dominion over his father's house by a fulfilment as sweet as it was wonderful. What have we here but the very authentic stuff of romance, even as you would find it in an Odyssey of Greeks, or a tale of Arabians, or a chivalrous fiction of our North.

I. Joseph's tale is *our* tale. I called it a romance; and I call the moral life of a man or woman a romance. There is a region of your life to which the marvellous cleaves and cannot be separated. The moment we have to think not of the trader or labourer or citizen, but of the spiritual being that wears the name which is ours, that moment our life is touched with mystery. I see not why one should be more thrilled by the romance which Joseph lived between home and prison and palace, than by the romance we live ourselves between cradle and life-work and the grave.

II. Is Joseph's prison also ours? That, too. And in it are spent the more part of our days. A prison not of brick or stone; a prison with walls of glass, and you can see through them; of air, and you cannot touch them; but the walls hold you caged as if they were iron or granite. The name of that prison is Life in the Flesh.

III. 'The promise of Jehovah tried him.' How blessed is it when this, the most universal trial of the religious life—the contradiction between our faith and the things which do appear—is felt by us, to remember that it *is* trial, that the promise is only trying us. How supportable is this world of appearances when once we have seen that these daunting and humiliating appearances are there only that we may have our chance of resisting them, of refusing to be brow-beaten, of asserting against them the Divine assurance in our hearts that we are not what we seem, and this mortal encompassment is not the fact.

References.—CV. 19.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxii. No. 1277. CV. 24.—G. S. Barrett, *Old Testament Outlines*, p. 140. CV. 41.—J. Davies, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 1513, p. 241. CV.—*International Critical Commentary*, vol. ii. p. 339.

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A SOUL

'They believed His words; they sang His praise. They soon forgot His works, and lusted exceedingly in the wilderness.'—Psalm cvi. 12-14.

I. They believed His words. I venture to say there is not a soul who cannot recall, at least once or twice,

such hours of vivid deliverance, when God's power thrust itself into your life and made clear your path before you. It may require perhaps a certain effort on your part to remember just at once such times of Divine interposition, but they are there none the less. They come in different ways.

(*a*) Perhaps it was that day when some one dearer to you than life itself was lying on the borderland of death. You just prayed with all the passion of a soul that shrank from the anguish of bereavement, that God would hear you and give you back, even for a little while, the life that seemed to be slipping from your grasp. Then the miracle took place.

(*b*) Or it may be that this Divine interposition in life comes through deliverance from some great temptation.

(*c*) Or it may be that God reveals Himself in a human life in saving from some great personal peril.

II. Most of us who have experienced such deliverance have written the second chapter in that spiritual biography, the chapter of praise. I do not know anything more beautiful than he who has thus come out of such a deliverance writing in his deeds of love and charity his record of gratitude.

III. But then comes the other side of all this, the story of forgetfulness and indifference. They believed His words, then sang His praise, but they soon forgot Him. Literally, they made haste to forget Him. The vividness of their faith was obliterated by the suddenness of their indifference.

IV. Forgetfulness passed by a natural stage into apostasy. When the psalm of gratitude ceased, the discord of sin began. The soul must feed on something. It craved other food. Its passions demanded other sustenance. So inevitably sin creates an unnatural and unsatisfied appetite. It begins by making us forget God and it ends by making us crave for that which makes the very thought of God distasteful. So the tragic schism between the soul and its Maker is rendered complete.—D. S. Mackay, *The Religion of the Threshold*, p. 310.

Reference.—CVI. 15.—R. M. Benson, *Redemption*, p. 30.

MAN'S REJECTION OF GOD

'They thought scorn of that pleasant land, and gave no credence unto His word.'—Psalm cvi. 24.

Whatever diversity of opinion upon the sacred significance of life may be represented in this congregation, there is at least one thing upon which all serious-minded souls will agree, and that is, that there is nothing more important in the moral order than man's acceptance or rejection of God.

I. Causes of Man's Rejection of God.—In the Bible there are many causes for man's rejection of God.

(*a*) *Dissatisfaction with the Invisible.*—The first of these seems to be the incapacity of man to rest satisfied with the invisible. He doubts the invisible. It does not seem to satisfy him, and he ever and anon looks about him in the world for some object upon which he can fasten the marvellously mixed emotions of his nature and at the same time satisfy the inquisitiveness of his reason. Hence it was that in early days when Moses, the man of God, was in the mount with the Father of us all, receiving from Him a revelation, the privileged people were dissatisfied with his absence and with that which the absence represented; they longed for the visible. They thought that the visible was the real.

(*b*) *Evil Associations.*—But this is not at all the only reason. We come down the stream of Hebrew history. We pass through the judicial period, through the monarchical period, and we come to the golden age of the Old Hebrew monarchy, to Solomon in his splendour, in all his Oriental magnificence. He has been warned of God against the peril of evil associates. He became associated with heathen women, and his heart strayed from God Who made him what he was. And thus we are enabled to see that evil associates, forbidden by God and known to men, will come between God and man and will produce the same result in the moral order that is produced by man's impatience with a religion that has in its centre the invisible.

(*c*) *Thinking Scorn of Religion.*—But in our text you have not to do with either of these. Here the cause that leads to separation between man and God is in the field of fancy. It is in the realm of the imagination. 'They thought scorn of that pleasant land.' The children of Israel wondered why they had been brought up from Egypt. Their insurrection took the practical form of trying to stone Moses. And the cause of this was that not one of them knew anything about the land. They refused the evidence, and they were in a state of open hostility to God their Father. They thought scorn of the land, and the consequence of this 'thinking scorn' is that they 'gave no credence' to the word of Moses. The word of Moses was the Word of God, and therefore the rejection of the message of Moses was the rejection of the Word of God. They thought scorn; and then they appear to have lost the capacity even to believe rightly about Divine things.

II. An Everyday Experience.—That spirit is not quite extinct. There is a large number of persons who first think scorn of religion and then become not only disobedient to God's Word, but apparently they lose the power to grasp the weight of its increasing evidence. To bring this subject up to everyday life, we do not say that God gives us a land flowing with milk and honey, we do not adorn this land with all the fertility with which God was pleased to stimulate the spiritual life of the Israelitish nation. But we have our Canaan. What Canaan was to the Israelites Christ is to us, Christ in all the majesty of His Person, Christ in all the potentiality of His office, Christ in all the catholicity of His love, Christ in all His unchanging, undying sympathy with suffering humanity.

III. Factors in Coming to Christ.—But in our invitations to men to come to our Canaan, that is, to Christ, there are three factors that must not be omitted:—

(*a*) *A Sense of Sin.*—The first of these is sin. Let

men be as optimistic as they may about the advancement of education, about the spread of order, sin cannot be excluded from the body politic nor from the individual nor from the race. It is as certain as that there is blood in the body, that penetrating and inter-penetrating the moral nature of man there is the awful reality that God calls sin. For that God has been pleased to provide a great remedy. It is pardon, and this pardon is given through Christ. Society cannot pardon sin. Society can punish. It is only Christ Who has the power to say 'Go, and sin no more'.

(*b*) *Repentance.*—The second factor in our message is repentance. Man needs this if he desires to have perpetual affinity and association with God. A bad, unpardoned soul in heaven would make it hell. There must be affinity between those who dwell together, and the only way in which this affinity can be ours is announced to us by Him Who has made it absolutely certain, that is, Christ. He gives us His righteousness, and when we are in Christ God beholds us as in Him. We are one with His righteousness.

(*c*) *Power.*—And there is the third great factor that we may not be without. I need not only that my sins be forgiven, I want power to resist sin. I want freedom, and freedom consists in the power to master sin that will otherwise master me. Why do men commit sin at all? Because sin is stronger than man. Christ makes man stronger than his sin. Young men, carry away that sentence with you, love it, translate it into the moral rhetoric of your everyday life, and when you are tempted again, remember that Christ makes you stronger than your sin.

IV. What is our Response?—What is our response to the appeal? Is there nobody here who thinks 'scorn of the pleasant land,' and then gives 'no credence' to the Word of God Almighty? Is there no one who thinks scorn? Why, there are crowds of men who gather their ideas of religion not from their Bible, not from the character of people who love the Bible and God, but from some caustic publication or novel that seems to make light of truths that God holds dear, and of religion by which we are to live and without which we dare not die. You think scorn of the pleasant land and of those who think anything of it. No, you will say, that is hard, that is uncharitable—we do not think scorn, but we will act scorn. God expects every soul baptized into the Church and who rejoices in the association with Christ, to work and to labour. He has purchased to Himself 'a peculiar people, zealous of good works'. How many here are addicted to any form of moral work? Spiritual levity precedes spiritual unbelief, and spiritual unbelief means spiritual sterility. The man that is frivolous about religion will soon disbelieve it, and the man who disbelieves will not only not aid God's work but will hinder it. All this is very serious and sorrowful. Now what are we to do? The first thing, I say, and especially to the young, is this: In all my reading I have never yet read of one experience, and that is that any soul who gave himself to Christ ever regretted having done so. You will never find a nobler religion than the one presented to you. Whoever discovered a better? Frivolity is such a peril to the English nation at the present time. Who would have his spirit tossed upon the torrent of the stream and in the end find himself without possibility of returning, without capacity to believe? There are dangers in the world of the imagination, dangers in the world of fancy, dangers which God has immortalized for our learning in these well-known words—'They thought scorn of that pleasant land, and gave no credence unto His word'.

THE PLEASANT LAND

'Yea, they despised the pleasant land, they believed not His word: but murmured in their tents, and hearkened not unto the voice of the Lord.'—PSALM CVI. 24, 25.

THIS Psalm was written when Israel had a long history stretching far back into the past. The particular episode brought before us in these verses is the refusal of the children of Israel to advance and take possession of the Promised Land. There is one parallel which is frequently drawn between ourselves and the ancient Israelites. Canaan was to the Israelites what heaven is to us.

I. There is a Pleasant Land nearer to us than that which is divided from us by death. A Pleasant Land which we might possess now if we had the courage and made the necessary effort. Much that is meant to be ours now we push from us, and locate somewhere in the after-life. The Christians of the Dispersion really knew something of the 'joy unspeakable and full of glory'. We find Wesley testifying to what he had seen—men, women, and children saved from sin, and filled with warm, holy feelings. Christian experience has been shared by many who had no genius of any kind.

II. Let us be real then, and ask ourselves what efforts were necessary to enter this Pleasant Land.

(*a*) Inwardly we should have to overcome our sins, our sinful ways of thinking or speaking, our sloth, despondency from past failures, the deadening weight of routine, acquiescence in what we are.

(*b*) Outwardly, too, we have our difficulties. Some may fear social coolness, ridicule heard or suspected. We have often heard exhortations to greater earnestness, and have approved. Has not our habitual sloth interposed between the approving judgment and the will to do? As Israel murmured 'in the tents' so we excuse our sloth by what we are and have been.

III. But besides our contempt of the Pleasant Land of Christian experience another reason for our failure is unbelief. Such unbelief is fashionable. When Christianity was young Christian joy and exultation were then real things. But in these later ages our religion is a sober thing, and it is well if we attain peace. All the spiritual experiences of the New Testament, then, are real, and are possible now. What is begun here is perfected there.—**P. J. MACLAGAN**, *The Gospel View of Things*, p. 23.

THEIR INVENTIONS

Psalm cvi. 29.

How often does the word 'inventions' occur in the holy record? It seems quite a modern word, but in reality what is there that is modern? The whole text reads: 'Thus'—as a thing done over and over again—'Thus they provoked Him to anger with their inventions,' their tricks, their small novelties, their empty and futile devices. We do not make any graven images now; still we may be credited with inventions, as we shall presently see. What are these inventions, under what name soever they may flourish amongst us? They are attempts to do without God, to put substitutes instead of the living Father, to displace the spiritual and ineffable by something that we can see and handle.

I. What are these inventions? They are attempts to supplement God. The Israelites did not wish to dethrone Jehovah. It would have struck them as a very curious suggestion if you had charged them with a desire to get rid of God; they would have replied that they had no such desire or intention, but they would endeavour to supplement the majesty of the Eternal; something that was nearer to their own hands they would like to be able to approach. It is so difficult to take in eternity, it was never fitted to the human nostril; and so difficult to take in infinity, it was never shaped and adapted to the human eye. So they would have something supplemental, something subsidiary, something of the nature of a deputized Jehovah. They, poor innocent creatures, did not want to unseat the King, they wanted to have some kinglings to whom they could talk in a way more or less familiar. These were part of the 'inventions' of old Israel.

II. What has been the opinion of God about all these inventions? That opinion is given in the text—'They provoked Him to anger with their inventions: and the plague brake in upon them'. God has cleansing days, great ventilating shafts which He opens now and then in the cumbrous process of all this human evolution; so He calls in the plague, and says: 'They are past entreaty, pray for them no more, let the plague go'. And then we wonder where the plague came from, and what we have done to provoke this uproar and upset of the ordinary commonplaces of life. There is always a moral reason even behind an earthquake.

III. Now 'their inventions' sometimes take curious forms and expressions—as lots, coincidences, omens. Sometimes we have given way to these tricky and apparently innocent temptations. An omen! I heard a voice, I heard no words, but I heard a voice, and it seemed to be a calling, an inviting, seductive voice; something I am sure is going to happen, because the omen was so distinct and so delightful and impressive. 'Man was made upright, but he sought out many inventions.' We are led away from simplicity; we are led away from restful truths. We tempt God.

IV. What is God's view of all such invention? We have that view in the text, and in Psalm xcix. 8 we have 'Thou tookest vengeance of their inventions'. He wrung their necks, and dashed them to the dust; He has swept out all these god-houses and invention-museums and ground them to powder, and He will do so again, and all your lots and omens and coincidences and shadows and table-rappings and table-turnings and all your miserable inventions, which are lies from the beginning to the end, because they spring out of a lie. The Apostle in Romans i. 30 says, 'They are inventors of evil things'. Good things do not need inventing; evil things suggest themselves for incarnation and expression, and the evil things sometimes have falsehood enough in them to say, If you embody us, if you incarnate us, you will do a world of good by showing what evil really is if properly interpreted. You know the old fable in the writings of Erasmus in which the tempted man asks for a dark place, for a more hidden place, and when he gets to the place which he cannot get beyond he says to the woman-devil, Can God see us here? That one question was like a lightning flash that cut the darkness in pieces and made midnight brilliant as noonday. We cannot bury ourselves out of God's sight; He is as familiar with the bottomless pit as with the immeasurable heights of heaven.

Then whence is the cleansing? There is only one answer to that inquiry. Only one power can cleanse the heart and bring us back to holiness, simplicity, and real sonship in the household of God. All this has to come out of us by blood, by the precious blood, by the redeeming, atoning, priestly blood of the Son of God.—Joseph Parker, *City Temple Pulpit*, vol. v. p. 136.

References.—CVI. 45.—L. E. Shelford, *The Church of the People*, p. 128. CVI. 48.—J. Percival, *Some Helps for School Life*, p. 177. CVI.—*International Critical Commentary*, vol. ii. p. 339. CVII. 9.—W. G. Rutherford, *The Key of Knowledge*, p. 256. CVII. 14.—F. D. Maurice, *Sermons*, vol. iii. p. 149. CVII. 17-20.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxxi. No. 1824. CVII. 19.—E. A. Askew, *Sermons Preached in Greystoke Church*, p. 42. CVII. 21.—J. Baldwin Brown, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. vi. pp. 312, 375. CVII. 23.—S. Gregory, *How to Steer a Ship*, p. 91.

FROM THE SEA TO THE CITY

'They that go down to the sea in ships, that do business in great waters; these see the works of the Lord and His wonders in the deep.'—Psalm cvii. 23, 24.

To return to London—in this forge of human work and passion—when one has been living with great nature, almost in solitude, is always a curious experience. The things which are considered of vast importance in London seem small; the battles waged here with amazing ardour, needless and apart from the greater issues of life. Man, we think, is walking in a vain show, and disquieting himself in vain. The great things of nature, the mighty powers we have felt at work, have dwarfed the business and battles in which men are so impetuously concerned. Yet while we live in the movement of mankind, with a silent love and with faith in its salvation, knowing that in its errors there is truth, and in its wrong

victorious good—we ought, when we have been for a time near to the life of nature, to be able to bring back from it some thoughts which may support, dignify, and add beauty to our life with humanity.

I. I have been staying in Cornwall on the very verge of the Atlantic; all day long, around the Lizard Point, the multitudinous ships passed by. I thought of all this energy of man, of all this sorrow of the world, as I watched the ships sail by, and wondered at that unconquerable force and hopefulness of mankind which failure only urged into greater activities—and wondering, I said, 'Almighty God is at the root of man, else long ago he had despaired'.

II. Secondly, could we but realize the Infinite, set free our thought from the limiting notions of space and time, imagine even in a little way the infinite scale in which things are done, all that I have tried to say would become clearer to us. We live and die, we think, in a finite world. In reality we are sailing in the infinite, and our little life here is like the momentary opening and closing of an eyelid in comparison with the endless being which even now belongs to us, and in which we live. The conception of the Infinite has been made a thousand-fold easier to us by science. But its clearest revelation is in the soul itself. The soul knows, as it knows immediately what love is, that the Infinite is the fact which underlies the universe; knows that it is consciously at one with infinity and belongs to it for ever. To realize the infinite love, to feel our childhood to it, to live in it, to die for it, and to pass, after death, into closer union with it—that is to be a Christian and to have the Christian faith. And no words contain its fullness so completely as those which Jesus used, when he called the infinite Creator our Father, and us, who share in his infinity, His children.

III. This world in which we live, this limited world of time and space, this present in which we clash incessantly with transient and dying things, with interests of a day—this is only our momentary home. We are to do our duty in it, to share in its higher life, to love our comrades in its fleeting scene—but our true resting-place is not in the passing and the finite. We are sailing over the infinite which for the moment seems the finite, to a further infinite, on which, in a doubling and redoubling life, we shall sail for ever.—S. A. Brooke, *The Kingship of Love*, p. 1.

Reference.—CVII. 23, 24.—C. Kingsley, *Discipline and Other Sermons*, p. 23.

'JESUS, LOVER OF MY SOUL'

'So He bringeth them unto their desired haven.'—Psalm cvii. 30.

To the Oriental mind in olden times the sea appealed chiefly as an object of terror. Its masterfulness was the one thing about it which affected the imagination.

I. Notwithstanding all the study that has been given to it the sea remains the most masterful thing with which man has got to do. Only He who made the sea can get it to do His bidding. He sits above the storm and is King over it.

II. The sacred writers never conceive of the universe as a great machine with a great unknown behind it, to whom any individual man or thing is of no moment whatever. When they speak, as so often they do, of the operations of nature, it is by referring not to what are called the laws of nature, but to the authors of these laws.

III. However appalling and inscrutable the phenomena of nature may be, they are included in all the things mentioned by St. Paul as working together for good. The various parts of our lives, and the manifold events which go to make up history, cannot be rightly understood, if they can be understood at all, when they are taken by themselves; each has its place in the whole, and where that place is, He who has all eternity to work in will let us know some day.

IV. I wonder whether Charles Wesley was thinking of the scene associated with our text when he wrote 'Jesus, Lover of my Soul'. This hymn has been the salvation of many a voyager on life's troubled sea. For in truth human life may be likened to a voyage. —W. Taylor, *Twelve Favourite Hymns*, p. 97.

References.—CVII. 30.—E. A. Askew, *Sermons Preached in Greystoke Church*, p. 51. Spurgeon, *Down by the Sea*, p. 170. J. M. Neale, *Sermon Passages of the Psalms*, p. 226. H. J. Wilmot-Buxton, *A Year's Plain Sermons*, p. 254. CVII. 40, 41.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons on Passages of the Psalms*, p. 238.

DARK DAYS AND THEIR COMPENSATIONS

'Who is wise, and will observe these things, even they shall understand the loving-kindness of the Lord.'—Psalm cvii. 43.

Astronomy would be impossible if it were always daylight. Only in the dark do we grow aware of these companies of constellations to which the sunshine had blinded our eyes. The chief discoveries of the moral firmament only become possible to us under similar conditions. There are strange outlooks and splendours of the human spirit which never begin to reveal themselves until after the sun of prosperity and happiness has gone out of the sky.

I. This Psalm celebrates the blessed experience of those whom God takes down into the darkness that they may learn there the mysteries of His love. They are described as fainting travellers in the desert, as forlorn captives in the dungeon, as sick men about to die, as sailors ready to founder in a tempest. But in each case the result is the same. In their blackest extremity they find underneath them the Everlasting Arms, and they are brought back to praise the Everlasting Mercy. Do we not often meet with shallow Christians who are curiously uneducated in spiritual things, because their experience hitherto has included so little except sunshine?

II. How little of the Bible you can understand so long as you only read it in sunshiny weather. But in black midnight sorrows its pages begin to shine and burn like the stars. Scripture remains more or less a sealed volume to those who have never suffered. But our extremity becomes its opportunity, and we realize then that it carries the one prescription for the pain of the whole world.

III. The loving-kindness of the Lord is represented here as a great induction from the experience of His people. When we consider the manifold applications and consolations of the righteous, and learn how the saints are distressed and succoured and emptied and satisfied, there is borne in upon us a sweet and solemn sense of the everlasting faithfulness and patience of their Redeemer. The final value of a spiritual biography lies in the record of how God brought His servant through deep waters and dark nights, and how, having suffered the loss of all things, that man found his infinite compensation in the holy and acceptable and perfect will of God.—T. H. Darlow, *The Upward Calling*, p. 27.

References.—CVII. 43.—C. Bradley, *The Christian Life*, p. 98. E. Thring, *Uppingham Sermons*, vol. i. p. 392. CVII. —*International Critical Commentary*, vol. ii. p. 357.

THE LIFE OF PRAISE

'O God, my heart is ready, my heart is ready. I will sing and give praise with the best member that I have.'—Psalm cviii. 1.

I. Unselfishness of Praise.—To praise is more unselfish than even to pray and thank. You will not expect me to underrate or minimize the need of prayer. But yet though to pray is according to the will of God, there is an element of selfishness in prayer. We are asking something for ourselves, or for others, for those we love; we are in the attitude of receivers when we pray rather than that of givers. You will not expect me to minimize the need and glory of thanksgiving, and yet even when we thank, even thanks contain an element of self; it is for something that you have received that you render thanks. I have no doubt that you—or many of you—do praise God, but do you realize at all the greatness, patience, and generosity of God? In order to praise aright we must take in more and more the greatness and the generosity and the patience of the God whom we praise.

II. The Greatness of God.—Think of His greatness, even from the point of view of nature. To engineer twenty million blazing suns through space from day to day with perfect order and perfect quiet, to have nature not only working like machinery, but sleeping like a picture the whole time, and while He does it, to paint, at the same time, the beauty of the smallest shell upon the seashore. Or think of God's wonderful generosity. Why are we alive at all? Why are we enjoying the glories of this summer morning? Just because of the generosity of God.

III. The Highest Act of Worship.—Praise is the highest act of worship because it demands the exercise of every faculty that we have. There in praise must be the reverent attitude of the body, the devotion and loyalty of the mind, the emotion of the heart, and the bowing down of the heroic, yet subject spirit. When we come to church and give our praise it is the will, the royal and yet subject will that brings us, the will that is royal because it is the image of God—a free, personal spirit as God is a free, personal Spirit, and ye are subject to God. Then once again praise is the highest act of Christian worship because it joins more completely than anything else to the life and the worship of heaven. Many, or most of you, have lost some and, perhaps, many whom you have loved; and we all have naturally a poignant feeling when we have lost some one dear to us, especially some one whom we regarded as cut off in his prime. Now nothing can so bridge over that, nothing can make us so at one with the world to come that when we are summoned to die there is no shock to break as living a life of praise. Meditate upon God's greatness, His generosity; and then when your call comes, not only will you be able to say of your patient, tired body, 'I will lay me down in peace and take my rest,' but looking up, you will say with the Psalmist, 'O God, my heart is ready, my heart is ready; I will sing and give praise with the best member that I have'.—Bishop A. Winnington-Ingram, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxvii. p. 107.

References.—CVIII. 12.—G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 242. CVIII.—*International Critical Commentary*, vol. ii. p. 364. CIX. 4.—Spurgeon, *Evening by Evening*, p. 15. CIX. 5.—C. G. Finney, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 1703, p. 663.

AN IMPRECATORY PSALM

'Let another take his office.'—Psalm cix. 7.

It is not too much to say that, save in the Athanasian Creed itself, nowhere have Christian people found more widespread spiritual difficulty than in what are commonly known as the Imprecatory Psalms, and even among these none is equal to the Psalm whence the text is taken. How are we to understand them; how, especially when we are told to forgive as we would be forgiven, can we, in Christian churches, take them on our lips? The explanations are various. Bishop Hall, in his desire for an explanation, would alter the optative to the future. In the case before us this is undoubtedly the natural conclusion. Whether in accord with a wish or not, the fact was plain: when an office was once forfeited or lost another must take it. Whose office? We are reminded of the election of St. Matthias, by lot after prayer, to the post vacated by the traitor Judas. St. Peter quotes the Greek Septuagint version of the Old Testament, and says with peculiar appropriateness, 'his bishoprick let another take'. And what an occasion it was! Peter applied the ancient words of prophecy in this Psalm to Judas Iscariot.

I. Peter and Judas.—Peter speaking of Judas! Was there no inappropriateness in this, think you? For it is an indisputable fact that in one sense Peter and Judas were both in the same category. Both, alas! had greatly sinned; and yet there was a difference and distinction even here. Peter denied Christ, while Judas betrayed Him; but there was this difference: Peter's denial had been an act of sudden impulse, while Judas's betrayal was but the final outcome of a long-cherished secret, deliberate, wicked design. Peter had fallen owing to the fear of man, forgetful of God, Who is alone truly to be feared here and hereafter as well. But Judas was guilty of hypocrisy, lying, and covetousness in their most terrible form;

and Christ, recognizing the sad and evil fact of the sinister presence of Judas Iscariot amid the little band said, 'One of you is a devil'. Peter and Judas! There was another difference between them. Not only in their sin but in its results. Judas Iscariot was smitten with remorse, but Peter had a godly sorrow that worked unto repentance.

II. The Temporary Character of Office.—And are there no ways in which that prophecy may appeal to us? Let us see. In one sense it must—temporariness. We are here but a short time; only One, Jesus Christ, as the Epistle to the Hebrews teaches us, abides a priest eternally, having His office unchangeable. That tender Old Testament picture of Aaron, Eleazar, and Moses going up together to Mount Hor and Aaron dying there, and Moses and Eleazar coming down from the mount alone, is a true parable of the succession of office. God buries His workmen, but He carries on His work. Some day your medical practice, or your profession, or your business, or your shop, or your clerkship, or your Church office, or your own particular work will be held by some one else. Another name will be painted up outside. The wind will pass over you, and your place, like that of the flower of the field, shall know you no more. Strangers that know you not, and with different ways, will come. What they do concerns you not. Your duty is with yourself. Make the most of your present opportunity before old Time, with his hour-glass, lays us of the present generation low, like as he has done to the past, and like as he shall do to us as well. The time comes when the door of earthly opportunity shall be shut, and to each of us in turn the inevitable sentence must go forth, 'Let another take his office'.

III. Unfitness for Office.—But if this is the common law over which human control is not, there are other senses in which the answer must rest with ourselves. There are offices held by people manifestly unfit—the square man, as the old saying goes, in the round hole. Our English Charles I., the French Louis XVI., a succession of Russian Czars; who can assert that nothing but harm was done by deposition, in filling their position by others? How much good would be done if people who are in unsuitable positions everywhere could have the gentle word of release spoken, passing them to suitable spheres and letting others take their office! But more often unfitness lies in deliberate fault rather than in actual misfortune. We are not fit for noble tasks because we make no effort. It is God's inexorable law that office is taken from those who misuse it.

IV. Hold fast that which Thou Hast.—Yes, there is one tiny place in God's Church and universe which no one can fill so well as ourselves. Christ's office none can take, yet that office is there for a purpose—to save us, to enable us each one to be faithful.

References.—CIX. 8.—Bishop Woodford, *Occasional Sermons*, vol. i. p. 67. J. Keble, *Sermons for the Saints' Days*, pp. 154, 165. CIX. 40.—R. M. Benson, *Redemption*, p. 221. CIX.—*International Critical Commentary*, vol. ii. p. 364. CX. 1.—J. Budgen, *Parochial Sermons*, vol. i. p. 58.

CREATION'S WITNESS TO THE YOUTH OF JESUS

'Thou hast the dew of thy youth.'—Psalm cx. 3.

On the one hand, we have the eternal youth of Christ, and for us who are Christians, Christ is the Creator. On the other hand, we have this great creation, the handiwork of this eternal youth. Let us try and discover the witness of creation to the perpetual youth of Jesus Christ.

I. First, then, youth is the season of abounding energy. There is an eager strenuousness in opening life that is tamed or tempered by the advance of years: I look abroad upon creation, I watch the motion of the tides; I hear the roaring of the breakers; I mark the sweep of the rivers; I am told of the resistless progress of the glacier. And I cannot think of these resistless powers but I feel the stamp of energy on nature. Now as I see these energies of nature, I feel that the heart that fashioned it was young. Christ may have lived from everlasting ages before the moment of creation came; but the eternal morning was still upon His brow when He conceived and bodied out the world.

II. Once more, youth is the season of romance. It is in youth if ever that every dream is sweet and every sound is melody. In other words, life's time of light and time of colour comes not in age but in youth. Well, now, I lift my eyes into the face of nature, and the splendour of light and the wealth of colour amaze me. I cannot watch the play of light and shade upon the sea, nor the magnificent splendours of the setting sun, but I feel that this is the romance of youth. That light and colour is not the work of age, it is the outpouring of a youthful heart. It speaks to me of the perpetual youth of Jesus.

III. But again, youth is the season of vast designs. To youth there is nothing impossible. Now we live in a world of vast design. Its distances are vast. Its times are vast. This vastness, then, of space and time, that are inwrought into the design of the creation are eloquent of youth. And as I dwell on that, I turn to Christ and say, 'Thou hast the dew of Thy youth'.

IV. Lastly, youth is the time of hope. There is a royal hopefulness in youth that is magnificent. And I must be blind, indeed, if in the world around me I have found no traces of that youthful spirit. In every spring there is the hope of summer. In every summer there is hope of harvest. So as we go out into the summer world, we shall take with us that thought of its creator. And we will remember that the Creator is our portion, and that He gives eternal life and eternal youth to us.—G. H. Morrison, *Flood-Tide*, p. 282.

THE DEW OF THE MORNING

'Thou hast thy young warriors as the dew of the morning.'
—Psalm cx. 3.

It is fitting that a little child should be a Christian,

because our Master, like every good man, loved children, and the child heart in its simplicity and purity is the symbol of the kingdom of Heaven. It is fitting that an old man be a Christian, because Christ only of all teachers has lifted the veil from the other world and assured the human soul that the grave is the gate of life. It is fitting that a woman be a Christian, because Christ cast His shield over womanhood, and fulfilled the finest aspirations of a woman's heart. It is fitting that a man bearing the burden of life in his middle years should be a Christian, because the peace of Christ can alone garrison the heart and mind against corrupting worldliness. But there are reasons why of all people it is most fitting that a man in the flush of his youth should accept Christ, and why the religion of Jesus makes its most persuasive appeal to men in their early life, and why the words of this ancient prophecy should ever come true: 'Thou hast thy young warriors as the dew of the morning'.

And the reason I wish to urge this is because our Master was a young man.

References.—CX. 3.—J. Vaughan, *Children's Sermons*, 1875, p. 132. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. ii. No. 74. G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 397.

A PRIEST AFTER THE ORDER OF MELCHIZEDEK

'A priest after the order of Melchizedek.'—Psalm cx. 4.

Let us consider what a priest means, and what place, if any, he holds in the Church of Christ. The profession of priest is, I suppose, the oldest in the world. The opponents of religion in the eighteenth century pretended that the priests invented religion. Of course that is not true. Religion invented the priests. But since religion is practically universal we find priests everywhere and in all times.

I. What is the essential idea of a priest? What does the word imply, over and above what is implied by such words as minister or pastor? It implies this, the priest is an ambassador between God and man. The traditions in his case are, or should be, part of the stored wisdom of humanity in Divine things, the experience of God's saints in their dealings with God. The true and false priests are thus as far apart as heaven and hell. The false priest desires that men should remain bound till he comes to set them free. He will plunder his people like the sons of Eli; he will sacrifice the innocent blood like Caiaphas; to maintain the supposed interests of the Church he will buy the gift of God to sell it at a profit like Simon Magus. But the true priest is a born teacher and healer. He teaches and he heals because he cannot help it, necessity is laid upon him—yea, woe is me (he says) if I preach not the Gospel.

II. In the Church of Christ the grace of the priestly office is not reserved for a particular caste or profession. This power of helping others in their spiritual life, of lifting them up when they have fallen, of encouraging them when they are faint, and showing them the right path when they are in doubt is the most blessed gift which God gives to any man. It is given irrespectively of profession or sex, and it is given to be used.—W. R. Inge, *All Saints' Sermons*, p. 161.

References.—CX. 4.—G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 398. J. Vaughan, *Fifty Sermons* (2nd Series), p. 29. CX.—*International Critical Commentary*, vol. ii. p. 373. CXI. 2.—Bishop Wilberforce, *Sermons*, p. 182.

THE BEGINNING OF WISDOM

'The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.'—Psalm cxi. 10.

Are we as a people entering upon a period of physical and moral deterioration? It is a question which is vexing the minds of many. May it not be said that few lovers of their country can be wholly at their ease as they watch the streams of thought and habit and speech which seem to be carrying along with them the great masses of our people of every rank and class?

I. The Source of Strength.—Have we as a people the moral stuff and strength with which we can venture to be what is called an imperial race. It is easy, of course, to talk in generalities. Do we not all agree in our heart of hearts that we stand as a people in grave need of a moral renovation, a strengthening of our moral fibre, and a raising of our moral idea? Now if this be so, what is to be the attitude of those who wish to be on the side of religion? We are not to bemoan these tendencies but to redeem them. It is the special duty of a religious man at the present moment to look round about and ask, What is it that I feel to be wrong in the tendencies of this people of which I am a part? and then to set himself, with serious prayer and self-discipline, to exhibit in his own life and extend by his own influences just those very primary moral qualities of which he feels that his kind is lacking.

II. The Lack of Reverence.—If you were asked which of all these qualities is the one of which we stand most patiently in need, what would your answer be? I think there are many of you who would say, We stand most in need of the sense of reverence, the recognition of an excellence beyond and above ourselves which claims our homage and devotion. Now it is plain is it not? it is needless to labour the point, that there can be no great future for any nation which is lacking in the sense of reverence. In the case of the people, as in the case of men, we can only rise if we can dare to stoop; we can only rise in character if at some point we bow in reverence. It is forgetfulness of God that is accountable for the spread of impudence and irreverence. It is the fear of God that alone can restore it.

III. The Fear of God.—So it is that the Bible lays down from beginning to end that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. It is not a slavish terror. It is merely a reverent and reasonable recollection of the claim and being of God.

IV. God as a Sovereign.—In our hold of the Fatherhood of God let us not forget His sovereignty. Let us keep before us always this sense of the majesty and the mastery of God. And from this sense of reverence for God we shall draw a sense of reverence for the world in which he has placed us. We shall feel that it is after all the vestibule of a great Presence.—Archbishop Lang, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxvii. p. 213.

References.—CXI. 10.—J. Thomas, *Myrtle Street Pulpit*, vol. ii. p. 177. CXI.—*International Critical Commentary*, vol. ii. p. 382.

HEAVENLY LIGHT IN EARTHLY DARKNESS

'Unto the upright there ariseth light in the darkness.'—Psalm cxii. 4.

Everywhere the blessing is given on conditions. Men fail to receive because they refuse to meet the conditions laid down. Even grace can enter only the open heart and a free salvation can be gripped only by faith.

I. The man who in the text is promised light is the upright. He dares stand on his feet, does not cringe to the great, nor apologize to the foolish. With a clear conscience he can look the whole world in the face. He is upright. He does the right thing at any cost. We must admit that the hard and sometimes harsh theology of our fathers made strong men. I am afraid the softer theology of to-day has a tendency to make a race of weaklings. There seems to be nothing worth contending for. Even among Christians we have too much moral flabbiness and too little grit. True manliness is not all strength, but strength blended with grace. The good man is not only brave, but is also a gentleman.

II. Man's pain is never in vain. His sufferings are never for nothing. Man, to be man, must struggle, fight, and conquer. He must struggle on to even keep what he has, and if he wants more he can have it only in the sweat of his face. His very dinner is a victory over many opposing forces. His clothing is won in battle. The house in which he dwells is a conquest. All progress is through war and sacrifice. Those who oppose us teach us. A world without pain, without a trial, without a sorrow, would be a world without a hero, without a saint, without a martyr.

III. Nothing succeeds like failure. On noblest natures failure acts like a spur to greater efforts. Men are stung to victories. Out of failures they are made conquerors. For the upright there is light in the darkness itself. We sometimes think progress is slow and evil is strong, but amidst all the strifes and fightings we hear the voice of the all-conquering Christ saying: 'Lo, I come'. He is winning His kingdom, the kingdom of love and truth. He will not fail us nor fail any who trust Him. In this confidence let us face the future. The Lord's servants are not fighting a losing battle, for the battle is the Lord's, and our defeat would be His too. Our victory will be His also.—W. J. Evans, *Homiletic Review*, vol. lvi. p. 386.

Psalm cxii. 4.

Speaking of the Irish problem in 1868, John Bright observed: 'It is a dark and heavy cloud, and its darkness extends over the feelings of men in all parts of the British Empire. But there is a consolation which we may all take to ourselves. An inspired king and bard and prophet has left us words which are not only the expression of a fact, but which we may take as the utterance of a prophecy. He says, "To the upright there ariseth light in the darkness". Let us try in this matter to be upright. Let us try to be just. That cloud will be dispelled.'

References.—CXII. 4.—E. Bersier, *Sermons* (2nd Series), pp. 273, 286. CXII. 6.—W. F. Shaw, *Sermon Sketches*, p. 110. CXII. 7.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xi. No. 647. CXII.—*International Critical Commentary*, vol. ii. p. 384. CXIII.—*Ibid.* p. 387.

THE RESPONSE OF THE ENVIRONMENT

'When Israel went out of Egypt, the mountains skipped like rams.'—Psalm cxiv. 1, 4.

I. It is said that man is affected by his environment. It is true; but it is equally true that man's environment is affected by him. We are influenced by the sights and sounds around us; but it is no less certain that the sights and sounds around us are influenced by us. In this passage we have an incident of the latter kind. When Israel went out of Egypt there was a change in her environment. 'The mountains skipped.' She transferred to the things around her the impression of her own joy. She was inwardly leaping and dancing, and, as in a mirror, she saw the mountains leaping and dancing too. Why the mountains? Why not the brooks, the streams, the rivers? Is not the idea of motion more suitable to these? Certainly; therefore the Psalmist, because he was a poet, did not select them. He selected the most unlikely things—the mountains. The mountains naturally suggest anything but dancing. They suggest immobility, steadfastness, iron determination to be affected by nothing. And that is just where the dramatic power of this poet comes in. He sees the joy of the soul infecting the most stolid objects in the world—the sober, grave, serious mountains. If these could be made to dance to the rhythm of the heart, no part of nature could possibly remain unmoved.

II. I regard it as a fine stroke of literary genius that, in seeking a partner for the dance of the spirits, the Psalmist should have chosen, not the streams, but the mountains. He wants to show how utterly dependent is the aspect of Nature on the state of the heart, even where the aspect of Nature seems most fixed and stereotyped. He tells how in the joy of the spirit even the stable mountains cannot keep still to the eye of the beholder, but leap and bound and vibrate to the pulse of the gladdened soul.

III. Have you not felt this power of joy over prosaic things. Have you not felt how cold has lost its chillness, how rain has lost its dreariness, how wind has lost its bitterness, when the heart was young. Have you not felt how the long way became short, how the rough road became smooth, how the muddy path be-

came clean, when the heart was young. The Psalmist was right when he said that when the soul is emancipated from its Egypt the very mountains leap.

IV. Lord, Thou hast said, 'I go to prepare a place for you'. Yes, and the preparation must be rather in me than in the place. Any place will be joyous if my heart be young. When my heart grows old I get weary of localities; I migrate from spot to spot, I flit from flower to flower, I sigh for the wings of a dove to break the monotony of my rest. But that is because my heart is not leaping. If my heart would leap everything would leap—the very mountains. It is not new objects I want; it is renewed joy in them. Revive the joy of my heart, O Lord! make my spirit young again! Then shall the waves resound once more; then shall the mountains leap as they did at morning's glow.—G. Matheson, *Messages of Hope*, p. 61.

References.—CXIV. 3.—T. Sadler, *Sermons for Children*, p. 172. CXIV.—*International Critical Commentary*, vol. ii. p. 390. CXV. 2, 3.—J. J. Ingram, *Preacher's Magazine*, vol. xix. p. 304.

Psalm cxv.

Non Nobis Domine was the battle-song of the heroic John Sobieski, King of Poland, 12 September, 1683, when he marched down from the heights of Kalenberg, and defeated the immense army of the Turks which was besieging Vienna, and had reduced it to the last extremity. It was a turning-point in history, the final great Eastern invasion which has thundered at that gate of Europe; and ever since, the Turkish power and Mohammedan faith have been on the wane. There was indescribable enthusiasm as the Psalm was sung, 'Wherefore should the heathen say, Where is now their God? But our God is in the heavens: He hath done whatsoever He hath pleased'.—J. K.

TRUE KNOWLEDGE THROUGH SPIRITUAL INSIGHT

'Eyes have they, but they see not.'—Psalm cxv. 5.

The heathen, with his idol gods about him, has challenged the champion of a spiritual religion to show him his God. The answer was simple and complete, though not, we may be sure, convincing to the opponent. It was this: 'As for our God, He is in heaven'. To have eyes, and yet not see, in body and in spirit, that and some of the several stages of it are the points which I ask you to consider.

I. Let me take first the eyes of the body, and illustrate my meaning, as to their seeing or not seeing, by one or two examples.

(*a*) You have seen a ray of light caught by a prism by some skilful operator, and thrown on to a surface carefully prepared to receive it. But striking and suggestive and beautiful as what you see is, you do not see all that is there. The human eye is not so arranged as to see it all. That is a case in which the eye of the body is unable to see that which science shows to be there.

(*b*) You stand before some monument of ages long gone by. Its surface bears the marks of time, and to the untrained eye shows nothing but irregular depressions. But the trained eye sees in one or another of the depressions the last lingering trace of what a thousand years ago was part of a letter, and sends to the brain the information which determines of what race they were who raised the monument.

(*c*) The rich and varied gifts, the pure exalted pleasures which the eyes of the body are intended to minister to man, are marred by want of sympathetic observation even more than by want of knowledge. The unlearned, unlettered man will often read through the bodily eye in nature, and in his whole environment, lessons fair and touching, lessons far beyond the reach of that saddest product of this or any age—the man with well-trained head, and richly garnered mind and memory, and empty heart.

II. But none of us would long be satisfied with the life of the body alone, lived ever so well and worthily. We must, if we would avoid a growing discontent, live the inner, the spiritual life too. The eye of the spirit must be an eye that sees. How shall we help it to see? That which the spirit of man most needs, for its full play and development, is just that which in this hurrying age is ever more and more difficult to obtain—rest and quiet, time and place for contemplation.

III. If the eye of the spirit is by care and contemplation trained to see spiritual verity, to range as freely and keenly over the realms of the unseen as the eye of the body over the works of nature and of art, what shall it, in its furthest flight, its keenest insight, what shall it see? the eye of the spirit cannot but travel far, whatever and however the man believes. For the man who believes, ask him what in the end his inner eye can see. He tells you—they are his own words—'I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing on the right hand of God'.—Bishop G. F. Browne, *Cambridge Sermons*, p. 52.

'They that make them are like unto them; so is every one that trusteth in them.'—Psalm cxv. 8.

St. John of the Cross explains this text as follows: 'He who loves the creature, remains as low as that creature, and in a certain sense even lower, because love makes the lover not only equal, but subject to the object of his affection'.

References.—CXV. — *International Critical Commentary*, vol. ii. p. 392. CXVI. 7.—W. P. J. Bingham, *Sermons on Easter Subjects*, p. 119. CXVI. 9.—J. Baines, *Twenty Sermons*, p. 163.

'I believed, therefore have I spoken.'—Psalm cxvi. 10.

Ernest Naville, the eminent philosopher of Geneva, wrote to the Countess de Gasparin in 1892: 'I often ask myself what view, as death approaches, can be taken of their own past by men of letters who have used their pens in the service of evil passions, or have employed their talent in spreading a doubt which consumes them and the melancholy effects of which they cannot fail to recognize. People of that sort arouse within me feelings which fluctuate between scorn and pity. Happy are those who can say, bor-

rowing the words of Holy Scripture, "I believed, therefore have I spoken".'—*La Comtesse Agénor de Gasparin et sa Famille*, pp. 426, 427.

REFERENCES.—CXVI. 13.—H. M. Butler, *Harrow School Sermons* (2nd Series), p. 89. CXVI. 15.—J. Keble, *Sermons for the Saints' Days*, p. 30. CXVI. 16.—Spurgeon, *Sermons to Young Men*, p. 325. CXVI.—*International Critical Commentary*, vol. ii. p. 397.

PSALM CXVII.

THE Psalm sung by Cromwell and his army after the victory of Dunbar, 3 September, 1650, and known afterwards by the Puritans as the Dunbar Psalm. As the Scottish army left their strong position on the heights to offer their raw soldiers to Cromwell's veterans, he pointed to the sun, whose disc was rising over the German Ocean, with the words, 'Let God arise, let His enemies be scattered'.

IT was the custom of Philip Henry to sing the 117th Psalm every Sabbath after the first sermon as the fullest expression of thanksgiving. He used to say that the more singing of Psalms there is in our families and congregations on Sabbath, the more like they are to heaven; and that he preferred singing whole Psalms to pieces of them.

REFERENCES.—CXVIII. 10.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons on Passages of the Psalms*, p. 254. CXVIII. 15.—H. J. Wilmot-Buxton, *A Year's Plain Sermons*, p. 137.

A CRY OF FAITH AND JOY

'I shall not die, but live, and declare the works of the Lord.'
—PSALM CXVIII. 17.

WE shall never, I suppose, know from whose lips and heart this cry of faith and joy first sprang. One thing is clear—there has been a great danger threatening the very life of a man or a nation. There has been more than danger—there has been the very presence of death; but the hour of suspense has now passed, and the man or the nation survives. Doubt has gone, certainty takes its place, and that certainty gives the thought of service, of newness of life, of joyful self-consecration. I shall not die, but live, and declare the works of the Lord.

Let us, then, take these ancient words of our Psalmist, and see whether they may not lead us up to some holy mountain spot of which we may say with reverent truth, 'It is good for us to be here'. For observe there is not only past history which we can but faintly decipher, there is also present biography. The pulses of life are in them. You can almost hear the beating of their hearts. Again and again they rise up and give their message to men.

I. It is not men and women alone that are threatened with death. It is the same with causes, and books, and faiths, and churches. These, too, have their hours of seeming sickness and joyous revival. It is the better men and women in each generation who give the life-blood of their hearts to some great causes which are restored to mankind, freedom, or justice, or peace, or temperance, or purity, and for a time they seem to make way. They are almost more than conquerors; their zeal, their enthusiasm, perhaps their eloquence, win for a time. The reformers are not only reverenced but popular; all men go after them. And then comes the change. Applause is coldly silent; its place is taken first by apathy and then by abuse. How many of the choicest spirits of the past and present have known these times of decline and depression and almost seeming death! How many whose names are now household words for noble service to God and man, how many, I say, of these have felt in dark hours that their labour was in vain! And yet in such cases the day of seeming death has been the day of real recovery, and the fainting, feeble cause might have said, through the lips of its faithful champions, 'I shall not die, but live, and declare the works of the Lord'.

II. Believing most profoundly, as I do, that the moral life of our nation will advance in the future much in the same way that it has advanced in the past, and observing how much it has owed in each generation to a few earnest Christian men and women, who rested neither day nor night till they could redress some great wrong or impart to men some great gift of God, I offer this voice of the Psalmist to any here who are struggling might and main for some righteous cause, and seem to themselves, it may be, to be watching by its bed of sickness. Public opinion, they say, is less in earnest than it once was. The tide is ebbing, not flowing. Men care less for righteousness, and justice, and virtue. In the smoke and dust of the battle we lose sight both of flag and leader. We see not our signs. There is no more any prophet, neither is there among us any that knoweth how long. If there are any tempted to say this in their haste and in the bitterness or sadness of their heart, I bid them be of good cheer and take this verse of ours to their comfort, and make it the very anchor of their soul.

III. If I mistake not, there are just now many good men and good women who have anxious fears for a life yet more precious and august than any of which we have just been thinking. I mean the life of the Bible. They say to themselves that if its power over men's hearts and lives is on the wane, and is still to be on the wane, the loss is simply fatal. Nothing, absolutely nothing, can be set against it. In this belief I for one cannot doubt that they are right. Whatever is best in our country, whatever is purest, truest, most honourable, most serious, most tender, most devout has been largely drawn, I will not say from the careful study, but from the simple and reverent love of the Bible. England and Scotland, without reverence for the Bible, would be false to their history and themselves. And I think we must go further and say many of those who foresee the grave character of the danger if it should ever arrive are also fain to believe that it is now upon us, even at the door. The supposed evil is a fact; the play has begun. The Bible, they complain, is no longer what it was in British homes and schools. It is circulated and translated, and carried by brave and loving hands to the ends of the earth,

but it is less loved at home; it is less appealed to as the supreme court of conscience; it is less authoritative in moulding people's ways of thinking, and feeling, and acting. It is not easy to speak clearly and wisely on this great and many-sided subject. It is still less easy to speak words of soberness neither too rash nor too vague, but I think we may venture to say two things. First, the free criticism of both the Old and the New Testaments will in the next half-century wear a different face to devout minds from that which it wears to-day. They will start with less suspicion, they will end with less disquietude, they will count their gains as well as their losses. They will see that this dreaded criticism, while it has taken away something, has left behind infinitely more. Then, secondly, I believe that the value, the unspeakable and wholly unrivalled value, of the Bible can never fade from the minds and consciences of men. For all time they will go to the Bible; they will persist in going to it for their ideas of God Himself, of His mind towards us, and His dealings with us, with our failures and infirmities, our sorrows and our sins.

I take for granted that all the more thoughtful among us try at times to think what will be the England of the future. We ask ourselves, Is He indeed come, or do we look for another? Will the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ, lifted up on the Cross, still our best and dearest, our tenderest and saintliest—will that Name still be, by common consent, more and more above every name? Will it, far more than now, far more than ever, yet purify our private and ennoble our public life? Will it make us at least ashamed of our wretched feuds and factions, our belittling of each other's good, our trampling on each other's falls, as though we wished before we died to add one more text to the Bible? For such questions as these there is no accepted oracle, either when we put them to ourselves or when others put them to us. The future will belie both our hopes and our fears. We, in our dim, blind way are the servants, often it might seem the slaves, of the present; but, thank God, one form of freedom is even now ours. Our old men may dream dreams, and our young men may see visions, and among these dreams and these visions a place may be found for the majestic image of the Holy Bible, the Book which Jesus the Messiah loved, and interpreted, and quoted—quoted even on the Cross, and claimed it as His own witness—the image, I say, of this Master's Bible, supposed by men of little faith to be lying on a bed of sickness, outlived, outvoiced, outargued, and yet rising, as it were, from its couch and pointing as of old to the Cross and to Him that hangs upon the Cross, with a new and a most sure word of prophecy—'I shall not die, but live, and declare the works of the Lord'.

'I shall not die, but live, and declare the works of the Lord.'
—PSALM CXVIII. 17.

THIS is a text which often meets us in German Reformation annals. It was one of Luther's favourite passages in the Psalm which he called 'the beautiful Confitemini,' and his own dear Psalm. It is also associated with Melanchthon's dangerous illness at Weimar in 1540. Writing five years later to his friend Camerarius, Melanchthon said: 'I should like you to sing that text: *Non moriar sed vivam, et narrabo opera Domini.* When I lay ill at Weimar, I saw that verse written on the wall, and rejoiced at the good omen.' A biographer of Melanchthon has suggested that it was Luther who wrote the words on the wall, but in his last illness (April, 1560) Melanchthon recalled this experience and said that he had seen the words in a dream at Weimar.

DR. DALE chose the text, 'I shall not die, but live, and declare the works of the Lord,' as the text for his first sermon at Carr's Lane meeting, Birmingham, after his serious illness in 1891. Writing to Mr. Richard Davies he said that text is 'an exclamation which I suppose was originally intended as a cry from the heart of the Jewish nation when it had returned from exile and caught sight of its true vocation, but which . . . expressed very naturally the emotion with which a Christian minister returned to his work after an experience like mine'.

REFERENCE.—CXVIII. 17.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons on Passages of the Psalms*, p. 268. CXVIII. 22.—*Ibid.* p. 278.

THE REFUSED STONE

'The stone which the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner.'—PSALM CXVIII. 22.

'THE stone which the builders refused.' But surely the builders could not be wrong? They were experts. We pay for an expert in our age; for we have high prices to pay for the most elaborate ignorance. They knew exactly what stone to choose and what stone not to choose, and they reported upon the case, and upon their report the stone was cast away with a spitting of contempt upon it. Does God delight to baffle the malevolent ingenuity of man? Has He some special pride in taking the experts by the feet and dipping them into the river as if He would drown them in the waters of contempt? It is an awful thing to be an expert when you do not know anything about the business in which you profess to be a proficient; your aggravation is sevenfold.

I. Many persons have undertaken to refuse the Bible stone. God has made it the head stone of the corner. Every day brings a new witness to the truth of the Bible, and even to the science of the Bible, and one day even Moses will have what is due to him in the way of tribute and gratitude and coronation. Moses has stood many a test; our hearts have ached for the grand old man as he had to die without treading the land that was fruitful with the harvest of a promise. Our grief was premature. Do not interfere with God's way. He knows it is better to die here than to die there; let Him fix the place, and dig the grave, and write the epitaph; and as for us, let us stand back; we are of yesterday and know nothing.

II. Refusals do not end in themselves. Do not suppose that the matter is of no consequence; that we can refuse, and nothing more will be heard of it.

It is not so written in the Book. They refused to obey, and the consequence is that the Lord mocked them and shamed them. We have to face our refusals. We cannot throw our lives behind our backs, and say, Nothing more will be heard of this. Everything more will be heard of it; we shall give an account to God for every idle word we have spoken; we shall have to account for our decisions and elections and preferences.

III. There is a refusal which is right. Moses when he was come of age refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter. The offer was made to him, he might have had the honour, he might have occupied an exalted position; he was learned in all the lore of the Egyptians, he had been proved to be a man of capacity, of great physical beauty and majesty, of great moral force and dignity; and when the offer was made to him that he might be the son of the king's daughter, he said, No. Then what will you choose? I choose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God. These are the refusals that mark critical points in human history. These, too, are the refusals which bring character to completeness and to crowning majesty. Resist, refuse the devil, and he will flee from you.

IV. We cannot depose those whom God has called in His electing love to this position or to that. We can say to Him, Lord, make me much, little, nothing, but let me know that it is Thy doing, and I shall be calm with Thine own peace; I shall not know the burning of jealousy and of envy; I will know that He who set the stars in their places has appointed my habitation. That is the spirit in which to accept the providence of life, and work out the destiny fixed by the love of God. Understand that we cannot all be at the head of the corner. Honour enough for us if we be in the God-built edifice, whether in the base, in the midst, or at the top.—Joseph Parker, *City Temple Pulpit*, vol. II. p. 2.

THE BLUNDER OF THE BUILDER

'The stone which the builders refused has become the head stone of the corner. This is the Lord's doing; it is marvellous in our eyes.'—Psalm cxviii. 22, 23.

Taking this incident as a parable of life, the blunder of the builders corrected by the providence of God, let us notice, in the first place, how often in our human experience this parable finds illustration, and then we shall be better able to appreciate its application to the history of our Lord and Saviour.

I. Interpreting our text in its purely human aspect, have we not here in this incident of the rejected stone a picture of misunderstood lives, a parable of unappreciated life? Lives misunderstood, love unappreciated, devotion neglected, the tender ministry of a woman's love cast aside—there is the hidden spring of much of life's silent tragedy.

II. Our text is also a picture of unappreciated truth. How often the truth which to-day lies at the foundation of life was in a previous age sneered at and condemned. The great builders of the temple of truth have frequently been forced to confess their blunder in casting aside some new idea quarried out of eternity, but whose significance they failed to understand.

III. The blunder of the builders reminds us of the compensations which God reserves for His servants who are misunderstood or unappreciated. Our text lifts for a moment the curtain that sways between time and eternity, long enough to see how lives that are stunted here break into the fullness of unshackled power yonder. But this reversal of the builder's blunder is not necessarily deferred to eternity. We witness the vindication of rejected truth on this earth.

IV. We turn to the last application of our text, as a prophecy fulfilled in Jesus Christ. It is the glory of our age that never was the place of Christ in human history so clearly recognized as now. All that is deepest and most sacred in life to-day, the noblest charities, the most enduring influences, the hopes of progress, no less than the achievements of the past, rest upon the great truths which became incarnate in His character and found expression in His life.—D. S. Mackay, *The Religion of the Threshold*, p. 249.

Reference.—CXVIII. 22-24.—H. Melvill, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 1696, p. 607.

DIFFICULTY OF REALIZING SACRED PRIVILEGES

(*Easter*)

'This is the day which the Lord hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it.'—Psalm cxviii. 24.

This is Easter Day. Let us say this again and again to ourselves with fear and great joy. As children say to themselves, 'This is the spring,' or 'This is the sea,' trying to grasp the thought, and not let it go; as travellers in a foreign land say, 'This is that great city,' or 'This is that famous building,' knowing it has a long history through centuries, and vexed with themselves that they know so little about it; so let us say, This is the Day of Days, the Royal Day, the Lord's Day. This is the Day on which Christ arose from the dead; the Day which brought us salvation. It is a Day which has made us greater than we know. It is our Day of rest, the true Sabbath. Christ entered into His rest, and so do we. It brings us, in figure, through the grave and gate of death to our season of refreshment in Abraham's bosom. We have had enough of weariness, and dreariness and listlessness, and sorrow, and remorse. We have had enough of this troublesome world. We have had enough of its noise and din. Noise is its best music. But now there is stillness; and it is a stillness that speaks. We know how strange the feeling is of perfect silence after continued sound. Such is our blessedness now. Calm and serene days have begun; and Christ is heard in them, and His still small voice, because the world speaks not. Let

us only put off the world, and we put on Christ. The receding from one is an approach to the other.—J. H. Newman.

EASTER DAY MORNING

'This is the day which the Lord hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it.'—Psalm cxviii. 24.

I. I would say to all who love the Lord Jesus Christ, to all who have mourned for their sins that brought Him to His death, that we have two reasons to rejoice to-day—that we rejoice both for His sake and for our own. We rejoice because He Whom we love, He Who loved us, and died for love of us, is not now dead, but alive for evermore. And again we rejoice because we are ourselves alive from the dead, able to live a holy life, a life in God's presence, like the life which He lives now. Yet these two reasons for joy are one, because the truth is, that He and we are one. Still we can distinguish in thought and word what cannot be separated; we may say that we rejoice for Jesus' sake that He is alive and for our own sake that we share His life. They who mourn for the dead without a Christian's hope do not cease to love those whom, as they think, they have lost for ever; they grieve that they cannot feel their love, that those who are gone are no longer able to love them. But Jesus is not only alive in the sense that our departed friends are, but in every sense; He not only is a living soul but is alive both in Soul and Body, alive and working with all the powers of true God and true man. We can, in the Spirit, have direct intercourse with Him and He with us; He knows all our love to Him, and He tells us all that we can comprehend of His love to us.

II. Again we rejoice for Jesus' sake that we ourselves are alive. If we were still dead in sin, we could do nothing for Him; even if we knew how He loves us, we could make no return to Him for His love, no reparation to Him for our sins against Him, our wrongs done to His loving heart. But now we can; if we are indeed united to Christ by faith; if we have died to sin on His Cross, and risen with Him to a new life now, we can do Him real service; now, by our works of charity to His Brethren we can do acts of kindness to Himself, can do what He will actually be grateful for, will reckon as returns made for His own unutterable acts of kindness to us. Remembering our state by nature, our own sinfulness when Jesus first loved us, we are enabled to measure the greatness of His love, who loved us when we were so unworthy; but now we are not ashamed to accept His love, because, unworthy as we were, we are so no longer—He has made us worthy. Loved by Him and sanctified by His Spirit of Love, we will not shrink away from His presence and say we are unworthy of it; but will come nearer to Him, and seek to be made one with Him, knowing that if we are united to His spotless holiness the sins of our own nature are of a surety all purged away.—W. H. Simcox, *The Cessation of Prophecy*, p. 310.

THE LORD'S VICTORY

(Easter Day)

'This is the day which the Lord hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it.'—Psalm cxviii. 24.

I. It is clear why our Church selects the 118th Psalm for Easter Day. It is full of the great tidings of a risen conquering Lord—a Psalm of rejoicing, and a giving of thanks to Almighty God.

II. If there comes one day above all others in the year on which it becomes a Christian to be in gladness, to put away his sorrow, to be lifted up in heart, it is Easter Day.

III. Jesus is shown to us, no longer in humiliation, a very scorn of men, no longer subject to insult, no longer enduring great suffering, but shown to us as a Mighty Conqueror.

IV. The joy that a Christian feels to-day, it is a widespread joy; it is not only that the Holy and Innocent Jesus has shown Himself the Conqueror, but it is because the benefit of His victory reaches far and wide—reaches to all the race which He came to save.

V. The resurrection of the dead is assured to us by what happened to-day; that is our blessed hope, which the Lord Jesus Christ, by bursting the bonds of death, has given us for an anchor of the soul, safe, sure, and steadfast.—H. D. B. Rawnsley, *Village Sermons* (3rd Series), p. 92.

References.—CXVIII. 24.—Canon Beeching, *The Grace of Episcopacy*, p. 19. G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 255. CXVIII.—*International Critical Commentary*, vol. ii. p. 402.

Psalm cxix.

This Psalm was the special admiration of Pascal, who, as his sister Madame Perier says, often spoke with such feeling about it, 'that he seemed transported, *qu'il paraissait hors de lui même*'. He used to say that, 'with the deep study of life, it contained the sum of all the Christian virtues'. He singled out verse 59 as giving the turning-point of man's character and destiny: 'I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto Thy testimonies'.

Verse 9. 'Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed thereto according to Thy word.' Henry Scougal, author of *The Life of God in the Soul of Man*, when a youth, opened his Bible and lighted by peradventure on this passage. It went to his heart, and he gave himself to God, and to the Christian ministry. He became Professor of Theology, King's College, Aberdeen, and dying in 1678 at the early age of twenty-eight, has left a fragrance in his name which associates it with that of Leighton.

Verse 20. Chalmers says that though 'he could not speak of the raptures of Christian enjoyment, he thought he could enter into the feeling of the Psalmist, "My soul breaketh for the longing that it hath unto Thy judgments at all times".'—John Ker.

References.—CXIX. 1.—J. Thomas, *Myrtle Street Pulpit*, vol. ii. p. 226. J. Keble, *Sermons for Christmas and Epiphany*, p. 186. CXIX. 11.—A. Maclaren, *After the Resurrection*, p. 256. CXIX. 18.—F. D. Maurice, *Sermons*, vol. v. p. 77.

H. M. Butler, *Harrow School Sermons* (2nd Series), p. 169. J. Keble, *Sermons for Advent to Christmas Eve*, p. 312. CXIX. 25.—F. D. Maurice, *Sermons*, vol. iv. p. 259. CXIX. 32.—J. Keble, *Village Sermons on the Baptismal Service*, p. 126. J. Vaughan, *Fifty Sermons* (9th Series), p. 95. E. J. Boyce, *Parochial Sermons*, p. 64.

'I will speak of Thy testimonies before kings, and will not be ashamed.'—PSALM CXIX. 46.

THIS was the text printed on the title page of the Augsburg Confession which was published in quarto form in April, 1531, with the Apology. The text is given in Latin: 'Et loquebar de testimoniis tuis in conspectu Regum et non confundebar'. A copy with this motto, says Dr. J. W. Richard, is found in the royal library at Dresden. 'Beneath the title Melanchthon wrote with his own hand, *D Doctori Martino. Et rogo ut legat et emendet.*'

REFERENCES.—CXIX. 54.—J. Monro-Gibson, *A Strong City*, p. 195. CXIX. 55, 56.—J. Keble, *Sermons for Ascension Day to Trinity Sunday*, p. 292. CXIX. 59, 60.—G. Jackson, *The Scottish Review*, vol. iii. p. 107. CXIX. 62.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons on Passages of the Psalms*, p. 284. CXIX. 63.—J. Keble, *Sermons for the Saints' Days*, p. 394. CXIX. 75.—F. Bourdillon, *Plain Sermons for Family Reading* (2nd Series), p. 217. CXIX. 80.—J. Smith, *The Integrity of Scripture*, p. 151. CXIX. 89-91.—R. Allen, *The Words of Christ*, p. 258. CXIX. 90.—A. Tucker, *Preachers' Magazine*, vol. xix. p. 323.

COMFORT IN TROUBLE

'The same is my comfort in my trouble: for Thy word hath quickened me.'—PSALM CXIX. 50.

WHEN we study the Psalms with a religious purpose, we would know something of the writers, and it is unfortunate that we know very little about them.

But when we look into so long a Psalm as the 119th we seem to see somewhat of the circumstances of the writer's life. It is a late Psalm, a Psalm written by one who lived in times when the Jewish nation was being influenced by the heathen nations around, and it seemed almost as if the persecution had gone further in reference to him who wrote the Psalm, as if they had actually placed him in durance vile. Yet, clinging more strongly to the words of God revealed to him and to his nation by the prophets of old, they were the sole comfort to him in his distress. 'The same is my comfort in my trouble: for Thy word hath quickened me.'

I. Now we come to the application to ourselves. Does it ever happen that we are similarly situated? Has it never occurred to us that we have been under influences which we felt were influences which tended to weaken the hold of the Christian faith upon our souls and our hearts? Certainly, we are from time to time brought face to face with persecution. Have we had recourse to God's promises, written and preserved to us in God's Word, and can we say with this pious Jew, 'The same is my comfort in my trouble'? You and I will all, some time or other, have to face trouble and pain. Pain will certainly come to us before the pilgrimage is over, and what a glorious and splendid thing it will be if you and I, like this pious Jew, can say of our trouble that we have got its corresponding comfort. This, I know, is my trouble, and this is my comfort. We will face trouble, then, much more readily when we know we have got our comfort.

Now let us consider just for a moment that thought, 'My comfort in my trouble'. It is quite clear that the words are emphatic, that the Psalmist meant to draw attention to himself, both in reference to his trouble and in reference to his comfort. And so you and I must also be emphatic, and devote our attention to our trouble and our comfort. Let us see, then, in what way he speaks of God's revelation as his comfort.

First of all, he would distinguish it from the comfort that other persons receive. The man of the world finds comfort in various sources. But this saint of God speaks of God's Word as 'my comfort'. It tells of that spiritual experience which is peculiar to each one of us when we with all our hearts strive to serve God, and it speaks of that comfort and joy which we can recollect we have received in reading with faith and with love God's Word, and deriving from it that help which we well know we need in the hour of our trouble.

Or again, it is my comfort as revealing to me the cause of my trouble. The servant of God looks to God's Word, and there he finds that God has allowed this trouble to come upon him to try him, to see whether he really loves Him, to see whether that heart of the pilgrim responds to the heart of Him Who is its King, its Guide. And therefore he begins to feel that the trouble is, after all, one allowed to come upon him by God for some good reason of His own, and in that he receives comfort.

Or, again, it is my comfort, this message from God's Word, because it is one always present with me wherever I go. Wherever I am there is that message from God which I recollect, remember imperfectly perhaps in reference to the exact words, but there it is. I store it up in my memory: it is an ever-present comfort.

But one word more. The verse in the Psalm consists of two clauses: 'The same is my comfort in my trouble; for Thy Word hath quickened me'; that is to say, that the result of this comfort which God gives to His striving and faithful soldier, in these messages which He conveys through His revealed Word to His soul, gives him new life, quickens him.

II. This quickening of our spiritual life, this quickening of our effort in the affairs of our daily life, comes to us in two distinct ways.

First of all it comes to us from outside, it comes to us from our reading of God's Word. Holy Scripture is full of comfort and encouragement to those who strive with a good heart. Only be strong and of a good courage. When the Apostles thought they were overwhelmed with the waves of the storm on the lake, Jesus was present with them, and when, in their fear, they saw Him coming, He cried out, 'Be not afraid: it is I'. And we see in every page of God's Word how God was the comfort and support of His servants of old.

And it gives us new life from within. For we recall, in reference to that moment of our spiritual wavering, many a time when God was very good to us. Our spiritual experience tells us of a time when temptation came and seemed almost as if it were going to overwhelm us, and how God in His goodness sent the angel, and He closed the lion's mouth that it should not hurt us. And we feel guilty of ingratitude because we doubted that God would help us, and the thought of what He has done for us in the past gives us new life. Yes, there wells up from within a new vigour; the grace of God has been given us.

Ask yourselves to what extent you can take these words home; ask yourselves, in reference to your trouble, to what extent God is your comfort? Can we say: 'Thy Word, Thy revealed truth is my comfort, shall be my comfort all the days of my pilgrimage, whenever my trouble shall come upon me?' May God give us grace to answer this aright.

THE MYSTERY OF PAIN

'It is good for me that I have been in trouble: that I may learn Thy statutes.'—PSALM CXIX. 71.

It is scarcely surprising if the mystery of pain has been a problem which beyond almost any other has tasked the brain and wearied the heart of many of the world's greatest thinkers. With the steady advance of knowledge, moreover, especially that of a scientific character, the shadows upon the picture seem to grow yet more sombre of hue. Day by day the cry continues all around us, 'Has God forgotten to be gracious? Has He shut up His loving-kindness in displeasure? Why does He not eradicate the ape and tiger instincts from the heart of man? Why tarry the wheels of His chariot so long in coming? Why does He not lay bare His holy arm and scatter the legions of iniquity for ever?' Over and over again, when men have witnessed some helpless body racked with pain in its most exquisite forms, when they have beheld the great social cankers sapping the very springs of life, when the dogs of war are let loose and they see before them such horrors as those depicted by Zola in *La Débâcle*, at such seasons as these the cry has often risen to men's lips, 'Is there any reward for the righteous? Is there a Judge Who judgeth the earth?'

I. Pain the Result of Sin.—It is important for us to remember at the outset that a huge amount of the pain of which we ourselves are the unwilling witnesses, perhaps even victims, to-day, is the direct or indirect result of sin, and being such it is wholly unjustifiable for us to cast the tiniest stigma of blame upon the Almighty for its existence. The sins of the fathers are visited upon the children, yea, even unto the third and fourth generation. This statement is not a mere piece of philosophic theory, it is a tremendous present-day fact of which even the most unreflecting among us cannot fail to take notice. Consequences are God's commentaries. If you narrow down the subject for a moment to those particular forms of child-suffering which touch our hearts so deeply, we shall learn from those whose mission in life it is to do what they can to alleviate cruelty and suffering at this time,—we shall learn from them that ninety-nine per cent. of the child-cruelty with which they are brought into contact is the result simply and solely of the curse of intemperance on the part of their parents or guardians.

II. The Discipline of Pain.—But my purpose now is rather to dwell upon pain and suffering regarded from their disciplinary point of view—that is to say, as exercising an important influence in the formation and development of the highest type in Christian character, that type of Christian character which has been so wonderfully summed up for us by the great Apostle in the familiar words, the life which is 'hid with Christ in God'. First of all, then, I would appeal to the testimony of the Gospels. I do not mean necessarily the experience of great thinkers, but also that of the humblest and most commonplace of the sons of men. Can we fail to recognize it as a truth that pain and suffering have been responsible, times without number, for the development of the most beautiful traits of Christian character? Is it not an incontestable fact that pain is, as it were, a great moral lever wielding a far mightier power than riches, or force, or both. The road to victory lies across the burning, fiery furnace of martyrdom. It was in the presence of a Man of Sorrows that the great unshaken imperial might of Rome was at length compelled to bow, and at last crumbled to atoms. Hence we can understand the tremendous words of the Master when He charged us to take up our cross and follow Him. Pain, suffering, discipline, these are potent beyond anything else to uplift our poor human nature to its true height. Trial or suffering, this must be the lot of us all. It was through discipline like this that the great Captain of our salvation, wearing the robe of flesh, was exalted to the right hand of the Father Himself, and we ourselves cannot rebel against a similar lot. 'I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me.' And this leads us to a second thought: the formation within each one of a Divine character through and by the aid of suffering and discipline. This brings in its train many consequences which are altogether external to ourselves, but which are none the less of a most far-reaching type. Cases undoubtedly do exist, and have existed, in which the effect of suffering, whether it be physical or mental, appears to be the freezing up of all love. This result, however, we may truly regard as being applicable to a very small minority of people indeed, whereas, on the other hand, suffering and discipline, if only they be accepted in the true Christian temper, in the spirit of the Christ, with a manful determination to show forth in our own body the marks of the Lord Jesus Himself—suffering such as this is bound, however little we ourselves may be conscious of the fact, to produce flowers of grace which could never otherwise have put forth their exquisite blossoms. Personal suffering—this is a cross

which we must inevitably endure if we desire our own individual souls to be filled with the Divine grace of sympathy, if we desire to take our share in bearing the burdens of our comrades. It will quicken our spiritual perceptions till we become possessed of an insight, altogether foreign to any previous experience, an insight which will impel us to extend a helping hand to a companion who has perhaps been racked with some long agony. The very fact that we ourselves have partaken of God's gift of suffering will throw around us in the eyes of our fellow-men a bright halo of love. It will draw our fellow-men to our side, to be absolutely at one, in full sympathy and communion with our fellow-men. In order to bring about this end, the influence of sorrow is a thousand times more powerful than that of joy. Pain and sorrow possess an attractive power of a most extraordinary type. They simply weld the most divergent characters together. Whether it be the soldiers who have fought shoulder to shoulder through some toilsome campaign, or the patriots who have sworn that they will give their life-blood if need be for the triumph of their cause, or the husband and wife upon whose heads the storms of adversity have descended in blinding torrents; these will be the people who will be able to exclaim with the full heart of the Psalmist, 'It is good for me that I have been in trouble'.

III. Christianity and Life.—Suffering and discipline, then, are mighty factors in our spiritual education, and when we dwell upon such themes as these the inherent reasonableness of much which would be otherwise dark and inscrutable is beginning to dawn on our minds. Now we are ascended to higher ground still. The very clouds themselves seem to be rolling away. We almost fancy that we can get a glimpse of the heavenly Jerusalem. Life—this is the great title of Christianity—remember not simply the purification of this life, passed in this world of lights and shadows, has the promise of an infinitely purer, grander life in the vast ages which are as yet unborn. Once realize and take home to yourselves the great fact that this world is not an end of itself, but rather a school of character, and the discipline of pain and suffering seems forthwith to fall into its place as a normal and necessary element in the Divine government of the world. We are constrained to believe that each one of us exists for a definite purpose, but the purpose which is apparently the sign of each personality is ever being ceaselessly baffled. In all that we attempt to perform we are fettered, shackled, hampered. Pleasure, knowledge, achievement, each of these in turn breaks down, and as we fall upon them they pierce us through and through. But remember, we are working for the most glorious of futures, when the life we now enjoy will attain to its complete development, when we shall indeed know what it is to realize ourselves; for we shall wake up with Christ's own likeness and be satisfied with it. Amid all the sad scenes with which we are so constantly confronted, in the presence of the bitter, aching sorrows which sooner or later descend upon us all, till the iron literally enters into our soul, it is difficult to grasp the fact that the whole picture is one of ordered beauty, and not a mass of confused colour destitute of all semblance of design; but have patience, have faith, the work never ceases to go on, although things often seem so meaningless and unintelligible.

REFERENCE.—CXIX. 71.—H. Windross, *The Life Victorious*, p. 33.

PSALM CXIX.

VERSE 92. 'Unless Thy law had been my delight, I should have perished in mine affliction,' is written on Martin Luther's Bible by his own hand. The date is 1542, and the Bible is preserved at the Brandenburg Mark Museum, Berlin.—J. K.

THE SINNER AND THE SAVIOUR

'I am Thine, O save me: for I have sought Thy commandments.'—PSALM CXIX. 94.

WE notice as we read this Psalm that there is one thought that occurs in every single verse right through the Psalm from beginning to end, and that is the thought of God's law. The writer has evidently learned one great fact in his life, that we depend upon God for all our good things, and without Him we can do nothing; he has learned that as God is the supporter and stay of the whole creation, so He is the supporter and stay of the individual human life. And then, as he dwells upon this change, there is another thought which comes to his mind, and which seems to press upon him almost as strongly as that first thought, and that is that there is something between man and God which prevents man from following God's will, and that something he knows to be the existence of sin. He feels his need of pardon, and so he prays, 'I am Thine, O save me'.

I. The Need of a Saviour.—This need is a need which we should all of us feel. There have been times, and we know it, when we have wandered far away from God. There have been times when we have seen before us the choice between good and evil, and we have deliberately chosen that which is evil. We have preferred sin. We have loved sin, and chosen it because we preferred it. But God has blessings in store for the sinner, as soon as the sinner becomes penitent and turns from the evil of his ways. And so all that we have to do is to understand the real meaning of the word penitence, or the word conversion, which means practically the same, and see that we are truly penitent, and then we may believe that much blessing is in store for us, that is in store for those who are undefiled in the way.

II. The Meaning of Penitence.—Let us try and see what is the real meaning of this word, penitence. The first step necessary in true penitence is that we must learn to know ourselves. The writer of this Psalm says, 'I am Thine, O save me, for I have sought Thy commandments,' and that is necessary for us as it was necessary for him. There are a great many people who have never done what the prodigal son did, they have never come to themselves or thought of their own ways, and learned what their own life has been. How can we gain this necessary self-knowledge? The man of the world would tell us that if

we would know human nature, our own nature and lives, we must live in the world, we must see something of the world, we must not be too hard on the faults of the world. Sometimes they will say the best man is the man who has fallen into sin himself. But Christ says to us something very different from this. Christ says, If you would know human nature, know yourself and your own life, there must be times when you cut yourself off from the world, and when you get alone with God. And so, if we would know what real penitence is, it is necessary first of all to know ourselves and our own life, and to call upon the Lord, 'O save me'.

III. A Change of Life.—Conversion means turning to God, seeking His commandments, and we must make no mistake about it. It means a change of heart, which must be followed by a change of life. Real penitence, real conversion is not a state of feeling, but a change of life. The result of our conversion, or our turning to God, may show itself in different ways. It sometimes is a sudden result, and it shows itself suddenly in the complete change of a life, so that those who know us can see what has taken place in our lives and see at once we have turned to God. But conversion does not always come to a man in this way. Sometimes it comes slowly and gradually. Sometimes God's Holy Spirit has to deal with a man very gently, and lead him on slowly, step by step, correcting one fault at a time, gradually changing his life; and it is only after a long time that we see the result of the change in his changed life.

REFERENCE.—CXIX. 94.—H. Woodcock, *Sermon Outlines*, p. 76.

PSALM CXIX. 97.

RUSKIN says: 'If people would but read the text of their Bibles with heartier purpose of understanding it, instead of superstitiously, they would see that throughout the parts which they are intended to make most personally their own (the Psalms) it is always the Law which is spoken of with chief joy. The Psalms respecting mercy are often sorrowful, as in thought of what it cost; but those respecting the law are always full of delight. David cannot contain himself for joy in thinking of it,—he is never weary of its praise: "How love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day. Thy testimonies are my delight and my counsellors; sweeter, also, than honey and the honey-comb."'—*Modern Painters*, vol. v., pt. vii. chap. iv. § 22.

VERSE 97. Henry Martyn says: 'I experienced a solemn gladness in learning this part, "MEM," of the 119th Psalm'.—J. K.

MY LAMP

'Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.'
—PSALM CXIX. 105.

THE Word of God is compared to a lamp or lantern such as that which is carried on dark nights in country places in lands where fixed lights are not to be found. Let us see how the Word of God may be compared to such a lamp.

I. First like a lighted lantern on a dark and lonely journey it is a pleasant companion. A lamp cannot indeed talk to us or even listen to our voices; but its cheerful light close beside us, belonging to us, and going on continually with us, takes away our feeling of loneliness, and we feel that the common saying is quite true that 'a light is pleasant company'. This is much more true of the Word of God. Life has not only its sunny days, but its long dark nights in which we must go on just the same in the way that is set before us. But even in the dark nights of temptation, pain, disappointment, sickness or bereavement, we need not travel alone, for this lamp may be ever at our sides, cheering us with its radiance.

II. Then again the Word of God, like a lighted lantern, is a protection against danger. The shining light of the truth we love will often preserve us from the more accidental spiritual dangers and temptations of life. It will save also in deliberately planned attacks of our spiritual enemies upon us. A thief would not choose to try to rob a man who carried a lighted lamp in his hand or to break open the lock of a house with the Master's lantern shining full on him.

III. But the third and principal value of a lamp is that it shows us the way, and it is in this respect especially that the truth of God is most precious to us.

(*a*) It shows us the entrance to the way.

(*b*) Then it shows us the way itself, as we travel on step by step through the lonely darkness. If at some meeting of the ways we might in darkness have turned in the wrong direction this lamp will show us the true path, whispering kindly to us 'This is the way, walk ye in it; when ye turn to the right, or when ye turn to the left' (Is. xxx. 21).

(*c*) Then lastly the Word of God will show us the end of the way. The word of God is a lamp that will light us all the way to heaven, where we shall need it no more.—R. BREWIN, *British Weekly Pulpit*, vol. III. p. 24.

PSALM CXIX.

VERSE 105. 'Thy word is a lamp unto my feet.' This is the text prefixed to a little book called *The Lantern of Light*, which was the favourite reading of the Lollards before the Reformation. The close of a prayer in the preface shows the principles of these children of the dawn: 'When Thou, O Lord, didst die upon the cross, Thou didst breathe into Thy Word the spirit of life, and didst give it power to quicken us through Thine own precious blood, as Thou Thyself hast said: "The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life".' The Lollards of England and Scotland were charged with reading the Bible in their mother tongue—Wyclif's translation—and with esteeming it above any instruction they received from the priests. On this account they were called *Biblemen*. A considerable number of them were taken up for trial in Kyle in Ayrshire, and other western districts, in 1494, nearly seventy years before the time of Knox. That region, so prominent in the time of the Reformation and the Covenant, had the seed in the soil.—JOHN KER.

REFERENCES.—CXIX. 105.—C. Bosanquet, *Tender Grass for the Lambs*, p. 154. J. Keble, *Sermons from Advent to*

Christmas, p. 257. R. Allen, *The Words of Christ*, p. 15. G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 199. CXIX. 112.—G. Bellett, *Parochial Sermons*, p. 54. CXIX. 117.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxviii. No. 1657.

THE QUALIFICATION OF A SERVANT

'I am Thy servant; give me understanding, that I may know Thy testimonies.'—PSALM CXIX. 125.

I. I SHOULD call this distinctively the servant's prayer. At first sight it might seem that the prayer of a servant should be more elementary. It might seem that the simple duty of a servant is to ask for orders. The Psalmist has a different view. To his mind the perfection of domestic service is not the receiving but the forestalling of orders—the providing for requirements beforehand. 'Because I am a servant, give me understanding, that I may know in advance the things thou hast need of—that I may not require to wait for Thy verbal instructions but may consider the wants of Thy household.' That is the Psalmist's meaning, and it is founded on truth. For, in God's house as in man's house, there are two ways in which one may be a 'good and faithful servant'—a lower way and a higher way. The lower way is that of the beginner. It is the waiting for every detail. 'What wouldst Thou have me do this day?' So asks the incipient servant. And in answer the heavenly Father gives the details; He issues Ten Commandments.

II. But as yet He misses something in the servant—that thing which the Psalmist calls understanding. He craves in the servant a second stage of goodness and faithfulness. Let us suppose that the Father names four rooms of His sanctuary which require sweeping. Let us suppose that on descending from His presence the servant finds that in the interval a fifth apartment has become soiled. Would it not be desirable that in the mind of him or her the understanding should supersede the command. Is the fifth room to be left useless because there is no verbal enactment concerning it? Is there none of the Lord's servants with discernment enough to improvise an eleventh commandment to satisfy God's will instead of His mere law? That is what the Father longs for, that is what the Psalmist prays for, that is what the instinct of all hearts desire.

III. Lord, men of old have said, 'Teach us Thy law'; rather shall my prayer be, 'Teach me Thy will'. My voice shalt Thou hear in the morning; but it will be to suggest not to receive orders. Wilt Thou give me liberty to act for Thee without command! Wilt Thou let us keep Thy house in order where from Thee I have received no order? Wilt Thou give me a commission without detail—a mandate to help where I see heaviness, to brighten where I meet burdens, to comfort where I find calamities, to free where I encounter fetters, to protect where I recognize poverty, to cheer where the atmosphere is chill!—G. MATHESON, *Messages of Hope*, p. 125.

REFERENCES.—CXIX. 126-128.—A. Maclaren, *Old Testament Outlines*, p. 146. CXIX. 129.—H. Woodcock, *Sermon Outlines*, p. 57. Bishop Woodford, *Occasional Sermons*, vol. i. 258. CXIX. 129, 130.—J. Wordsworth, 'The One Religion,' *Bampton Lectures*, 1881, p. 115. CXIX. 130.—R. Shutte, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 1715, p. 761. CXIX. 132.—J. Keble, *Sermons for Sundays After Trinity*, pp. 245, 417. CXIX. 133.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xv. No. 878.

PSALM CXIX. 136.

IN Thomas Hughes' *Life of Daniel Macmillan*, a letter of the publisher to Mr. Llewellyn Davies is quoted, in which he observes of Plato: 'There is none of the yearning over the sins of the world which expresses itself in "Tears run down my cheeks because men keep not Thy law," nor "I could wish myself accursed for my brethren's sake". He has no feeling of bearing the sins of the world. Vice and mean conduct are very ugly. He would do all in his power to banish them: but he speaks of them in the tone of a "very lofty Athenian gentleman".'

REFERENCES.—CXIX. 140.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons on Passages of the Psalms*, pp. 290, 299. CXIX. 144.—T. Sadler, *Sermons for Children*, p. 85. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxvi. No. 1572. CXIX. 148.—H. Melvill, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 1613, p. 301. CXIX. 151.—W. H. H. Murray, *American Pulpit of To-day*, vol. iii. p. 209. CXIX. 162.—G. A. Sowter, *From Heart to Heart*, p. 66. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxviii. No. 1671. CXIX. 176.—T. Arnold, *Christian Life: Its Hopes*, p. 171. J. Bolton, *Selected Sermons* (2nd Series), p. 135. CXIX.—*International Critical Commentary*, vol. ii. p. 409. CXX.—*Ibid.* p. 444.

PSALM CXXI.

DR. BLAIKIE, in his *Life of Livingstone*, tells that this Psalm and the 135th were read by him when he parted with his family and went out first as a missionary to Africa. 'I remember my father and him,' writes his sister, 'talking over the prospects of Christian missions. They said that the time would come when rich and great men would think it an honour to support whole stations of missionaries, instead of spending their money on hounds and horses. On the morning of 17 November, 1840, we got up at five o'clock. David read the 121st and the 135th Psalms and prayed. My father and he walked to Glasgow to catch the Liverpool steamer.' The old man walked back with a lonely heart to Blantyre, while his son's face was set in earnest toward the dark continent.—J. K.

THE RELIGION OF THE THRESHOLD

'The Lord shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in from this time forth, and even for evermore.'—PSALM CXXI. 8.

BETWEEN these two things—the exits and the entrances of the day—lie the whole problem and struggle of existence.

I. Get into the habit each morning and evening of meeting God for a moment on the threshold as you go out and come in, and though you may not see it, others will begin to see a new element of strength and tenderness in your character. The man and the woman who keep tryst with God at the threshold for just a moment each day as they go out and come in are ready for every contingency.

II. Of course, to offer that kind of prayer means that you and I are determined to live a certain kind

of life. There are three definite blessings on which we may surely count every day as we go out and come in, if we live this religion of the threshold.

(*a*) It will redeem the monotony of the day, and will sweeten its drudgery.

(*b*) It will make us ready for the unexpected things in life.

(*c*) It will hallow our evenings and sanctify our moments of rest. A simple religion, this religion of the doorstep, but death will be sweeter if we have learned to keep tryst with God as we go out and in.—D. S. Mackay, *The Religion of the Threshold*, p. 25.

References.—CXXI. 8.—H. Melvill, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 2241. CXXI.—*International Critical Commentary*, vol. ii. p. 446. CXXII. 3.—Canon Barnett, *A Lent in London*, p. 114. CXXII. 4.—S. Baring-Gould, *Village Preaching for a Year* (2nd Series), vol. iii. p. 242. CXXII. 6-9.—J. Bowstead, *Practical Sermons*, vol. ii. p. 80. CXXII. 8, 9.—H. M. Butler, *Harrow School Sermons* (2nd Series), p. 183. CXXII. *International Critical Commentary*, vol. ii. p. 448. CXXIII. 2.—J. Keble, *Sermons for the Sundays After Trinity*, p. 1. *Expositor* (3rd Series), vol. iv. p. 80 CXXIII.—*International Critical Commentary*, vol. ii. p. 450.

Psalm cxxiv.

When the conflict was over, the venerable Theodore Beza, eighty years old, returned solemn thanks, and gave out the 124th Psalm to be sung. Every year since, on 12 December, it has been sung in Geneva.

Dr. Tholuck of Halle used to tell an anecdote of his father-in-law. He was a convert from Roman Catholicism; and as it happens sometimes that though the mind may be entirely emancipated, the desire for priestly absolution returns, his son-in-law asked him before he died, if he had any such feeling. The dying man expressed his sole confidence in the great High Priest, and, giving a wave of triumph with his hand, said in the words of Luther's version of the psalm—

Strick ist Entzwei, und wir sind frei.
Broke are their nets, and thus escapèd we.

The biographer of M'Cheyne, giving an account of his death, tells that 'next day he continued sunk in body and mind, till about the time his people met for their usual evening prayer meeting, when he requested to be left alone for half an hour. When his servant entered the room again, he exclaimed with a joyful voice, 'My soul is escaped as a bird out of the snare of the fowler; the snare is broken, and I am escaped'. His countenance, as he said this, bespoke inward peace; and ever after he was observed to be happy.—J. K.

References.—CXXIV. 7.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxviii. No. 1696. CXXIV.—*International Critical Commentary*, vol. ii. p. 452. CXXV. 1.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxiv. No. 1450. CXXV.—*International Critical Commentary*, vol. ii. p. 453. W. Brock, *Midsummer Morning Sermons*, p. 74.

BIBLE MOUNTAINS

'As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the Lord is round about His people from henceforth even for ever.'—Psalm cxxv. 2.

Are there many mountains mentioned in the Bible? Are they lumped under one generalization? They are not so massed, they are spoken of in detail, as if each were almost a living thing or a living church or pillars of some vaster edifice. May we not bring them usefully into the whole action of our daily life and service and suffering? Some mountains are red with blood, some soft with dew, but both the hills were set up by Him Who buildeth all things.

I. Who can forget Mount Moriah? who could pronounce that sweet word frivolously? All the hill-side is alive with thoughts, and the thoughts are almost winged things, fluttering and flying and shaking from their wings great suggestions and pensive yet triumphant memory. Yours has been a poor landscape if there is no Moriah.

II. Is there not somewhere a hill of fellowship, a kind of council-chamber amid the rocks, a high place where certain men that seemed to be the very pillars of society are closeted? Yes, there is a hill of that kind. What is its name? Tabor. You love the name. Are not names as birds that sing their own songs? Do you not realize even in Tabor solemnity, possibility, suggestion? Who was on Tabor? Moses and Elias and Jesus. There must be hills that are as council-chambers in the Church and in the individual heart, Tabors on the top of which the most eloquent must be silent, and therefore the more eloquent.

III. Are there any other severe mountains in the Old Testament? Yes, there is one severest of all; surely this mountain is nought but rocks; you could not plant the simplest flower in those crannies so high and solemn. I refer to the Mount Sinai, the mount of law, the mount where the eternal righteousness was, so to say, born in this bitter, gruesome Bethlehem. He is either a great man or a small one who is independent of the Commandments. We may in some way plant beautiful flowers on the grim hill; that is surely not forbidden; or we may by the providence of God so enlarge the plain into garden land as to include the mountain; let it stand, but give it a new and blessed environment.

IV. We must have the rock, and its companion law, and in our yearnings after something quieter we may find our holy prayer lovingly and sufficiently answered by taking a glimpse at another mountain. What mountain is that? It is Mount Hermon. 'As the dew upon Hermon.' Dew is often to us more acceptable than lightning and snow and crushing tempest, though all these may be sanctified and ennobled by the great voice of law and claim of righteousness.

V. Can there be more mountains in this mountainous land of the Bible? Yes, a hundred more; we can touch but two of them. There is a mountain I should like to see; it is the mount of vision from one of whose peaks men catch glimpses of the land they long to go to. It is Mount Nebo. I would not care to see the specific and nameless grave amid the solitudes of Nebo, it would be enough for me to know that one sorely tried life climbed the steeps of Nebo that he might catch sight of another land,

while Jordan rolled between his poor old heart and that green Canaan. There are such mountainous times in the history of our souls.

VI. It was so on Mount Olivet. Jesus climbed that Olivet hill that He might leave it for ever behind Him as a mere letter or a term in geography. The ending-place was the beginning-place in the history of Christ; He did not end on Olivet; Olivet was to the dear Saviour a beginning, the point at which He started, a point therefore never to be forgotten. Blessed are they who climb Olivet, for they shall not die. The most beautiful sentence in the whole history of burial is to be found in connexion with this same Olivet, as also in connexion with old Nebo. Moses we know nothing about as to his death or his burial-place, and Jesus did not die on Olivet, but ascended; herein is the poem complete, the poem of Moses and the Lamb. Nebo and Olivet shoulder each other in the memory of a common and most blessed and significant history.—Joseph Parker, *City Temple Pulpit*, vol. III. p. 108.

SOWING IN TEARS

'They that sow in tears shall reap in joy.'—Psalm cxxvi. 5.

The words of the text are an inspired proverb. They are found to-day in all literatures, and they bear a twofold meaning: (1) that patient, enduring toil shall sooner or later have its reward; (2) that vicarious suffering lies at the root of all advancement in social, national, and religious life.

I. *See how the principle which is embedded in the text is found everywhere in nature.* Death lies between sowing and reaping. There is not a blade of grass in our fields, nor a flower in our gardens, which has not been produced by the sorrows of nature by her sufferings and death.

II. *We see the great fact in nature, illustrated in God's providential and moral government of the world.* I appeal to individual experience. Just as that loveliest of all Swiss flowers, the Blue Gentian, grows most luxuriantly under the cornices of snow, have not your greatest happiness and calmest peace grown from beneath your greatest sorrows?

Our fathers 'sowed in tears'; we, the children, 'reap in joy'. 'Are we not led up the great aisle of nature to the altar on Calvary, and prepared by the great facts of nature and of human life for regarding the expiatory sacrifice of Jesus with adoring faith?'

III. *If we see a certain law in nature and in God's providential and moral government of the world, as far as we can trace His footsteps, we shall find the same principle in Divine Revelation, and in the history of the Church of God.* What is the grand theme, the great central truth of the Bible? Is it not atonement? the highest form of vicarious suffering—the death of 'the just for the unjust'—the fit for the unfit?

1. My text gives the history of all true prayer. The saints in felicity are reaping the harvest of seed sown in penitential sorrow for sin.

2. Consider the Church's work. The history of the Church is but a continuation of the history of Christ. He who was the Sower was also the Seed. 'Except a corn of wheat fall to the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die it bringeth forth much fruit.' Was not Jesus the 'Man of Sorrows'? Did He not sow in tears? On the Day of Pentecost He began to 'reap in joy'. He has been reaping ever since in the centuries of the Church's history. Is He not reaping to-day?—J. W. Bardsley, *Many Mansions*, p. 105.

THE PREPARATION OF THE SOIL

'They that sow in tears shall reap in joy.'—Psalm cxxvi. 5.
(See also the Parable of the Sower.—Matt. xiii.)

In these words the Psalmist expresses a very important truth, one which finds a parallel in the proverb 'No gains without pains'. We may perhaps be allowed to state a kindred truth in passive form, which would enable us to derive more instruction and profit from the Parable of the Sower, 'They that are sowed upon in tears shall bear fruit in joy'. It is our gracious Lord who sows the seed, and it is He who will reap the harvest.

I. We read of the wayside, the rock, the thorns, and the good ground.

(*a*) The seed that fell by the wayside had no possible chance of bearing fruit; it was trodden under foot by the immediate passer-by and devoured before the day was done by the birds of the air. That wayside, because difficult to get at with the plough, might have been broken up and prepared for the seed had the husbandman been more industrious, but was barren and fruitless because of his neglect.

(*b*) Some fell upon the rock. It had not enough earth from which to gather moisture and so it and the seed were wasted.

(*c*) And some fell among thorns, or rather the roots or seeds of thorns, which grew up along with the corn and drew all the goodness of the soil to themselves, so that the corn was soon choked and overshadowed, and could not bear fruit. Again the blame lay with some one, with him who had tilled the soil, for he had not cleared it thoroughly before the seed was sown.

(*d*) And some fell on good ground which had been properly broken up and cleaned and thoroughly prepared so that the seed had a chance to live its full life and bring forth fruit according to its nature, some thirty, some sixty, and some a hundred fold.

II. 'He that hath ears to hear let him hear.' In the interpretation of the parable, we learn that Jesus Christ and His servants sow seed, which is the Word of God. The field is the heart and lives of men, which have to be prepared for the seed if it is to bear fruit in them. What is the preparation which our hearts must receive to fit them for the seed which is sown by the Master Hand or by His Holy Spirit through His servants in the world? We must search our hearts and examine them by means of the law of God, enlarged and exemplified by Christ in His teaching and His works. We must plough up everything, and sift every thought, and it will be remarkable if

we are not appalled with the revelation such an examination will make, if we are not overwhelmed with the thought that so much of our lives has been lived in culpable ignorance of our sinfulness and unfitness for God's presence, so much in disregard of His will and purpose concerning us, and so much in neglect of the great gift which He offers us. When our self-examination is complete and we feel crushed and broken; when we are humbled to the dust with a sense of our sinfulness and weakness, our merciful Lord will speak to us words of comfort and love. He will sow the seed which is the fruit of His life in our hearts.

REFERENCE.—CXXVI. 5, 6.—J. Baldwin Brown, *Aids to the Development of the Divine Life*, No. ii.

DIVINE SERVICE A SPECULATION

'He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him.'—PSALM CXXVI. 6.

IT may be assumed that God has a kingdom in this world, and that although it appears in different forms it can always be recognized; for it means the increase of knowledge, the spread of charity, the deliverance of the oppressed, the rescue of the fallen, the preaching of Christ's Evangel. We believe that God is calling us daily to cast ourselves into His work and to be fellow-labourers together with Him for the redemption of humanity.

I. Were one restricted to three departments of beneficence, as an illustration of hazardous and yet hopeful speculation, he might take for the first—

(*a*) Foreign Missions. Its pioneers were laughed at in society, and lectured by the Church; they were hindered and persecuted; their passion for human souls and their splendid self-abnegation were neither welcome nor admired. We are now beginning to rescue their names and to recognize what those men who were judged in their day fools and fanatics have done for philology and anthropology, for geography and commerce, and most of all for religion.

(*b*) How slow again has been the progress of education, how bitter its controversies, how vast its outlay, how many have been its servants. But the spirit of intelligence is spreading like leaven through the heavy mass of the people.

(*c*) The pioneers of temperance fought an unpopular and arduous battle, and none of the benefactors of society have suffered more through defeat and disappointment. Evidence can be produced to show that there is no decrease in the statistics on drink and no improvements in the habits of the people, and every person who is not a raging optimist will admit that drunkenness still battens on the vitals of England. On the other hand, it is beyond question that the nation as a whole is learning temperance and self-respect. Drunkenness, except in cases where it is a disease, is now confined to the lowest classes in the commonwealth, and there it is a misfortune as much as a vice.

II. God's servants would not be discouraged if they remembered that beneficence has many conditions of success, and one of them is time. You cannot hurry nature, neither can you hurry humanity. You can change the face of a country in ten years, but you cannot create an intelligent, temperate, industrious, thrifty people in less than three generations. Work for such high ends, and on such spiritual lines must be without haste and without rest, and the first workmen must be content to leave their unfinished building to their successors.

III. But the spiritual workman should remember that if the rate of progress be slow the far result is already discounted, and that if he speculates it is not in the sense that he may lose altogether, but that he loses in the present in order to gain in the future. Remember in moments of depression, when your own work and that of your generation seems a failure, that the kingdom of God has a long past. The history of commerce records how men have been willing to stake all they had upon one transaction in the hope of huge gain; the history of religion records how a greater multitude have risked everything for the good of their fellow-men and the kingdom of God. Theirs is the higher spirit and the future vision; theirs has been the master speculation of humanity. Time alone is arbiter of their wisdom, and time has already justified the venture of beneficence.—JOHN WATSON, *The Inspiration of Our Faith*, p. 298.

REFERENCES.—CXXVI. 6.—J. Thomas, *Myrtle Street Pulpit*, vol. ii. p. 263. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xv. No. 867. CXXVI.—*International Critical Commentary*, vol. ii. p. 455.

GOD THE BUILDER OF THE HOME

'Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it.'—PSALM CXXVII. 1.

HE who undertakes to build up a home without God fails and fails dismally. The first requisite in the building of the home is character, and the final purpose of every true home is the strengthening and development of character. Let us consider the practical bearing of this thought of the home as a school of character.

I. The first necessity is surely a frank recognition of the Divinity of the home. The division of secular and sacred is misleading in almost all its applications; nothing is secular but that which is enfeebling, ugly, sinful; everything which has a legitimate function in life should be viewed by Christian people as sacred, and the scenes of all such activities should be holy places. You read the report of a gathering held in some church or chapel, and the newspaper informs you that the 'sacred edifice' was well filled. Now whilst for my own part I fully understand and sympathize with the deep and often superstitious veneration even of the wood and stone that has been long associated with the prayer and praise of devout people, I find a deeper truth in the view of Puritanism that every place in which reverence is paid to God, and duty performed in fellowship with Him, becomes thereby sacred. Convention would scarcely permit the reporter to describe your house as a 'sacred

edifice,' but it ought to be that, and the sense of its holiness ought to grow on you year by year as the Divine meaning of the home becomes clearer.

II. The acknowledgment of God in the home is the basis of all true culture of souls, and the secret of the best type of home influence. And in speaking of the 'culture of souls' and of 'home influence' it is well to remind you that such words do not refer merely to the influence of parents upon children; the earliest pupils in the school of the home are the husband and wife themselves. They are at once pupils and teachers, each learning from the other, each instructing the other.

III. In the presence of the most solemn of all life's tasks, the training of children, how momentous is the significance of our text! The religious destiny of the rising generation is largely, under God, within the power of the parents. What do our children acquire in our homes? Maxims of commonplace morality, or the sense of God as a near and warm friend? To believe in the grandeur of your children's possibilities, fathers and mothers, to believe that even in childhood they may acquire the God-regarding habit; how great a matter is this, and what dignity and worth it would impart to their characters! The Lord builds our homes that our labour be not in vain! He will. He does. The very word 'home' thrills us; it comes to us laden with the sacred associations of many faithful generations; and by His grace shall we not covenant with Him and with one another in high resolve to make home life yet more joyous and Divine?

References.—CXXVII. 1.—J. S. Bartlett, *Sermons*, p. 198. C. J. Vaughan, *Memorials of Harrow Sundays*, p. 1. C. D. Bell, *The Name Above Every Name*, p. 232. J. Baldwin Brown, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxiii. p. 103. CXXVII. 1-3.—J. Bowstead, *Practical Sermons*, vol. i. p. 129.

THE GIFT OF SLEEP

'He giveth His beloved (in) sleep.'—Psalm cxxvii. 2.

The Psalmist is warning against that overwork which so surely degenerates into worry. He is picturing the man who overdrives himself until he has no leisure and no liberty. Remember that the Psalmist never dreamed of casting a slur upon honest, manly labour. What was borne in upon his soul was this: that by overtoil we lose more than we gain, for many of the richest gifts of heaven only approach us as by the path of slumber.

I. Let me consider that thought, thinking first of the blessings of our infancy. There is a world of love encompassing an infant, yet how unconscious the babe is of it all. Not alone in the land beyond the river is a place prepared for every one God loves. When into this present life a child awakes, hearts have been busy with the preparation; it is clad and fed, and sheltered from the storm. Yet who more passive than that little infant? Helpless it lies, and doomed to certain death if life depended upon its puny efforts. But 'God giveth to His beloved sleep'.

II. Our text has a great depth of meaning when we think upon the influences that play upon youth. Mightier influences than any teacher wields are being wielded beyond the class-room walls; in the loving intercourse of home there is progressing a deeper education than has ever been dreamed of in the standards. Its lesson book is not the printed page; it is the happy companionship of boyhood. Yet how absolutely and utterly unconscious is the youth of the blessings which are ingathering on him so, and which are to make him rich through all the years.

III. Our text has large significance in regard to the pursuit of happiness. The only sure way to miss the gift of happiness is to rise early and sit up late for it. The way to be happy is not to toil for happiness. It is to be awake to what is higher and fall asleep to that, and then as the day goes on, comes the discovery that 'God giveth to His beloved in sleep'.—G. H. Morrison, *The Wings of the Morning*, p. 24.

References.—CXXVII. 2.—H. Melvill, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 1666, p. 367. J. T. Stannard, *The Divine Humanity*, p. 125. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. i. No. 12. C. J. Vaughan, *Memorials of Harrow Sundays*, p. 1. CXXVII. 3.—W. Braden, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. vii. p. 369. CXXVII. 3-5.—H. W. Beecher, *Ibid.* vol. ix. p. 323. CXXVII.—*International Critical Commentary*, vol. ii. p. 457.

THE REWARD OF THE GOD-FEARING

'Behold, thus shall the man be blessed that feareth the Lord.'—Psalm cxxviii. 4.

I. Questions of a Future Life.—It is an interesting and curious problem to explain the absence or dimness of the belief in a future life among the Jews for so many centuries, especially when we consider the great place which the doctrines of the immortalities of the soul and of reward and punishment after death held in the religion of Egypt. A long life, a prosperous life was all that they looked for. In the earlier stages of Jewish thought the Messianic hope, the glorious future was for the nation, not for the individual. Sceptics it is true were not wanting. The author of the book of Job attacked the doctrine as untrue, the author of Ecclesiastes as unsatisfying. But it was the sharp lesson of fact which at last undermined its dominion over the thought of men. The religious Jew living under the insane tyranny of Antiochus Epiphanes; the kindred but undevout dynasty of the Hasmoneans; the half alien and wholly unpatriotic rule of the Herods, could no longer hold to this belief. The good things of this life were too obviously not with Jehovah's worshippers. And side by side with the waning of earthly hopes came a deepening of religious consciousness. The pious Israelite, feeling his fate to be in the hand of God, and sure that God would not forsake him, begins to expect that he, and all the godly, will have a share in the future of the nation.

II. Belief in the Early Return of Christ.—The belief in an early return of the Lord carried the Church through the first century of her existence; and even before men had time to say 'The Lord delayeth His coming,' the visions of enthusiastic faith had set into dogma. The Christian knew that Christ would come

to judgment at last (though he himself should pass to his rest long ere the coming), and that they who have done good shall go into life everlasting, and they that have done evil into everlasting fire. There was no doubt about the reward of the elect; no scruples about the fate of the reprobate.

III. Present Day Position.—We can no longer dream that old dream, that virtue and piety bring material prosperity. God has told us that He maketh His sun to shine upon the evil and the good, and sendeth His rain upon the just and the unjust. But there is implanted in the heart of man a clear unreasoning certainty—unreasoning because it is earlier than reason and of a higher authority—that it is better somehow to do right than wrong, irrespective of pains or pleasures resulting. It is this that saved pro-Christian societies, this that in great measure saves society to-day from anarchy and dissolution; the instinctive belief that the reward of goodness lies there, in the right act itself, and in the character which makes the right act natural. And for the believer the universal law is expressed in terms of a higher and more intimate knowledge of the Divine. For him the motive and the reward of life are found alike in the clear and passionate consciousness of the abiding Presence of God.—J. Peile, *Church Family Newspaper*, 1907, p. 604.

References.—CXXVIII. 5.—W. M. Statham, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xviii. p. 360. CXXVIII.—*International Critical Commentary*, vol. ii. p. 459. CXXIX.—*Ibid.* vol. ii. p. 461.

THE SORROWS OF THE NIGHT

'More than they that watch for the morning.'—Psalm cxxx. 6.

Few have gone far along life's way without understanding what it is to watch for the morning. The invalid, helpless, sleepless, every nerve strained, with a great weight of confused woe heavy on his breast, welcomes the chill light, though it brings but little respite—though he can only say, 'Risest thou thus, dim dawn, again?' Even in full strength, when we lie awake at night, there may come to us all the cruel possibilities of the future, as well as the real anxieties of the present, till there is no more spirit left in us. But when the morning dawns, when we put on the armour of light, we are stronger to meet our foes.

Perhaps the sorrows of the night were never felt so little as now, when people fly to narcotics on the slightest provocation. In other times they were well understood. Whether the pain was of the body or the soul it ached on unallayed. Rousseau has a striking phrase, *les frayeurs nocturnes*, and the Middle Ages in particular knew those terrors in all their forms. It is this which gives their tenderness to the Provençal songs of the morning.

I. There is another coming desired more eagerly by the Christian heart, and promised by Jesus Christ Himself when He spoke the word, *Hereafter ye shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven.* This phrase cannot be reduced and tamed into anything short of lunacy if Christ was not Divine. This second advent is continually insisted on by Himself and His Apostles; its solemn note resounds through exhortation, comfort, and warning. Yet in our day it is largely ignored in Christian teaching, and is left as the heritage of comparatively small and obscure companies, who encumber it with false and doubtful interpretations. But the truth itself is independent of all these entanglements. It is simply that Christ is to appear suddenly, and the time may be close upon us; we are to be ready, for in such an hour as we think not the Son of Man may come.

II. What is the significance of this expectation to us? How is it to alter and colour our lives? We do not look for the Appearing in our own life here. As we have parted with the dear ones who, like ourselves, have been partakers of the power of His resurrection, we have felt that we, too, must die, and the clods of the valley have been sweet. We have looked to join our own among the shaded glories under the Altar-Throne, there to wait and pray for the adoption. But we should think of the advent as near, even at the doors, all the days we go out and in. Christ is with us according to His promise, but He stands by us unseen, and in spite of all His gifts there is still a hiding of His power. The meaning of the promise is that the fight will not go on for ever, that the flux and reflux of the tide of battle will at last cease, that a decisive interposition will end the war, and that the Son of Man will purge His kingdom of all things that offend, and them that do iniquity. Since Christ came, all have owned that a new force is astir, but we see not yet all things put under Him.

III. The day and hour we know not. Even the angels in heaven know not. More wonderful and touching still, this secret was kept from the Son in His humiliation. He consented to be ignorant of the time when His work should reach its term. We may reverently conjecture that this was one drop in His cup, that the tumult and anguish of His soul were not complete without it, that to sympathize with us perfectly He must know the turmoil of our spirits in expecting the end. Perhaps He meant to teach us that the best help for present duty and suffering is always to be expecting the second advent, always to be ignorant of the time. We are to fight as if no new succours were to come, we are to fight knowing that they are coming, it may be in our day, it may be after we have died on the field, but that with them the victory is sure. But the belief that even now the Lord is at hand will ever help to keep us in the earnest purity of the girded loins and the burning lamp, and deliver us from any hope that falls short of God.—W. Robertson Nicoll, *Ten Minute Sermons*, p. 103.

Psalm cxxx.

It was the 130th Psalm, sung in St. Paul's, May, 1738, and heard by John Wesley with deep emotion, that prepared him for the truth of justification by faith, which he embraced shortly afterwards, through reading Luther on the Galatians. His conversations

with Peter Bohlen, of the Moravian Brethren, also aided him greatly, and helped to preserve him from the mystic legalism of *Law's Serious Call*, to which he was at one time inclined. But for this decision, the mighty movement which has sprung from Wesley would have failed in the birth.—J. K.

REFERENCES.—CXXX.—J. W. Bardsley, *Many Mansions*, p. 315. CXXX. 4.—J. Keble, *Miscellaneous Sermons*, p. 441. M. Biggs, *Practical Sermons on the Old Testament Subjects*, p. 220. CXXX. 7.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. vii. No. 351. G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 367. CXXX.—H. Woodcock, *Sermon Outlines*, p. 170. *International Critical Commentary*, vol. ii. p. 464. A. Maclaren, *A Year's Ministry* (2nd Series), p. 31. C. Kingsley, *Westminster Sermons*, p. 262. CXXXI. 2.—J. Keble, *Sermons for the Sunday After Trinity*, p. 163. J. Vaughan, *Fifty Sermons* (10th Series), p. 234. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxi. No. 1210. CXXXI.—F. D. Maurice, *Sermons*, vol. ii. p. 135. *International Critical Commentary*, vol. ii. p. 466. C. Kingsley, *Westminster Sermons*, p. 280.

THE SONG OF THE BUILDERS

'Lord, remember David, and all his afflictions,' etc.—
PSALM CXXXII.

I. LET us gather from this portion some lessons touching preparatory work. 'Lord, remember David, and all his afflictions.' Look for a moment at the picture which is given us here of the aged king setting himself to his task. The historical book tells us that as soon as 'the Lord had given him rest from all his enemies round about' he began to think of building a house for God. He will put his own comfort second; God's service—which is but the noblest name for duty—first. Notice, too, that David's devotedness does make a plea with God. The prayer goes upon the supposition that his toil and self-sacrifices will not, cannot, be all in vain. And the prayer built upon that supposition is answered. God does not require perfect faithfulness in us His servants ere He blesses us with His smile; He does not need that the temple should be all complete ere He enters in. And consider, too, how God's remembrance of such preparatory work is shown. David saw no result from all his toils to build the temple. But none the less was it true that God remembered David and all his afflictions and accepted and crowned his work.

II. Thus we come to the second section of our Psalm, stretching from the eighth to the ninth verse, the prayer for God's blessing on the builder's work. The Psalmist asks first that God would dwell in the completed temple, and that the symbol of His presence may now at last, after so many wanderings, rest there. May we not from all this draw needful lessons for ourselves? And first as to the one great blessing which all builders for God should desire. We all think far too much of external activity, and too little of that Spirit who must guide and fructify it; too much of the institutions and too little of the indwelling God. And that presence is all which we need to make ourselves strong, and our work effectual. From this fundamental petition all the other clauses of the prayer flow. Taken together they are the sum of the Psalmist's desire for his nation, the ideal of what Israel might and should be, of what it certainly would be if God dwelt in it.

III. The final section of the Psalm contains the Divine answer, which more than fulfils the Psalmist's desire. The Church asks God to arise into His rest; and He answers by adding the promise of perpetuity; 'This is My rest for ever; here will I dwell'. The Church asks for robes of righteousness for the priests; and He replies with robes of salvation, which is the perfecting and most glorious issue of righteousness. The Church asked that the people might shout for joy; and He replies with an emphatic reduplication of the word, which implies the exuberance and continuance of the joyful acclaim. The Church asked for favour to the King; and He replies by the promise that the horn of his power shall continually increase, their light of guidance and gladness shall be always his, that victory over all his enemies shall attend his arm, and an ever-blossoming crown his head. Put this in its widest form and what does it come to but that great law of His grace, by which He over-answers all our poor desires, and giving us more than we had expected, shames us out of our distrust. For this law holds for us in all our works and in all our prayers.—A. MACLAREN, *Sermons Preached in Manchester*, p. 259.

REFERENCES.—CXXXII.—S. Cox, *The Pilgrim Psalms*, p. 261. CXXXII. 8.—S. Baring-Gould, *Village Preaching for a Year* (2nd Series), vol. i. p. 310. CXXXII. 9.—F. D. Maurice, *Sermons*, vol. vi. p. 237. CXXXII.—*International Critical Commentary*, vol. ii. p. 467.

PSALM CXXXIII.

THE American Greely Expedition went into their winter house in 1881, amid the eternal ice and snow of the Arctic Circle, with a night before them of four months and a half. They arranged their reckoning of time so as to keep their Sabbath, and have a religious service, including the reading of the Psalms. The first Sabbath contained Psalm CXXXIII., and the Commander brought before the men the duty of brotherly feeling, and his hope that every one would endeavour to cherish a friendly spirit, and endeavour to reconcile those who might drift into any unpleasant controversy. The result may be found in the fact to which he bears witness, that though 'for months without drinking water, destitute of warmth, with sleeping-bags frozen to the ground, with walls, roof, and floor covered with frost and ice, deprived of sufficient light, heat, or food, they were never without courage, faith, and hope'.—J. K.

REFERENCES.—CXXXIII. 1.—J. W. Bardsley, *Many Mansions*, p. 326. H. M. Butler, *Harrow School Sermons*, p. 288. CXXXIII.—*International Critical Commentary*, vol. ii. p. 475. CXXXIV.—*International Critical Commentary*, vol. ii. p. 476. CXXXIV.—*Ibid.* p. 478. CXXXVI. 17-22.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxii. No. 1285. CXXXVI.—*International Critical Commentary*, vol. ii. p. 481.

NATIONAL REPENTANCE

'By the waters of Babylon we sat down and wept when we remembered Thee, O Zion.'—PSALM CXXXVII. 1.

THERE are many causes which may well bring the Psalmist's sad words to our lips, 'By the waters of Babylon we sat down and wept when we remembered Thee, O Zion'.

I. The present condition of the Christian Church is a spectacle which must arouse sad thoughts as we contrast what is with what was. Is there any greater obstacle to the triumph of Christianity at the present day than the miserable fact that Christians are not agreed among themselves as to what Christianity means? As we think of the loss of spiritual power consequent on this loss of unity, we can but cry with the Psalmist, 'By the waters of Babylon we sit down and weep when we remember Thee, O Zion'. We hear a great deal about the Reunion of Christendom, and many laments are made over the disunion that we see. If reunion is ever to be attained by the Church Militant here on earth, it must be preceded by the penitence of the Christian world. Until we have sorrowed for the sins which have caused and do cause it, until we realize the spiritual force which we have lost by our divisions, until we sorrow for schism as not only an unfortunate inconvenience but as a sin, we cannot expect God will grant the unity for which we pray.

II. Worship, Work, Submission — these are the steps to the assurance of personal protection, of present deliverance from evil. Personal penitence really draws us away from ourselves, and suggests to us worship, work, submission as the primary duties of the penitent life. But the penitence must be personal to begin with. It is our own shortcomings, not those of other people with which we are concerned.—J. H. BERNARD, *Via Domini*, p. 72.

REFERENCE.—CXXXVII. 1.—E. Blencowe, *Plain Sermons to a Country Congregation* (2nd Series), p. 484.

THE SONGS OF ZION

'The songs of Zion.'—PSALM CXXXVII. 3.

VARIOUS kinds of song may be classed as songs of Zion.

I. First there is the song of the *pardoned penitent*. Mark that he does not attempt to praise God until he has asked for the fullest absolution of his foul crimes; and he then declares that if God will wash him, if God will create in him a clean heart, then will be the opening of his lips. In one single sentence this song of Zion is to be sung by the pardoned and the justified believer.

II. Another of the songs of Zion is the song of the *adoring creature*. And here I am reminded that one of our English divines has drawn a distinction, of which I would not make much, but still which seems to have some element of truth in it, namely, that there is some difference—a difference well worthy at any rate to be noticed, between thanksgiving and praise. When we are thanking God we are directly acknowledging mercies which we, or others for whom we are giving thanks, have received. But in the case of praise we are not necessarily to connect it with a special gift. Look, for instance, at the Psalms of David, the great manual of devotion for believers, both under the New and Old Testament. We find there in the early chapters, but notably in the concluding Psalms, that there is praise rendered to God not simply for mercies that we have received, but for His great acts—for His past acts in the Church, for His past acts in the world, for the laws of nature, for all those marvellous exhibitions of His power and wisdom which are before our eyes; and even the very inanimate creation and the irrational creation are called upon to praise God.

III. Then again we have, as one of the songs of Zion, the song of the *recipient of mercy*. And here I am speaking, not only of those great mercies which throw into the shade even all the other mercies of God for awhile, but I am speaking of the most ordinary mercies which we receive at God's hands. Do not forget the giver when the freshness of the enjoyment of the mercy is past. It will be well for us to recollect that every mercy, as it is renewed to us day by day, is not to be taken as a matter of course.

IV. Again, there is the song as we read in Scripture of the heaven-bound pilgrims, how they shall come to Zion with songs upon their heads, the redeemed of the Lord. 'Thy statutes have been my songs in the house of my pilgrimage;' what does that mean? It means to say that while we are journeying to heaven if we are indeed God's people in Christ Jesus, if we have received and are by humble faith realizing His salvation, and are delivered from the bondage of sin as well as from its burdens, and if we have the blessed gift of the Comforter, the Holy Spirit dwelling within us, that we are not to go onward toward heaven as if every Christian man were the most gloomy being in the world. The joy of the Lord is not only our privilege but our strength.

V. Again, to come closer home there is the song of the *sanctuary*. When we turn to the Saviour's own example, we find that when He instituted the Holy Sacrament, in which I believe we are not only to commemorate His death, but by living faith are to have spiritual communion with Him, He followed the custom of the festal supper, and gave us an example by singing a hymn before they went from that table.

VI. Lastly, there is one more of the songs of Zion. There is the song of Zion which is to be sung by the glorified above, that song which is to be the utterance—the ceaseless utterance—of their gratitude and praise for all the eternal love wherewith they were loved, for the grace by which they were redeemed, the grace which gave the Saviour, and the grace which brought the Saviour, and the grace which gave the Spirit, and the grace which educated and kept them and brought them home. That will be the song in which they will find that even angels will join them.—J. C. MILLER, *Penny Pulpit*, vol. XCI No. 911, p. 9.

REFERENCES.—CXXXVII. 4.—C. Bradley, *Faithful Teaching*, p. 40. T. Arnold, *Sermons*, vol. iv. p. 221. H. P. Liddon, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xvi. p. 197.

CHRISTIAN PATRIOTISM

'If I forget Thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning.'—PSALM CXXXVII. 5.

THERE is a blustering and hectoring and noisy patriotism with which religion can have nothing whatever to do. If a man be bad his patriotism never can be good. No sentiment is more human than true patriotism and none is more Divine. It takes the dearest memories of earth and links them with the august purposes of heaven.

I. Now, of course, we will be ready to admit that patriotism is not exclusively a Christian virtue. Much of the noblest patriotism that the world has known has been witnessed in countries that knew nothing of Christ Jesus; the love of country like a mother's love for her children, blossomed and fruited long before Christ was born. Patriotism, then, is not a Christian virtue only. But just as the love of the mother for her child has been ennobled and transfigured by Christ Jesus, so the love of one's country, that is a common heritage implanted in the natural heart by God, has been touched into new glory by Christ Jesus. What are the features then of a distinctive Christian patriotism? To answer that, I shall ask you to think for a moment of the patriotism of Jesus Christ Himself.

II. What then distinguished the patriotism of Jesus? Two features, and (*a*) first the absence of contempt. There was no scorn of other nationalities, nor was there any disdain of outlanders, in the deep-seated patriotism of Jesus Christ. He never preached beyond the boundaries of His Israel, yet He foresaw the day of a universal Gospel. So for the first time in human history the claims of the whole wide world were recognized, and the disdain that had been part and parcel of true patriotism once, was banished from that Christian grace for ever. (*b*) The second feature of Christ's patriotism was His recognition that the worst enemies of a people are their sins. To the average Jew the great enemy was Rome, for Rome had enslaved Palestine. To the average Jew the first task of a true patriot was to hurl defiance at that intruding power. It is very significant and very strange that no such defiance fell from the lips of Jesus. He never cried, 'Woe unto you, ye Romans'. He cried 'Woe unto ye, ye Scribes and Pharisees'; and that, too, was the cry of a patriot, only it brought the patriot to Calvary. In the long run, if a nation perishes, it is not another's guns, it is its own sins that ruin it. And so you see that what we call Christian patriotism is a far wider and larger thing than the world knew of once. Wherever men are fighting against evil in their own hearts, in their own village or town, wherever there is a brave and steady effort to give us a purer, a better, and a soberer land, *there*, there is Christian patriotism just as surely as in the heroic daring of the field of war.—G. H. MORRISON, *The Unlighted Lustre*, p. 93.

REFERENCE.—CXXXVII. 5.—J. Percival, *Some Helps for School Life*, p. 254.

IMPERIAL PATRIOTISM

'If I forget Thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning. If I do not remember Thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth; if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy.'—PSALM CXXXVII. 5, 6.

I. IT has been urged that whilst our faith revived virtues which were languishing unto death under the former civilization, and called into existence others unknown, Christianity has been a cruel stepmother to one of the noblest qualities of Paganism. Chastity and pity have come to their full height under the inspiration of Christ, humility and self-sacrifice have been vindicated by His example; but patriotism has been starved. One is haunted with the feeling that in proportion as people become spiritual they cease to be national, and the more they think of the world which is to come, the less they are concerned about the world which is, and especially about that portion which God has given them for a habitation. Let us lay it to heart that if the Church be of God, so also is the State, and that if anyone imagines that religion has loosed him from those civic duties which were a law of love to the Pagan conscience, he really holds that religion is in conflict with the order of God. As a matter of fact the most intensely Christian nations have been the most national—witness the Irish and the Scots, two extremes of rigorous and unbending faith.

II. What Jesus did for patriotism was not to abrogate it, which would have been sorry work for one sprung from the loins of the royal house of Judah, or to depreciate it and set His Church against the State in every century, but to cleanse it from impurities and give it a noble direction. Jesus rendered two services to patriotism and one was to inspire it with a noble mind. Patriotism must labour for the good of all and the injury of none, to build up a nation in faith towards God, and love towards man. Jesus has also taught us by His charity to believe that men of different views may have an equally good intention, and that there may be politics which will rise above parties. If indeed any party should claim to have the monopoly of honesty it is self-condemned; it is the party not of nationalism but of Pharisaism. Nothing can be more unworthy than to impute bad motives to fellow-citizens who attempt the good of the commonwealth by other means than ours, nothing more ungrateful than to belittle the labour of any who serve the State with a true heart.

III. One infers from the spirit of Christianity that the Church as represented by her ministers ought not to meddle with the machinery of politics. It is not for the Church of Christ to play upon the ambition of parties, offering and receiving bribes which are not less binding because they do not happen to be pecuniary, or to agitate the State for the passing of laws. But surely it is within her commission to feed the spirit of nationality in the hearts of the English people, teaching them that as God trained the Jews apart, that they might give His law to the world, so has He placed us in our island home that we may dispense

justice to distant nations.—John Watson, *The Inspiration of Our Faith*, p. 249.

References.—CXXXVII. 5, 6.—C. D. Bell, *The Power of God*, p. 277. CXXXVII.—B. F. Westcott, *The Incarnation and Common Life*, p. 41. *International Critical Commentary*, vol. ii. p. 484. *Expositor* (1st Series), vol. iv. p. 232. CXXXVIII. 8.—Spurgeon, *Morning by Morning*, p. 32.

'Forsake not the works of Thine own hands.'—Psalm cxxxviii. 8.

In *Unorthodox London* (2nd Series, pp. 255-60) C. Maurice Davies describes a service at the City Temple. He says that Dr. Parker took as his text the words, 'Forsake not the works of Thine own hands'.

'He proposed to examine the natural claims we had on God. We did not ask to be here in this world, but here we are, and therefore we had a right by *nature*, by the state of things in which we found ourselves, to say that, under such circumstances, we ought not to be forsaken. It was not enough to bring us here. If we had asked to be brought, then we might have divided the responsibility.

'"You yourselves,' he said, 'allow the efficacy of such an appeal. A child, it may be, left you ten years ago, and though that child could not plead virtue, it could groan forth the heart-breaking word, "Bad as I am, I am your own flesh and blood. I have done wrong, but don't let me rot. This flesh is your flesh. May I not come home on that natural claim?" So we could say to God, "Thou didst not make us thoughtlessly. That would have been unworthy of a work which comprised within it the stars and the angels. *Don't forsake* us."

'Some said,' the preacher continued, 'that as vessels of wrath, God had the right to dash us to pieces just as the potter had the work of his hands. No: God might dispose thus of masses of men, but He dealt differently with individuals. The text was a lawful, a pathetic, and a universal appeal. Now what was God's answer to this pathetic appeal of forsaken men? The whole constitution of nature,' he again submitted, 'was God's answer by anticipation. It would have no meaning else. For every desire of man there was a provision: for his hunger a table, for his thirst fountains of living water—springs perennial and inexhaustible. The answer came before the cry. Nature would be one huge waste if this were not so. When we are asked, "Will God forsake the works of His hands," we may take the whole scheme of nature for our answer. The whole constitution of things—mountains, streams, forests, fowl, and fish—are a pledge that God will *not* forsake man. He makes His rain to fall and His sun to shine on all—on the man who prays and on the man who blasphemes. You ask what is man's claim on God. This is the infinite reply.

'No bird ever sang the pathetic refrain of the text. The young lion finds his mouthful of food. It is man only that realizes the idea of being forsaken. The greater the life the greater the need, just as it had been curiously said, the more glorious the intellect the nearer to insanity. It is man who cries, "Why standest Thou so far off, O God?" Millions of human voices were gathered up in that cry on the Cross, "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" We see man's greatness in his distress. As man suffers more than beast or bird, so he can enjoy and know and realize more. Are ye not much better than they?

'It is we who have forsaken God. The forsakenness is not on man's side. His children have gone from Him to be guests at the devil's table. All we, like sheep, have gone astray.

'*Does* God forsake the righteous? Don't let us give an opinion to-day. Let an old man speak—a bright old man, with silver locks on his shoulder and an eye like a star. He has a harp in his hand, and thus the old ministrel sings, "I have been young and now am old, yet saw I never the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging their bread". David never saw the child of God dead upon his Father's doorstep. If you are forsaken, ask yourselves whether you have been righteous. Paul and David—the great reasoner and the greater singer—answer, "Cast down, but *not* forsaken".

'Make His service your delight
He'll make your wants His care.

'The above is only a condensation of a long and eloquent discourse. Some of the bits were worthy of Charles Dickens. For instance, picturing the abode of a poor widow, Dr. Parker spoke of "a place out of which even a sheriff's officer could not take more than the shadow, and would not take that *because he could not sell it*". "I have been as nearly forsaken as any man in the world. I looked around on all sides, but could see no way out—no lateral way, only a *vertical one!*"'

References.—CXXXVIII. 8.—A. Maclaren, *Old Testament Outlines*, p. 152. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. v. p. 231. *Ibid.* vol. xxv. No. 1506. A. P. Peabody, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xii. p. 158.

THE SEARCHING OF GOD

'O Lord, Thou hast searched me, and known me.'—Psalm cxxxix. 1.

We are prone to associate the searching-work of God with events of a striking or memorable kind. It is in great calamities and overwhelming sorrow that we feel with peculiar vividness God's presence. When Job was in the enjoyment of prosperity he was an eminently reverent man; but it was in the hour of his black and bitter midnight that he cried out, 'The hand of God hath touched me'. And that same spirit lodges in every breast, so that God's searching comes to be associated with hours when life is shaken to its deeps, and when all the daughters of music are laid low. Now the point to be noted is, that in this Psalm the writer is not thinking of such hours. There is no trace that he has suffered terribly, or been plunged into irreparable loss. 'Thou knowest my downsitting and my uprising'—my usual, ordinary, daily life—it was there that the Psalmist recognized the searching; it was there that he woke to see that he was known.

I. We are searched and known by the slow and steady passing of the years. There is a revealing power in the flight of time, just because time is the minister of God. In heaven there will be no more time; there will be no more need of any searching ministry. There we shall know even as we are known in the burning and shining of the light of God. But here, where the light of God is dimmed and broken, we are urged forward through the course of years, and the light of the passing years achieves on earth what the light of the Presence will achieve in glory.

II. Then once again God searches all of us by the responsibilities He lays upon us. It is in our duties and not in our romance that the true self is searched and known. Think of those servants in the parable who got the talents. Could you have gauged their character before they got the talents? Were they not all respectable and honest, and seemingly worthy of their Master's confidence? But to one of the servants the Master gave five talents, to another two, and to another one, and what distinguished and revealed the men was the use they made of that responsibility. They were not searched by what they had to suffer; the men were searched by what they had to do. They were revealed by what their Master gave, and by the use they made of what they got.

III. Once more, God has a way of searching us by lifting our eyes from the detail to the whole. He sets the detail in its true perspective, and seeing it thus, we come to see ourselves. You note how the writer of this Psalm proceeds: 'Thou knowest my down-sitting and my uprising,' he says. These are details; little particular actions; the unconsidered events of every day. But the writer does not stop with these details—he passes on to the survey of his life: 'Thou compassest my path and my lying down, and art acquainted with *all my ways*'.

We are all prone to be blinded by detail, so that we scarcely realize what we are doing. There are lines of conduct which we would never take if we only realized all that they meant. There are certain sins to which we would never yield, if we but saw them in their vile completeness. But the present is so tyrannical and sweet, and the action of the hour is so absorbing, that we cannot see the forest for the trees, nor reckon out the course that we are taking. We often say, looking back upon our sufferings, 'We wonder how we ever could have borne it'. One secret of our bearing it was this, that we only suffered one moment at a time. And so, looking back upon our foolish past, we sometimes say, 'How ever could we do it?' and one secret of our doing it was this, that we only acted one moment at a time. When a man is dimly conscious he is wrong, he has a strange power of forgetting yesterday. When a man is hurrying to fulfil his passion, he shuts his ears to the calling of to-morrow. And the work of God is to revive that yesterday, and tear the curtain from the sad to-morrow, and show a man his action of to-day set in the general story of his life.

IV. Again, God has a common way of searching us, by showing us our own case in another's life. We may never know ourselves until we see ourselves divested of all the trappings of self-love.

V. Does not God search us by bringing new influences to bear upon our lives? Some one enters the circuit of our being, and the light they bring illuminates ourselves. We are all prone in our ordinary course to settle down into a dull routine. The vision of the highest fades away from us, and we go forward without high ambition. Our feelings lose their freshness and their zest, and we are not eager and strenuous as we once were, and we are content with far lower levels now than would have contented us in earlier days. All this may come to a man, and come so gradually that he hardly notices all that he has lost. His spiritual life has grown so dull and dead that prayer is a mockery and joy is flown. Then we meet one whom we have not seen for years, one who has wrestled heavenward 'gainst storm and tide—and in that moment we realize it all. Nothing is said to blame or to rebuke us. The influence lies deeper than all speech. Nothing is done to make us feel ashamed. We may be welcomed with the old warmth of friendship. But there is something in that nobler life, suddenly brought into contact with our own, that touches the conscience, and shows us to ourselves, and quickens us to the shame that is medicinal.—G. H. Morrison, *The Return of the Angels*, p. 109.

Psalm cxxxix. 1.

Ruskin says of this Psalm: 'All the true religions of the world are forms of the prayer, "Search me and know my heart: prove me and examine my thoughts, and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting". And there are, broadly speaking, two ways in which the Father of men does this: the first, by making them eager to tell their faults to Him themselves (Father, I have sinned against heaven and before Thee); the second, by making them sure they cannot be hidden, if they would: "If I make my bed in hell, behold, Thou art there".'

References.—CXXXIX. 1.—J. Keble, *Sermons for Easter to Ascension Day*, p. 97. CXXXIX. 1, 2.—C. Vince, *The Unchanging Saviour*, p. 21. CXXXIX. 1-3.—Bishop Temple, *Rugby Sermons* (1st Series), p. 178. CXXXIX. 1-6.—W. G. T. Shedd, *American Pulpit of To-day*, vol. i. p. 281. CXXXIX. 1-12.—E. W. Shalders, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xi. p. 328. H. Woodcock, *Sermon Outlines*, p. 138. CXXXIX. 7.—Bishop Bethell, *Sermons*, vol. i. p. 351. A. P. Peabody, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xx. p. 118. P. McAdam Muir, *Modern Substitutes for Christianity*, p. 65. CXXXIX. 9.—A. P. Stanley, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xiv. p. 257.

THE COMFORT OF GOD'S OMNIPRESENCE

'If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; even there Thy right hand shall hold me.'—Psalm cxxxix. 9, 10.

I. The greatest comfort in all hours of separation is the idea of God. When you are to be divided from a friend by an earthly sea there can be no deeper solace than the thought that you and he are to be really within the hollow of a single hand—that, while unable to touch one another, you will be in the presence

of one who is touching you both. And when there comes the separation of that widest sea—death, there is again no solace so deep as that. At such a time what do I want to know? Is it whether the streets of heaven are paved with gold? Is it whether the songs of heaven are rich in music? Is it whether the work of heaven is wrought by angels? It is none of these things. It is whether in this vast universe beyond the earth there is anything which can connect my life with the life of my departed brother.

II. What a comfort to be told that, with all our seeming separation, we are still inmates of the same house—the house of God! That is just what the Psalmist says. He says that absolute separation between two souls is an impossibility—that the wings of the morning can never lift outside the gates of God. If you had departed into the far-off land and I, lingering here, had a message to send you, I should not, like Adelaide Procter, make music the medium of transmission. That would be wireless telegraphy; the song might reach the wrong quarter. But if I knew there was an invisible being in the universe who, spite of the poles of distance, had one hand on you and the other on me, I should find my medium of communication in him. I should say, 'Convey into the heart of my friend the impression that he is still remembered by me, still loved by me, still longed for by me'.

III. If a man feels himself in contact with God, he is in contact with all worlds. I once heard an old woman express great confidence that she would meet her departed husband beyond the grave. Experimenting on her understanding I said, 'Of course in that vast district it may take some time to find him'. She answered, 'It will need no time; I shall just ask Christ to take me to my husband, and He will take me at once'. With all its crudeness and primitiveness, the answer was on the lines of Herbert Spencer. If all the forces of the universe are the parts of one central force, that central force can at any moment unite them all: the wings of the morning can do nothing to divide.—G. Matheson, *Messages of Hope*, p. 196.

'If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; even there shall Thy hand lead me.'—Psalm cxxxix. 9, 10.

From this text Bishop Selwyn preached on the Sunday after his arrival in Auckland in 1842. In the afternoon of the same day, to the astonishment of all, he conducted a service in the Maori language, so quickly had he learned it while on his voyage out.

References.—CXXXIX. 11.—H. N. Butler, *Harrow School Sermons*, p. 245 (P.B.V.). M. G. Glazebrook, *Prospice*, p. 241. CXXXIX. 12.—B. Gregory, *How to Steer a Ship*, p. 50. CXXXIX. 13-24.—E. W. Shalders, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xi. p. 360. CXXXIX. 14.—C. Perren, *Revival Sermons*, p. 306. J. Baldwin Brown, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. vi. p. 321.

Psalm cxxxix. 16.

Ruskin says: 'Was the great precipice shaped by His finger, as Adam was shaped out of the dust? Were its clefts and ledges carved upon it by its Creator, as the letters were on the Tables of the Law? The only answer is—"Behold the cloud". No eye ever "saw its substance, yet being imperfect"; its history is a monotone of endurance and destruction; all that we can certainly know of it is that it was once greater than it is now, and it only gathers vastness and still gathers, as it fades into the abyss of the unknown.'

References.—CXXXIX. 16.—Bishop Bethell, *Sermons*, vol. i. p. 369. CXXXIX. 17.—W. L. Alexander, *Sermons*, p. 191. Spurgeon, *Evening by Evening*, p. 121.

STILL WITH THEE

'When I awake, I am still with Thee.'—Psalm cxxxix. 18.

A man whose religion is of a shallow kind is content with occasional acknowledgment of God. He has his stated seasons of approach, and his rigid periods of worship. There are long times when, as the Psalmist says, God is not in all his thoughts. He wages his warfare on the field of business in total forgetfulness of the Divine. That is one mark of a religious life which is neither very deep nor very real; it never issues in spiritual strength, nor in the bright experience of joy. Now in the book of Psalms it is not so. The Psalmist's recognition is continuous. What you feel about the Psalmist is just this, that *always* he sets the Lord before him. And it is this continual recognition, and this unvarying practice of God's presence, which kindle the Psalmist when he is discouraged, and bring the joy that cometh in the morning. When we go to sleep mastered by some thought, that thought is still beside us when we wake. If it be trouble on which we closed our eyes, how swiftly in the morn does it return! And it was because the Psalmist lived with God, and went to sleep under the wing of God, that he could take his pen and write in all sincerity, 'When I awake, I am still with Thee'.

Now I want to widen out that thought, for human life has various awakings.

I. And in the first place we might apply it to the waking of the child into maturity. God is with us in our sorest duty. God is with us in our heaviest sorrow. God is with us in our humblest task, if only it be valiantly done. And this is the joy of it when we awake, that through all we strive to do, and all we bear, God and His grace become more wonderful than in the earlier morning when we dreamed.

II. Again our text has a deep application when we think of the awaking to new knowledge. Through every increase and advance of knowledge the heart still hungers for the living God. We never outgrow that, no matter what we learn. We never get beyond it or above it. The heart and God were made for one another, and only in that communion is there rest.

III. Once more, our text is full of meaning when we think of the waking from spiritual lethargy. I believe that the long-suffering of God shines brightest, not against our blackest sins, but against those

periods when we were slumberous, and when the eyes of our trust were sealed in sleep.

IV. I think, too, we should bear our text in mind in view of any time of crushing sorrow. In all great sorrow there is something numbing, an insensibility like that of sleep. It is one of the triumphs of our modern medicine that it can apply opiates so powerfully. A prick of a needle or a little sprinkling, and one forgets the agony of pain. But God has His opiates no less than man, reserved for the hours when the physician fails, so that the mourner says, 'I cannot take it in—it is like a dream—I cannot realize it'. There is mercy in that numbing of the spirit. The worst might be unbearable without it. When vividness of perception would be torture, God giveth to His beloved sleep.

V. Does not our text apply to the last awaking in eternity? 'I shall be satisfied when I awake,' and satisfied because I am with Thee.—G. H. Morrison, *The Return of the Angels*, p. 290.

ALWAYS WITH GOD

'When I awake, I am still with Thee.'—Psalm cxxxix. 18.

Under what conditions did the Psalmist make this declaration? He said, 'When I awake I am still with Thee'. Where else had he been? He had been asleep; the reference is to natural sleep, but I am going to broaden the outlook and say next to nothing about that natural sleep. Still, confined to that little event, it is a very marvellous text. 'When I awake, I am still with Thee:' I have been in the darkness, and I should have been lost there, my dream teacher was grim, and the darkness was full of nightmare and sorrow and bitterness, but lo, when I awake, it is all right, I am still in my bed, I am still in safety, I am still in my house, I am still with Thee.

I. 'When I awake,' let us take that in its more ideal and poetic sense, in its higher intellectual aspect, and let us begin by saying how well we know what it is for a man to have his eyes opened, and yet not to be awake. We characterize some persons as sleepy, not alert, allowing chances to pass by, seeing nothing; it would require all God's thunder to get an idea into their heads. So we speak of them, so we characterize them: let us take care lest we are taking our own portraits, lest we are indicating our own intellectual and spiritual condition.

1. When I awake intellectually I am still with Thee; once I did not seem to have any mind; as for intellect, I did not know the meaning of the word. I begin to see somewhat of it now in dim outline, and what I do see I like, for there is a light even in the shadow. The weary, trying, weakening thing is that men who can be alert in business and bargaining are absolutely and wilfully half-asleep when the question is God, prayer, forgiveness, immortality. That is so strange and so wearying to the poor heart.

2. When I awake spiritually I am astounded at myself. I knew nothing about myself; I thought I was good enough so far as time permitted me to be good and circumstances allowed me to look after my own conduct, but when I awoke I saw that there was something finer than conduct, behind it, beneath it, above it. What was that ethereal, spiritual something? It was motive, disposition, spiritual impulse, moral intent. Conduct was a thing that was marked up in plain figures in the window, and I could go and buy it, and wear it, and look as respectable as other men; but when I awoke spiritually I saw that what I really needed was not something marked in plain figures in the window, but a new heart, a new life, new sensitiveness, in other words, a grander, a new personality. I thought life a run, a rattle, a feast, a wedding, a burial; I now see that all these poor outlines are nothing except in so far as they indicate that behind them all and above them all there is a spirit, a slumbering immortality.

II. Thus it is so all the way through. When I am awake and take a wakeful man's view of God's providence, I see how much God has been doing in the sleeping time. I used to call all these things events; in my fancy I published a morning journal, and called the leading column Events of the Day. Now that I am awake, at noonday awake, throbbing in every pulse, quivering in every nerve, I see that events make up a great Bible, a marvellous revelation; I see that God takes up these little patches, and so to say makes of them a great coverlet, a great area of philosophy, experience, and suggestion. Oh that men would connect things, bring them up into coherency and unity and final meaning.

III. Now the singer says, 'When I awake, I am still with Thee'. Always with God, without knowing it sometimes. I now begin to see that I live and move and have my being in God. Oh, it is all so mystic, so wondrous! I used to desire to fall asleep that I might forget everything; I have got so far on the road of progress that I sometimes say in my poor bedside prayer, 'Lord, send me to-night a dream of comfort, a dream of light, a dream of song'. And then I do this, as you do it—which is the most perilous experiment that a man can conduct or have any hand in conducting—I fall asleep. We have taken the poetry out of that expression and made it flat prose. 'I fell asleep,' says the man who does not know what sleep means in its innermost purpose and providential interpretation. That a man should willingly and eagerly go out of himself, leave himself as a half-dead thing on his feather-bed, and go away whence he may never return—oh, that is surely, if properly interpreted and understood, a deeply religious act. And yet men who throw themselves into that invisible power and presence and sanctuary called Sleep, dare not throw themselves by faith into the heart of God.

IV. 'I am still with Thee.' One man said this in other words on a very remarkable occasion. He fell asleep wearied, fatigued, exhausted, self-despising in some degree; he fell asleep among the stones, he could not keep his eyes open, and therefore he fell into natural slumber. And as the morning crept on and

all things showed themselves in a grey light, he arose, and looking round upon all the spectres of cloud and mist and growing light, he said, 'I am in the house of God, this is the gate of heaven, and I knew it not'. With true wakefulness comes true religion. Get intellectually alert, and you will begin to be religious. The universe is a less place to the fool than it is to the wise man. Have we not all hours of darkness? Are there not times when we cannot see the star? and yet when we sleep, partially at least, through the weary night there comes a great evangel, a great revelation on the white hills of the east, and we say, 'Why, we must have been mistaken, it was not darkness, at least it was that kind of darkness which is a quality of light. This is none other than the house of God.' These are the experiences that thief cannot steal, that moth and rust cannot corrupt. We must pass through them personally and really, and not try to live upon the leavings of other souls. Then what shall come to pass? We shall say, as the east whitens and the opal rises which will die in crimson, 'Lo! this is none other than the house of God—God—God'.—Joseph Parker, *City Temple Pulpit*, vol. v. p. 252.

DIVINE SCRUTINY AND GUIDANCE

'Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.'—Psalm cxxxix. 23, 24.

The Psalmist sets forth in poetry what theology calls the doctrine of the Divine omniscience. He believes in Jehovah, the God of all the earth, and therefore believes in a Providence so universal that it misses nothing.

I. God's providence is everywhere, but it does not dissipate itself in a mere general supervision of creation. It is all-seeing, all-surrounding, all-embracing, but it is not diffused in matter and dispersed through space. The Psalmist dwells on what that means, how there is no limit to God's knowledge of him. The strange and awe-inspiring thought is borne in on him that the God with whom he has to do has a perfect knowledge of him, that the whole life and soul lie open and naked before Him. No spot of creation is empty of God. Whither can he go from God's spirit, or whither can he flee from His presence? The practical ethical thought suggested by such a conception to the Psalmist is the question, how can God, the pure and holy One, with such an intimate and unerring knowledge, tolerate wicked men? He feels he must separate himself from the men who live in revolt against good and who hate God. But he is not content with such moral indignation against others. He is driven in to consider the state of his own heart, and to be willing to open up his whole nature to the Divine scrutiny that he may be purged from evil.

II. Divine examination and Divine guidance are the two petitions of the prayer; and the two are not only connected, but are dependent on each other. We all in some form know and admit the value of some sort of examination of life, the need of some kind of judgment and test; and we know that life and character are weighed on some balance or other. Religion also seeks for self-examination. Any kind of self-judgment is better than none; for there is always a chance of learning the truth, and of discovering duty. There is another kind of examination we are constantly undergoing—the judgment of others. We are always incurring criticism, the attempt of others to estimate our work and our worth. The world judges results. It cannot take account of motives or even of opportunities. Outside criticism cannot avoid being largely surface criticism. In the region especially of character, such examination constantly errs. On the whole, self-examination has a better chance of arriving at a true state of affairs.

III. But here is a judgment, both from without and from within, which can test the life. It is to this the Psalmist offers himself, to a judgment that is unerring, a scrutiny that is both just and merciful, an examination that will set for him a standard by which he can examine himself. All the methods of self-examination most approved of by the masters of devotional life will not themselves lead a man to the way everlasting. The Psalmist is not thinking of any such methods, or even of self-scrutiny at all when he asks to be searched and tried. It is the recognition and acceptance of God that he feels is the important thing. He would have God hold his hand and lead him in the way of life. He would turn the scrutiny into guidance; and this is done by simple surrender. — Hugh Black, *Christ's Service of Love*, p. 158.

THE SIGH OF THE SINCERE

'Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any way of wickedness in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.'—Psalm cxxxix. 23, 24.

In this wonderful Psalm the Divine attributes of omnipresence and omniscience are most eloquently set forth. It is a large subject; but the writer does not lose himself in immensity—he recognizes its immediate personal bearing. 'O Lord, Thou hast searched *me*, and known *me*. Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising. Thou understandest my thought afar off. Thou searchest out my path and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways.' And the moral bearing of the solemn theme is felt by the Psalmist to be of the first consequence. He does not contemplate the Divine immanence and transcendence like a poet, nor treat it as a philosopher, metaphysician, or theologian. He is fully alive to the fact that the all-pervading Spirit is the Spirit of righteousness.

I. The Examination Invoked.

1. Mark the *range* of this examination. '*Search* me, O God, and know my heart.' Bishop Horsley's translation reads: 'O Jehovah, Thou hast *explored* me, and Thou knowest me'. God knows him because He has explored him. The Psalmist stands perplexed before the mystery of his own being; he is at once ignorant of himself and yet mistrustful of himself; he does not know himself, yet knows himself suffici-

ently well to suspect himself; therefore he appeals to the Spirit who searcheth all things. How true it is that we are mainly unknown to ourselves; that within us are unexplored regions; that our heart is substantially undiscovered! Schopenhauer one day strayed into the Royal Gardens of Berlin; and when an officer inquired of him, 'Who are you, sir?' the philosopher responded, 'I don't know; I shall be glad if you can tell me'. The officer reported him for a lunatic; but he was far from that—he was one who had deeply pondered the mystery of personality, and was accordingly puzzled by it.

Our personality is largely unmapped; the heights and depths of the soul, its capacities and forces, its possibilities for good and evil, are only dimly perceived and faintly understood. We know more of the world outside than we do of the universe within us. The psychological Columbus has not yet arrived; no Cortez has yet scaled the peaks of the soul.

But what is beyond our ken is set in the light of God's countenance.

2. The *depth* of this examination. 'And know my *thoughts*.' 'My inward thoughts, my distant thoughts, the thoughts not yet come into my mind.' Ewald translates this, 'Prove me, and know my *dreams*'. Not the dreams of the night, which are fantastic and negligible; but the waking dream, the first ghostly inception of the act. All acts are first dreams, too faint for definition, too elusive for anything like satisfactory explanation; and evil acts are first evil dreams so shadowy as apparently to be without serious signification. Every robbery is first transacted in the phantom gold of imagination; murder is first rehearsed within the closed doors of secret malice; we lie in our heart before we lie with our tongue; the unclean act is born in a sullied fancy; deeds of pride, covetousness, and ambition are first dalliances with mental imagery and emotional moods apparently far from reality. Our dreams indicate what we potentially are, they forecast what we may actually become, and they have a strange trick of fulfilling themselves. Yes, this is the main matter—what we mean in our heart of hearts, what lies at the bottom of our heart. 'All mind finally becomes visible.'

It is one thing to examine ourselves; it is another to surrender ourselves unreservedly to the Divine criticism. When, in 1896, the engineers were planning the foundations for the Williamsburg Bridge, New York, the deepest of their twenty-two borings was a hundred and twelve feet below high water. Steel drills had indicated bed-rock from twelve to twenty feet higher than was the actual case; the diamond drill, however, showed the supposed bed-rock to be merely a deposit of boulders. So the diamond drill of God pierces our self-delusions, detects the fallacy of our assumptions, proves what we thought sterling to be only stones of emptiness, discloses the very truth of things far down the secret places of the soul.

3. The *severity* of this examination. '*Try* me.' 'Prove me.' He is willing to be subjected to severe discipline that the falseness and foulness of nature shall be seven-fold purified. In the Revised Version the third verse stands, 'Thou searchest out my path and my lying down'. But the margin reads 'Thou *winnowest* my path'—a close and cleansing scrutiny. As the thresher separates the golden corn from the valueless chaff, so the Psalmist prays that the Divine Analyst will deliver him from whatever is gross and worthless.

The consummate ability of Stas, the Belgian chemist, is celebrated because he 'eliminated from his chemicals every trace of that pervasive element, sodium, so thoroughly that even its spectroscopic detection was impossible'. But such is the efficacy of Divine grace that it can eliminate so thoroughly every trace of that pervasive and persistent element known as sin that we may be presented before the throne holy and unreprovable and without blemish. That the sincere may attain this purification, they are prepared to pass through the hot fires of bitter and manifold discipline.

II. The Design of this Examination.—The ulterior purpose, as expressed by the text, is twofold.

1. *Deliverance from our own way of life.* Our own way is a way of *emptiness*. Some would translate these words, 'any way of idols in me'. It signifies the vanity, the unreality, the delusiveness of the objects on which the natural man fixes his ambition and hope. We sometimes say of a thing, 'There is nothing in it'. We may say this of wealth, honour, pleasure, fame; if we make idols of them, we know that an idol is nothing in the world. If I follow the desires and devices of my own heart, I walk in a vain show and disquiet myself in vain. Our own way is a way of *pain*. 'See if there is any way of grievousness in me.' Our own way is a way of *destruction*. Not leading to a goal of lasting felicity, but descending into darkness and despair. The other petition seeks—

2. *Guidance in God's way.* 'And lead me in the way everlasting.' The way of final peace, security, and progress; of imperishable strength, full felicity, and of eternal life.—W. L. Watkinson, *The Fatal Barter*, pp. 95-109.

GOD'S MICROSCOPE

'Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.'—Psalm cxxxix. 23, 24.

Let us look at the request preferred, a request for the scrutiny of God to examine David's heart, then the acknowledgment which the Psalmist makes; and then the purpose which he proposes—leading in the way everlasting.

I. Let us look at the request: 'Search me, O Lord, and examine my heart: try me, and know my thoughts'. This is a rare desire, taken in all its comprehensiveness. It is not a common thing for a man to desire anything that is calculated to wound his pride or mortify his vanity. The man must have been very sincere towards himself, and must have

been very anxious to be sincere towards God, before he ever could have preferred such a request as this. Then this desire shows that David had made considerable progress in the things of God. No man who is not influenced by religious principles can with sincerity offer this prayer. A man may feel, for instance, a desire for deeper acquaintance with God; but that does not necessarily imply a knowledge of religion; for we know that unbelievers have desired to know about Him who everywhere gives manifestations of His power. But show me a man who is anxious to know how many secret evils are lurking and undetected in his moral nature; show me a man who is anxious that God should bring into the full blaze of Divine truth all the evils in his heart, and you show me a man who is anxious for holiness.

II. Next David's acknowledgments, first of the omnipotence and omniscience of God; second that that omniscience alone can search his heart. (*a*) First the omnipotence and omnipresence of God; the Psalm is a treatise on the omniscience and omnipresence of Jehovah. He ascends to the height of heaven, then to the depths of hell; He fills the whole of nature, and David feels that everywhere God is at his side, and His eye upon him; that he cannot escape from that glance, either in heaven or hell, or in the infinite space. (*b*) And the next acknowledgment is that this omniscience alone could search him; that if he was to do it effectually God was to do it with His glance. What deep conviction David must have had of the depravity of his heart when he felt that no glance but the glance Divine could search his heart.

III. There is next a gracious purpose proposed—to lead in the way everlasting. Now David did not want to know himself merely out of curiosity, he did not want to know himself that he might see how much good was in him, but that he might know the bad that was in him. There was another thing—self-examination should lead to correction. It would have been sheer hypocrisy if David knew that there had been any way of wickedness in him; if he knew that there were wrongs uncorrected it was his business to correct the wrongs he did know before asking God to show him other wrongs. We must correct ourselves as fast as we know ourselves if there be any good in self-examination. It would be in vain to attempt to conquer a country leaving enemies behind, and so it is in spiritual life. It is not for you to leave enemies behind you, foes unconquered, and then for you to ask God to show you foes that you might fight them; but you must master every rood of the field over which you march, and then when every foe is conquered you may say, 'Thou hast led me in the way everlasting'.—R. Roberts, *Penny Pulpit*, vol. xvi. No. 934, p. 193.

References.—CXXXIX. 23, 24.—J. Keble, *Sermons for Lent to Passiontide*, p. 253. J. Vaughan, *Fifty Sermons* (10th Series), p. 222. CXXXIX. 24.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xv. No. 903. CXXXIX.—J. Martineau, *Endeavour After the Christian Life*, p. 12. *International Critical Commentary*, vol. ii. p. 491. CXL. 12.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons on Passages of the Psalms*, p. 310. CXL.—*International Critical Commentary*, vol. ii. p. 402.

OUR WORDS

'Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth; keep the door of my lips.'—Psalm cxli. 3.

The occasion which called forth the Psalm was no doubt the rebellion of David's son, Absalom. And it may be that in a fit of penitential grief for the hard things he has said, he calls upon God to make him more careful in the future.

I. First, the careless word. Be on your guard against this. You spoke lightly, may be, of the Saviour's Name on some occasion. You spoke slightingly of religion. Some child or little one in the kingdom, some weak one just entering in, perhaps, was standing by and heard you. It changed the course of his life. It changed it for worse. You jested once on sacred things. Some soul was hesitating as to whether it should take this path or that. You decided. It was the wrong path. A careless word from you has wrought a soul's perdition! This is the idle word of which men must give account.

II. Now for a pleasanter word—a word which we may well search for in ourselves and be happy if we find it—the word of transparent truthfulness. What is truth? Well might Pilate ask. But we at least know that truthfulness is the best thing in words. One of the best traits of any character, and the trait which above all others suffers us to repose our confidence in a man, is his truthfulness. What is required of every man is that he be a truth speaker.

III. The word of minor untruthfulness. This is sometimes called the white lie. We can lie most abominably by half-truths. We may make it a safe rule, that if any statement has any intention of being a half-truth we have no right to use it. White lies and half-truths and insincere speeches are not to be countenanced by Christian men and women.

IV. The angry word. Is this ever justifiable? May we use it and yet be blameless? There are occasions upon which we may. There is a righteous anger. We read of Christ being angered. But it was a just and well-balanced anger. It was never misplaced. It was directed with wholesome purpose, and always against evil. Above all things, avoid words of merely selfish anger.

V. The little word. Only a syllable. Only yes or no. You might have said it or you might not. But, oh, the difference if you had or had not. It had the power to make or mar the day for you or some one else. We never really know what may be the end of any small beginning. We never know what great structure may at last be reared upon a tiny word.

VI. The profane word. We are to guard against the profane word in any shape. And none of us are quite guiltless. Profane speech in all its branches is hateful and an offence unto God. No man can of himself regulate his word: we need the help and guidance of the Holy Spirit. We must invoke His

aid in this matter. We must see what His influence is in our hearts.

References.—CXLI. 3.—Buxton, *The School of Christ*, p. 87. CXLI. 4.—C. Perren, *Revival*, p. 319. CXLI. 5.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xviii. No. 1049. CXLI.—*International Critical Commentary*, vol. ii. p. 506.

THE HUNDRED AND FORTY-SECOND PSALM

Psalm cxlii.

I. Life and liberty are sweet but we may pay too dear a price even for the sweetest things. David is now at liberty; he has escaped out of the prison-house of Gath; but he has made his escape and obtained his liberty at much too great a price. For years past the name of Gath had been the proudest name that David's flatterers could speak in his willing ears. But after his disgraceful escape from that city to David's old age, it brought a cloud to his brow and a blush to his cheek to hear the name of Gath. But then it is out of such degradation and shame that weak and evil men rise on stepping-stones of their own transgressions to true honour and wisdom, to stable godliness and exercised virtue. And no man will be dishonoured or degraded who speaks to himself about himself as David spake to himself as he climbed to his mountain cave in Adullam: 'What time I am again afraid I will trust in the Most High. . . . In God I will put my trust in my next trouble; I will not fear again what flesh shall do to me, for I have learned that Thou tellest my wanderings, that Thou puttest my tears into Thy bottle, and that my name is in Thy book.'

II. The prophet Gad puts a whole volume into two verses in connexion with David's life. 'David,' he says, 'escaped from Gath and came to the cave of Adullam; when his brethren and his father's house heard of it they went thither down to him, and every one that was in distress, and every one that was in debt, and every one that was discontented gathered themselves unto him; and he became a captain over them; and there were with him about four hundred men'.

III. 'I will take sentry myself to-night,' said David to his captains one Sabbath evening after Gad and Abiathar had sanctified the day, and blessed with an evening blessing the four hundred; 'May God give His sleep to every hammock, for I will be sentinel myself to-night'. Wrapping around him the cloak that Michal had worked for him in happier days, and taking in his hand Goliath's sword, David paced the rocky shelves and poured out his full heart to God all that Sabbath night. We are thankful for this dramatic 142nd Psalm; but it would have been a grand piece of devotional literature, aye of national history, had we had all that David said to God that sentinel night; but what he did say was not fitted or intended for any human ear. As Hezekiah showed to God the insulting letter, so David showed Him all the insults and injuries he had suffered at the hands of Saul, and no doubt it was at such moments that revenge and retaliation gave way to godly sorrow and pity, till David was able to forget his trouble and forgive his enemy.

IV. Calmed and quieted with his midnight prayer under the open heaven, the sentry halted on his scabbard, and mused and meditated on all the marvellous way the Lord had led him from the pastures of Bethlehem up to the cave of Adullam. And if at any time he felt the banishment of Adullam—and he had a thousand thoughts during those lonely hours—he soon recollected who held the keys; and though the door had been opened he would not have escaped. 'Bring my soul out of prison' was his last word to God, as the day broke in the east, 'that I may praise Thy name; the righteous shall compass me about; for Thou shalt deal bountifully with me'. And how well was that hope fulfilled to David, how bountifully did God deal with David, and how hath the righteous compassed David about, as rapt listeners compass round the sweetest music, as rejoicing fellow-worshippers compass round a miracle of Divine grace, so in all ages will the righteous compass David about. —Alexander Whyte.

MEMORABLE DAYS

'I remember the days. . . .'—Psalm cxliii. 5.

I. 'I remember the days'—when there were no days; I remember the period before duration was broken up into fragmentary hours and perishable opportunities; my time enables me to go back by spiritual interpretation and ideality into the chambers of the infinite, the eternal presence.

'I remember the days:' I have written them down in my book kept in the treasure-house of mine heart; no thief can break through and steal; the days are my own, the history is a gathering of nuggets which I can melt and mint into the current coin which I need for to-day's spending. Poor is he who has no yesterday; an atheist he must be who does not live in the days that are gone, and does not so live in them as to appropriate other men's experience and add it to his own wisdom. We might all be rich; the memory should be a bank, nay, more, it should be a gold mine, it should be a peculiar and an inexhaustible treasure.

The days are very many, we can name but a few of them, but the few should represent the multitude. Our subject is Memorable Days, days that can never be forgotten; days that created a place for themselves in the field of the memory; days of strife and temple-building and triumph and sorrow unutterable; yet all the days accumulate into *a* day, the many becoming unified, the unity glowing like an altar on the highways of time.

II. Who does not remember what the Psalmist calls in Psalm cxl. 7 the day of battle? Recall the battle as your own; recall the victory as God's. God appoints the battle, God knows exactly how much fighting is good for us. History is made by fighters; let us always fight in the right spirit, and for the right object, then we shall be in God's majority, though we may be overturned and over-

bourne for a moment, and though it may be said that we were borne down by an overwhelming mediocrity—a much better word than majority!

III. Who is there that cannot recall what Nahum in the first chapter and seventh verse of his Burden calls the day of trouble? Man is born unto trouble as the sparks fly upward. Poor is the life that has had no trouble day; it is a mean, frivolous, shallow life. Trouble works miracles of sculpture in the countenance and miracles of music in the voice, and gives the hand a new masonry when it shakes some outstretched hand of love. Trouble may have been one of our best friends; it shattered many an idol, it showed just what windows were southward and what windows opened upon the black north. Consult experience; have long conversation with the man whose house has for many a day been in the dark valley; he will help thee, he knows how to pray; his prayer may be brief, but in the power of Christ it reaches heaven and brings back the light you need.

IV. And there is a day called in the Scriptures, notably in 2 Cor. vi. 2, the day of salvation. Jesus Christ used an equivalent expression in the house of Zaccheus; said He, 'This day is salvation come to this house'; your day was a day of bondage, to-day is a day of salvation; yesterday you were slaves, to-day you are free men. Salvation is one of the greatest words in all language; it is as great as love, it is as glorious as light, it is as welcome as rain when the earth has been famishing for want of water.

V. In Eccles. vii. 1 we read of another day, common day, 'the day of death'. There is no discharge in that war. You may have company until the last day and the last noon of that day and the last sunset of that day, but after that you must go alone. There are some fifty odd yards of life's pilgrimage that every pilgrim must walk alone.

VI. There is another day referred to in Genesis xxxii. 26, 'the day breaketh'; the breaking day, the dawning day, the larger light, the Sabbath day. There is poetry in the very word day-break; it is a poem in a hyphened word. 'Till the day break and the shadows flee away:' we wait for the day! When Paul and his co-voyagers were in Adria, the historian says that they did all that lay in their power, and then they waited for the day; in still more explicit and holy language, they wished for the day. There is liberation in light. There is no gaol so deep and so unbearable as the prison of darkness; we know not what it holds, we cannot tell what loathsome beast may be one stride of our standing-place, we cannot tell but that if we move we shall dash our brains out against some protruding rock. What then do we do? we wish for the light, we wish for the day; one little beam would signify liberty, one laugh of light would signify and herald a festival of joy—alive! That is what we want. O ye great poets, sing of the day, repeat your prayer, it suits eloquent lips like yours—light! When the Amen of God comes the morning will shine upon the rejoicing and liberated earth.—Joseph Parker, *City Temple Pulpit*, vol. i. p. 150.

THE SOLDIER'S REST

'Hear me, O Lord, and that soon. . . . For Thy righteousness' sake bring my soul out of trouble.'—Psalm cxliii. 7-11.

There you have the transition of a soul from the rest which it needed in long conflict and many failures, from the rest, to the energy of a new service. 'Show me the way that I should walk in.' 'Quicken me, O Lord, according to Thy Word.' We need rest and may claim it at various times. If men will but taste deeply of the fountain of that rest, they will, before they know it, be roused up in new strength to the new service, and so it would be quite well to think of the promises of rest, and the duty of leaning all our weight upon God.

I. The Nature of the Rest.—First, then, about the rest itself, which is not a rest of sloth, a rest from toil. It is a rest from the strain of poverty, or the strain of covetousness and ambition. Found in pleasure, in the satisfaction of our desires? No; found in the spirit of contentment. We rest from struggle or from ambition in contentment; we rest from adversity and strife and contention in patience, not by God's taking away the causes of our unrest, not by His blunting the weapons of our accusers and oppressors, but by the spirit of patience in our hearts, the spirit of Jesus Christ, by which He submitted to the unjust judge, and for us bore our stripes and hung upon the tree. It is our rest from injustice, from tyranny, from adversity, from conflict. Our rest from anxiety, debate, discussion, and doubt is not in the clearing up of the atmosphere in which we view all things, but it is in taking into our hearts the great treasure of a trustful reliance on God, though we see Him not, though He seem to smite us. Rest from distraction is not found in being able to comprise and manage all the objects of our desire, so as to be able to husband our time and forces and gain them all, it is found in returning to the single eye, in submitting every desire to the yoke of Jesus Christ.

II. Peace and Warfare.—We find our joy in conflict; the kingdom we come into is no land of milk and honey, no Sabbath place of rest. It is called a kingdom because it is the sphere of activity and influence of a King on His march. We have a peace, but it is the peace of soldiers under the banner of a King in arms. No man liveth to himself but to the Lord, Who needs him for His service. He must live, he must be strong in the Lord, for the needs of others; he must rest for them, he must be revived for them, he must find strength for them, and, dying for them unto sin, he shall live again for them unto righteousness. He shall fight well because he hath rested well for them.

Just take that one word, rest, and find energy; rest, and in your peace find war; rest for others that you may fight for others. It is the corporate nature of your life which makes your rest necessary, which makes your weariness necessary, for it is to teach you to bring your single note into the great chord of life.

PLANTS GROWN UP IN THEIR YOUTH

'That our sons may be as plants grown up in their youth.'—PSALM CXLIV. 12.

DAVID is not praying that the youth of the land should have any abnormal precociousness; the picture before his mind is that of vigorous, healthful, upright, manly and ingenuous youth.

I. A Healthful Frame; a Strong, Robust, Vigorous Physique.—It has been said that, as righteousness is the health of the soul, so health is the righteousness of the body. All very true; but we must not run into the opposite error of encouraging the notion that thoughtful, refined, cultured, religious men must be pale-faced and delicate, and with a supreme contempt of a sound physical development.

II. A Solid Character.—I know it has been said that the weak side of young men is very weak. Youth is prone to excess, and, on the sunny side of t venty, there is a tendency to carry more sail than ballast. It is a fine thing to see a young man with some solidity about him; some moral backbone; to see stamped upon such an one's face and gait and manner, the self-respect that accompanies truthfulness, integrity, and goodness.

III. A Hidden Life.—Doubtless, what chiefly struck the eye of the Psalmist, as he looked on those young trees, was their exuberant vitality. That life came from God. Man's power is marvellous, but it stops short of this. He can neither understand or impart life. Personal and saving religion is no development from within, no product of moral evolution; it is something whose germ must be imparted to you by the Holy Spirit; and without which germ you are, in the sight of God, absolutely dead. 'One thing thou lackest.' And that one thing God only can give you.—J. THAIN DAVIDSON, *The City Youth*, p. 238.

REFERENCES.—CXLIV. 12.—W. Walters, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxi. p. 338. CXLV. 1, 2.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxii. No. 1902.

THE TRUE CONCEPTION OF GOD

'One generation shall praise Thy works to another.'—PSALM CXLV. 4.

IT is needful to the understanding of this Psalm and its lesson that we should realize that the religion of separation has no place whatever in the spirit of it. The conception of God here is not a being whom men can obey while they separate themselves from all human interest. It is a conception of a God who brings man back again into human interests and uplifts and dignifies all that they have to do day by day.

I. This Psalmist sees God where some of us even to-day do not see Him, in nature. God speaks through all physical life. Have some of us guessed the most elementary thought in religion, that if there be a God of faith He must be the same as the God of all knowledge, of all attainment in science, that the truth in all revelation must be the truth concerning Him whom you see in sky and sea, in all the wonders of life about you? And yet men to-day will speak with something like a sneaking contempt of all endeavour to understand what God does in this part of His world. I know good people yet who think the decoration of a church to be one of the greatest sins of the world. I will not for a moment quarrel with any man in his conviction, but may I ask this one question: Have we any right to rob the Creator of this part of His praise? Have we a right to make that dull which God had made eloquent with the acknowledgment of His power? You shut out great possible thoughts of God when you consign this part of the revelation of Him to a lower place and will let it have no part in your worship.

II. Teach men that God is the first word and the last word in everything that is beautiful and orderly. The sublimest picture that you ever saw upon canvas was in God's mind before it was in the artist's. The most beautiful music that ever thrilled you through and through was a thought in God before it entered into the mind of him who, you say, created it. Everything that is best in our life is of Him. Nature is a shrine of His worship, a side chapel in the great cathedral of service that we may render Him. Our generation demands this side of our utterance of what God is. Men are being taught that knowledge in its very nature is anti-religious. We need to teach men that nothing is so religious as the reverent humble growth into a better understanding of what God is, and of what God is doing. Bring into your conception of life your conception of God. Start with a belief of a God who is in humanity and seeks to work in humanity; come to the aspirations and desires of men with this vision, and you are bound to be a helper of men.—W. H. HARWOOD, *British Weekly Pulpit*, vol. III. p. 497.

REFERENCE.—CXLV. 6, 7.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxi. No. 1828.

PSALM CXLV. 9.

RUSKIN says: 'To declare that we have such a loving Father, whose mercy is over *all* his works, and whose will and law is so lovely and lovable that it is sweeter than honey, and more precious than gold, to those who can "taste and see" that the Lord is Good—this, surely, is a most pleasant and glorious good message and *spell* to bring to men'.

REFERENCES.—CXLV. 9.—E. A. Bray, *Sermons*, vol. II. p. 219. E. Johnson, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxvii. p. 250. CXLV. 10.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxx. No. 1796.

THE COMMUNION OF SAINTS

'All Thy works praise Thee, O Lord, and Thy saints give thanks unto Thee: they shew the glory of Thy kingdom, and talk of Thy power.'—PSALM CXLV. 10, 11.

THIS is the special glory of the Christian Church, that its members do not depend merely on what is visible, they are not mere stones of a building, piled one on another, and bound together from without, but they are one and all the births and manifestations of one and the same unseen spiritual principle or power, 'living stones,' internally connected, as branches from a tree, not as the parts of a heap. They are members of the Body of Christ. That

Divine and adorable Form, which the Apostles saw and handled, after ascending into heaven became a principle of life, a secret origin of existence to all who believe, through the gracious ministration of the Holy Ghost. This is the fruitful Vine, and the rich Olive-tree upon and out of which all saints, though wild and barren by nature, grow, that they may bring forth fruit unto God.

THE INVISIBLE CHURCH

Fifty times as many saints are in the invisible world sealed for immortality as are now struggling on upon earth towards it; unless indeed the later generations have a greater measure of saints than the former ones. Well then may the Church be called invisible, not only as regards her vital principle, but in respect to her members. 'That which is born of the Spirit is spirit;' and since God the Holy Ghost is invisible, so is His work. The Church is invisible, because the great number of her true children have been perfected and removed, and because those who are still on earth cannot be ascertained by mortal eye; and had God so willed, she might have had no visible tokens at all of her existence, and been as entirely and absolutely hidden from us as the Holy Ghost is, her Lord and Governor.

As landmarks or buoys inform the steersman, as the shadow on the dial is an index of the sun's course; so, if we would cross the path of Christ, if we would arrest His eye and engage His attention, if we would interest ourselves in the special virtue and fullness of His grace, we must join ourselves to that ministry which, when He ascended up on high, He gave us as a relic, and let drop from Him as the mantle of Elijah, the pledge and token of his never-failing grace from age to age. 'Tell me, O Thou whom my soul loveth, where Thou feedest, where Thou makest Thy flock to rest at noon; for why should I be as one that turneth aside by the flocks of Thy companions?' Such is the petition, as it were, of the soul that seeks for Christ. His answer is as precise as the question. 'If thou know not, O thou fairest among women, go thy way forth by the footsteps of the flock, and feed thy kids beside the shepherds' tents.' Out of the Church is no salvation—I mean to say out of that great invisible company, who are one and all incorporate in the one mystical body of Christ, and quickened by one Spirit: now, by adhering to the visible ministry which the Apostles left behind them, we approach unto what we see not, to Mount Zion, to the heavenly Jerusalem, to the spirits of the just, to the first-born elected to salvation, to angels innumerable, to Jesus the One Mediator, and to God. This heavenly Jerusalem is the true Spouse of Christ and Virgin Mother of saints; and the visible ministry on earth, the bishops and pastors, together with Christians depending on them, at this or that day is called the Church, though really but a fragment of it, as being that part of it which is seen and can be pointed out, and as resembling it in type, and witnessing it, and leading towards it.—J. H. Newman.

References.—CXLV. 13.—Archbishop Alexander, *Bampton Lectures*, 1876, p. 159. J. G. Greenbough, *The Cross in Modern Life*, p. 96. CXLV. 16.—G. L. Richardson, *Sermons for Harvest*, p. 27. J. J. West, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 1823. CXLV. 21.—M. G. Glazebrook, *Prospice*, p. 115. CXLV.—*International Critical Commentary*, vol. ii. p. 525. CXLVI. 1.—Canon Beeching, *The Grace of Episcopacy*, p. 201. CXLVI. 4.—T. Binney, *King's Weigh-House Chapel Sermons* (2nd Series), p. 97. CXLVI. 5.—C. Bradley, *The Christian Life*, p. 289. CXLVI. 7.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. iii. No. 484. CXLVI.—*International Critical Commentary*, vol. ii. p. 530.

PRAISE AND LIFE

'O praise the Lord, for it is a good thing to sing praises unto our God: yea, a joyful and pleasant thing it is to be thankful.'—Psalm cxlvii. 1.

'Young men and maidens, old men and children, praise the Name of the Lord: for His Name only is excellent, and His praise above heaven and earth.'—Psalm cxlviii. 12.

I. The Universal Hallelujah.—One has amplified and localized and modernized the application of this Psalm because it is, perhaps, in its call to Nature to find a voice and praise the Lord, more nearly akin to our own modern thought, more like the high Christian teaching of our own poet Wordsworth than any other in the Hebrew Psalter.

II. A Pagan Hymn of Praise.—We should err if we thought that the idea of praise to the Most High God was either Jewish or Christian. The pagan worshippers of Isis in Egypt have left on record their sense of the need of praise. But there is a difference. The pagan feels that praise is due to the great creating power, knows it is a good thing to sing praises unto the Lord, but he does not see that everything which hath breath can and must praise the Lord, by living its life to the full. And here come in the Hebrew ideal and the Christian ideal to help us. Praise is life that recognizes its fountain-head, utters its joy to the Giver by living life at its best, and magnifies the Giver of all life by fulfilling its appointed life-task with its utmost perfection.

III. Christ's Praiseful Life.—Christ's life was one long hymn of praise at its noblest and best. He came to glorify the Father by living His Father's life in human shape at its highest. It was in order to teach men that life lived in fullest obedience to the Divine will and in entire dependence upon God was praise, that Jesus pointed men to the lilies of the field and the birds of the air, and showed that in their perfect obedience to the law of their being there, and in their entire dependence upon the Divine will, they the makers of sweet praise were patterns for us men and our salvation. And since the day of Christ, who came to be the bread for all the world, men whose spirits have eaten the bread of life He gave them—that sweet food from heaven which was knowledge of and obedience to the Divine will, coupled with power from on high to assimilate that knowledge and make it part of daily life—the world has known that just in proportion as they were really alive unto God, men could praise God, and has realized that the

dead (those in whom the Spirit of Christ is not) cannot praise God, neither they that go down to the pit of selfishness and sin; nay rather, but that the living, they alone can praise God as we do this day. —H. D. B. Rawnsley, *Christian World Pulpit*, No. 1868, p. 123.

References.—CXLVII. 1.—Blomfield, *Sermons in Town and Country*, p. 335. CXLVII. 2.—Morrison, *Sermons Preached at Lyme Regis*, p. 145. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxii. No. 1320. CXLVII. 2-5.—J. Parker, *City Temple Pulpit*, vol. i. p. 217.

THE BUILDER OF JERUSALEM

'The Lord doth build up Jerusalem; He gathereth together the outcasts of Israel. He healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds. He telleth the number of the stars; He calleth them all by their names. Great is our Lord, and of great power; His understanding is infinite.'—Psalm cxlvii. 2-5.

If we were asked to select a passage to read to somebody about our God, could we select a much more beautiful passage than this 147th Psalm? It is so simple, so sublime. The sentences are so short, they might all almost be put into words of one syllable. Just as the sun itself is reflected in the dewdrop, so the glory of our God is reflected in these simple words.

Consider the lovableness of our God.

I. First of all, notice that His work is constructive? God does not destroy and cast down: He builds up—constructs. Our God builds us up, that is Creation. He took us out of the dust of the earth and built us up into perfection. That is the whole history. What building! He took the very lowest, you see—Dust. Where did the dust come from? Poor dust body. He breathed into it the 'breath of life'—Equipment under the action of God. That is our Creation—Construction: and our whole life, Edification: and the end, Perfection. 'The Lord doth build up.' 'Who shall build the tabernacle?' 'Let us make three tabernacles.' The heavens cannot contain Him, Who dwelleth with those who are of a humble and contrite heart. 'The Lord doth build up.'

II. Notice what it is He builds up—Jerusalem. This is no localization. If you want an idea of localization, go to Jerusalem and see for yourself, but the Jerusalem for us is the Jerusalem which cometh down out of heaven: it is a city where we may dwell all together, and the light of the city is God Himself. A Holy City He builds, an Eternal City, a City of Peace. 'He gathereth together the outcasts of Israel.' It is not God's will that any should be an outcast—He gathereth them together. If anybody is an outcast it is not that God has cast Him out, but that he has cast God out of his soul.

III. 'He healeth those that are broken in heart.' So many people in this cruel world are what we call 'brokendown' people—broken in health, broken in wealth, lost their money, lost all thought, lost all sympathy, lost all love—lost all peace, lost heart, 'broken-hearted'. Our God healeth those that are broken in heart. It is not a partial or tentative healing; it goes to the very core, it goes down to the very root: He healeth the heart. He is the only real heart doctor. If the heart is all right all else will be right. 'He healeth those that are broken in heart.' Our God alone can do it. He Who made the heart can heal it.

IV. 'And bindeth up their wounds.' Note the tender expression. Some people think that the Old Testament is hard and crude, and the New Testament loving and sweet. You cannot find any verse in the Bible more lovely and tender than this verse about our God. He, 'bindeth up their wounds'. The Hands that made you will bind up your wounds; The Fingers that created you will heal you. What more can you want? It is like the text which says: 'He maketh all my bed in my sickness'.

V. And while God is doing all this, what about the Universe? Does He leave the universe to take care of itself? to go on as it likes? Oh, no. 'He ordereth all things in heaven and earth.' If once He let the universe go, where would it go?—a general crash. 'He telleth the number of the stars.' No man has ever yet been able to tell the number of the stars, and there never will be a man who can tell their number, for they are infinite. But God, Who is infinite, can tell the number of them. And why? He will not miss one of them. The Lord who will not let a lamb be lost out of the flock will not let a single star be lost out of the firmament. He Who will bring back the wanderer, and get the outcast of Israel home, telleth the number of the stars. He telleth every one. And what is more singular than that: there is a sort of familiarity between God and the stars. Look up into the heavens and think, 'He calleth them all by their names'. We call the stars by heathen names. I do not think the names by which we call the stars are the same as the names by which God calls them—just as if He spoke to the stars and the stars answered him back again, a sort of sympathetic give and take between the Creator and the created. Who knows? 'His wisdom is infinite.' What if the light created speaks to the Light Uncreated, which is God? How do you know? There are many more things in heaven and earth than you or I understand, and science is every day showing to us how very little we know of the things that are. 'He telleth the number of the stars, and calleth them all by their names.' How great is His power! and 'His understanding is infinite!'

VI. Bring this subject under the glorious light of the Gospel. 'The Lord buildeth up Jerusalem.' We who know the Gospel know how He did it. He built it up with His Blood. The Church of God is built up with the precious Blood of the Covenant.

'He gathereth together the outcasts of Israel.' You know what that means now. You know how they cast Him out of the city, and that He was the great Outcast of Israel, and the poor outcasts of Israel are brought home by the great Outcast of Israel.

'He healeth those that are broken in heart.' How could He heal the broken-hearted so well? Because His own Heart was broken and wounded. It is wounded men that need a wounded Saviour. A broken-hearted man needs a broken-hearted Saviour.

'He telleth the number of the stars.' What are the stars but His Saints? The Saints shine as the stars for ever and ever, and God knows them. 'Right dear in the sight of the Lord is the death of His Saints,' and they shine as the stars.

References.—CXLVII. 3, 4.—F. Bourdillon, *Plain Sermons for Family Reading*, p. 122. CXLVII. 5.—W. F. Shaw, *Sermon Sketches*, p. 15. CXLVII. 7, 9.—C. Kingsley, *The Water of Life*, p. 317.

Psalm cxlvii. 8.

Ruskin writes: 'Look up towards the higher hills, where the waves of everlasting green roll silently into their long inlets among the shadows of the pines, and we may, perhaps, at last know the meaning of those quiet words of the 147th Psalm, "He maketh grass to grow upon the mountains"'.

References.—CXLVII. 9.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xii. No. 672. CXLVII. 16-18.—*Ibid.* vol. xii. No. 670.

Psalm cxlviii.

St. Bernard of Clairvaux thus describes the death of his brother Gerard: 'Who could ever have loved me as he did? He was a brother by blood, but far more in the faith. God grant, Gerard, that I may not have lost thee, but that thou hast only gone before me; for, of a surety, thou hast joined those whom, in thy last night below, thou didst invite to praise God, when suddenly, to the surprise of all, thou, with a serene countenance and cheerful voice, didst commence chanting that Psalm, "Praise ye the Lord from the heavens; praise Him in the heights. Praise ye Him, all his angels; praise ye Him, all his hosts." At that moment, O my brother, the day dawned on thee, though it was night to us; the night to thee was all brightness. Just as I reached his side, I heard him utter aloud those words of Christ, "Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit!" Then repeating the verse over again, and resting on the word *Father, Father!* he turned to me and smiling said, "O how gracious of God to be the Father of men, and what an honour for men to be His children!"

References.—CXLVIII. 1.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons on Passages of the Psalms*, p. 318. CXLVIII. 3.—Archdeacon Sinclair, *Words from St. Paul's*, p. 20.

THE WEATHER

'Fire and hail, snow and vapours: wind and storm, fulfilling His Word.'—Psalm cxlviii. 8 (Prayer Book Version).

This verse tells us what God wants us to think about that most frequent of topics of conversation, the weather. The weather brings us into contact, immediate contact, with the forces of Nature. Here is a verse that strikes the keynote, true now, true then, always to be true.

I. The Will of God.—And what is the first word whenever we think of the weather? God has brought into existence in this universe of ours forces of two kinds, forces that can disobey His will, such as the forces that we call human nature, and forces that cannot disobey His will; such are the forces that make for the weather. So whenever we realize what a storm, thunder, lightning, mist, fog, and rain, are doing, we are realizing what is going on among agents that cannot help doing what they do—we are witnessing the direct action of God, forces that are fulfilling His Word.

II. Therefore, No Grumbling.—What is the second thought? It is a very practical conclusion, which we see to be a good one very plainly, though I quite admit it is not very easy to fall in with it. Do not let us ever grumble at the weather, do not let us ever grumble at anything that we cannot absolutely help, because if our will does not come in, why then it is God's will. I shall never forget the remark of an old Scottish gamekeeper, a good, old-fashioned Presbyterian. Some sportsmen were grumbling at the weather, and one of them went a step further and was cursing the weather; and the old gamekeeper said reverently, in a tone that the man could not help hearing, 'It wets the sods and fills the burns, and it's God's will'. The weather, and any other inevitable thing, is God's will.

III. An Ideal.—The third thought is this. Let us take the weather as our ideal. Is that a lowering of ideals that we who have a will of our own should wish that we were like forces that have no will? That depends upon how we use the power given to us. If mankind always used the free will which we have, to a certain extent, so as to make us act far better than the forces of Nature, of course it would be a Divine conception of existence; but, alas, you need not live more than a single day in any place on the face of this world to find out that we have not made good use of our will! We have sinned, we are full of negligences and ignorances, forgetfulness of God's law. The best thing we can do is to ask of God, 'Make me subservient to Thy will, make my will Thine. I want to be like those forces of Nature who have not a will of their own, fulfilling Thy word.' It is the highest ideal to be in God's hands, to know that you are in God's hands. It makes a strong life, a life that brings influence to bear on the men and women of one's generation.

IV. Storms and their Results.—The last thought I have time for is this: Observe results of the weather upon the physical world round about. Observe the result of every kind of weather, stormy weather, stress of weather, upon the face of Nature. Terrible storms, what we call catastrophes, sometimes gradually work upon the Nature upon which these forces are exerted that which is very striking, grand, and beautiful for us to see. From one point of view, in human nature, though the changes have sometimes come gradually and sometimes suddenly, these scenes of beauty would not have been there had it not been for the wind and storms and vapours fulfilling God's Word. If we are yielded up to God's will, every stress and every strain

of trial is just helping to carve out, moulding and modelling a life that shall be beautiful in God's service.

PSALM CXLVIII. 8.

RUSKIN says: 'The snow, the vapour, and the stormy wind fulfil His word. Are our acts and thoughts lighter and wilder than these—that we should forget it?'

YOUTH AND AGE

'Both young men, and maidens; old men, and children: let them praise the name of the Lord.'—PSALM CXLVIII. 12, 13.

THE young have special needs of their own which the Gospel must recognize if it is to be of any use to them; and the mature or aged, in like manner, have their own special wants, which cannot be met by the provision made for the young, but can only be satisfied by a Gospel which understands and sympathizes with them.

I. For the young He has the Gospel of Living; for the old the Gospel of Dying. A considerable proportion of those who have passed middle life have, by repeated experiences, been made acquainted with death. If you speak to them about it, you awaken a hundred tragic and tender memories, every one of which constrains them to prepare to meet their God. It is of life the young mind thinks, not of death. It must mingle with the warm rush of the healthy blood and keep time with the beating of the bounding heart. But is there not a response to this in the Gospel of Christ? Is it not pre-eminently a gospel of life? There is nothing else about which it is more constantly speaking, 'I am come,' said Christ, 'that ye might have life, and that ye might have it more abundantly'.

II. To the young Christ brings the Gospel of Inspiration; to the old the Gospel of Consolation. Youth looks around on the world in which it finds itself, and notes its defects with a fresh and inevitable glance. It burns to put them right. Christ taught the individual to realize his dignity as an immortal being; and the life He condemned most severely was that which accomplishes nothing. There is nothing too small to be done to the honour of God. The New Testament is from beginning to end a record of how men who were nothing in themselves became princes of thought and action through the inspiration of Christ.

III. For the young Christ has the Gospel of Giving; for the old the Gospel of Receiving. Christ has a cause on earth which can only be carried on by the energy of those who are willing to devote themselves to His service. He is not here any longer to carry on His cause Himself; He has left it to the charge of those who are willing to act in His name. It needs courage, initiative, sacrifice; it needs the lives of men. This appeal comes home especially to the young. There is a work you can do for Him in youth that none can do in old age.—J. STALKER, *The Four Men*, p. 178.

REFERENCES.—CXLVIII. 12.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons Preached in Sackville College Chapel*, vol. iv. p. 285. S. Gregory, *How to Steer a Ship*, p. 113. H. Jones, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxviii. p. 70.

THE RELIGIOUS LIFE OF YOUNG PEOPLE

'Both young men, and maidens; . . . let them praise the name of the Lord.'—PSALM CXLVIII. 12, 13.

IT is scarcely superfluous to ask, What is religion? for we cannot strive too earnestly for clear conception of such great terms. Definitions of religion are innumerable, but I think it would not be easy to excel that of Dr. Agar Beet, who states it as 'such conception of the unseen as makes for righteousness'. No part of your manifold life is so precious as your religious life. All else is moulded by it.

I. Characteristics of the Religion of Young People.—Whilst in one sense religion is the same in men and women of all ages, in another sense it varies according to years. The essence is one, the expression differs. Even among young people religion is marked by *variety*. It is the glory of Christianity that it is adaptive to individuality. It helps to make each of you himself, herself. *Intellectual inquiry* is a usual mark of young people's religion. Their heart is set to know the reason of things. As we grow older most of us are less anxious for explanations. Age tolerates mystery. Youth resents it. Young people's religion is a religion of *gladness*. A mournful piety can never meet the needs of youth. *Enthusiasm* is a precious feature of the young people's religion. The august and winsome truth of godliness together with its cheering experiences kindle the ardour of youth. They fire the heart with the flame of Jehovah.

II. Temptations of the Religion of Young People.—Young religionists are liable to over-criticalness. Everything is put under microscopic tests. There is ample room for legitimate criticism, but never seek to afford space for pedantic criticism. *Hypersensitiveness* often vitiates youthful religion. It is well to have due sensitiveness, but if it degenerate into touchiness it becomes a curse to ourselves and to our friends.

III. Advantage of the Religion of Young People.—Reasons might be multiplied why young men and women should dedicate themselves to God's service. They have the advantage of physical strength. It is easier to be a Christian in health than in sickness. They have also mental alertness and freshness. Their potencies of mind, consecrated unreservedly, may be used for God and man. The religion of youth *has the accumulated experience of the past to profit by*. The universal past waits to enrich your future. That you live in this privileged age gives you an immense religious advantage. The means of being good and doing good are multiplied to an unprecedented extent.

IV. Obligations of the Religion of Young People.—Your religion must be *reflective*. In all your thoughts let your God be. Let your religion be intensely *Biblical*. Make God's Book your book. *Prayer* must strongly mark your Christian life.

Nothing must arrest your devotions. Your religion must be *a religion of service.* The Church needs you, and the world needs you.—Dinsdale T. Young, *Messages for Home and Life*, p. 123.

References.—CXLVIII. 12, 13.—W. Brock, *Midsummer Morning Sermons*, p. 58. G. Dawson, *Sermons on Daily Life and Duty*, p. 64.

A PEOPLE NEAR UNTO HIM

'A people near unto Him. Praise ye the Lord.'—Psalm cxlviii. 14.

There was a time when we could not take these words to ourselves. We were not a people near unto God. Our sins had separated us from God, and we had no idea that we had gone so far from God until we tried to come back again to God. The prodigal had no idea he had gone into such a far country until he tried to come back to his father. But whilst he was yet a great way off the father saw him, ran, fell upon his neck, and kissed him. And now we who once were far off are 'made nigh by the blood of Christ'.

I. How are we Brought Near?—How are we brought near to God? We are brought nigh by the blood of Christ. Now this is true both objectively and subjectively. It is true objectively. The only power which will save us is the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. I know there are those who will tell you there is nothing objective in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ; that that Cross was simply a manifestation of God's love, and that any idea of a sacrifice or an atonement for sin must be entirely put upon one side, for, unless we are willing to do so, we shall drive all thinking men to unbelief. There is only one old Gospel, that Jesus Christ died for our sins, according to the Scripture. He died 'the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God'.

II. How Near have we been Brought?—If it is by the Blood of Christ that we are brought near to God, how near, practically, have you and I been brought to God? Let me bring you to the Old Testament picture of that wonderful scene which is portrayed for us in Exodus xix. and following chapters. God descends upon Mount Sinai. You may regard that mountain as a very pivot of the earth to-day, for God is there. And I want you in your thought to draw four concentric circles round about that mountain. And as we press through one circle to another, I want you to ask yourselves, Have I reached that point of nearness to God? The outermost circle is described in Exodus xix. 16 and 17, 'And it came to pass on the third day in the morning, that there were thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the mount, and the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud; so that all the people that was in the camp trembled. And Moses brought forth the people out of the camp to meet with God; and they stood at the nether part of the mount.' And when they heard God speaking to them it seemed as if the very earth trembled beneath the very breath of God. No wonder all the people trembled; no wonder Moses never allowed them to forget that day. Again and again in Deuteronomy he reminds them that they were brought so nigh unto God 'that the Lord spake unto you out of the midst of the fire'. Those people were brought very near to God when God spake to them, and His Voice reverberated in the very inmost souls. Do you know what it is to be brought thus near to God, so near that we lose sight of everything else, and God alone is the great reality in your life, and God speaks to you, and as God speaks to you you tremble? This nearness of impression is very solemn, it is not something to be treated lightly; and yet the nearness of impression is not enough. This very people who stood there and trembled, and lifted up their hands in despair and said, 'All that the Lord hath said will we do, and be obedient,' went away, and in a few days afterwards were dancing and playing round about the camp. And is not it so sometimes with ourselves? If you know what it is to get on the top of the hill with God, there will be a change in your life, in your character. As you come down to your daily life, there will be unselfishness, there will be consideration for others, there will be a spirit of self-sacrifice, a spirit of gentleness and a spirit of love, which will so overflow your very life and character that men will know that you are a man who is living in very close intimate communion with Jesus Christ.

References.—CXLVIII. 14.—G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 138. CXLVIII.—*International Critical Commentary*, vol. ii. p. 538.

GOD'S INHERITANCE IN SAINTS

'For the Lord taketh pleasure in His people: He will beautify the meek with salvation.'—Psalm cxlix. 4.

The Lord takes pleasure and finds delight in those that run to do His bidding.

I. The Lord cares nothing for the strength of a horse or for the rapidity with which a man's legs can carry him from place to place; but He loves to see a meek and humble believer trusting Him. That delight begins with the repentance and with the true sorrow for sin, the sorrow according to God. There is a godly element in sorrow.

II. God is the highest and the holiest of beings. He is in heaven; He is enthroned there; that is His proper throne and His proper shrine; but there is one dwelling-place for the sake of which He will come down from heaven—that is, when He sees a humble and a contrite heart, where there is reverence for His Word and a trembling and holy fear—not a servile fear, but a filial fear, like that of a child to a father.

III. It is very common for people to say that the angels rejoice over every returning sinner. Whose joy is it? Not the angels' joy, it is God's joy, and the thought is that God is so full that He cannot contain His joy, and so the whole of the heavenly hosts are marshalled, and He says, 'Share My joy,' and the great heart of God overflows and they hold up their cups to catch the overflowing of the infinite chalice of the love of God.

IV. It is a great thing to have Christ's compassion

when you have fallen. Is it not a greater thing to have Christ's sympathy when you stand, and is it not worth while to fortify ourselves against all the assaults of the devil when we remember that we can change the feeling of compassion in Jesus Christ over our fall to one of delight and sympathy over our victory?—Arthur T. Pierson, *Homiletic Review*, 1904, vol. xlviii. p. 378.

References.—CXLIX. 4.—G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 98. Spurgeon, *Evening by Evening*, p. 120. CXLIX. 9.—J. Keble, *Sermons for the Saints' Days*, p. 444. J. Bolton, *Selected Sermons* (2nd Series), p. 97. CXLIX.—*International Critical Commentary*, vol. ii. p. 541.

MUSIC AS A FACTOR IN CULTURE

'Praise ye the Lord!'—Psalm cl. 1.

Music is a gift of God. Like all the sciences it is a radiation of Divine truth.

I. The Divinity of music further appears in the fact that the greatest musicians have been good men; and to develop the mighty impulses which they have felt in their souls, the great musicians have chosen lofty Divine themes. It is a mission of music to soften and remove the asperities of men. It helps to unify the race and make men homogeneous in spite of controversy and unbelief, the music of all the Christian Church is saving this world for the Christmas of Christ. The hymn and the singer are often a long way in advance of the sermon and hearer in evangelizing influences. Music refines and ennobles. Music brightens life's dark places, and soothes the heart in trouble.

II. Music could not enjoy its best development until man had passed beyond his feudal age and reached the time when the lion and the tiger were being eliminated from his nature. Men had to pass beyond their barbaric, belligerent, and boisterous eras before they could realize that the highest expression of mind and spirit is in music. Music, if not more perfect than printing, the art preservative of all arts, is surely the best interpreter of all art and science. The mystery and mi acle of truth reveal their open sesame when studied through the atmosphere of music. Music is thus an intellectual factor. It is not so much a truth-seeker as a truth-finder.

III. Instrumental as well as vocal music should be made a part of the public school curriculum of every child. True religion like true love is emotional, and music is the most adequate impression of the emotional faculties. Faith sings, unbelief never. Music reveals God. All revivals of religion have been accompanied by revivals of sacred songs. Music is the language of celestial throngs. True eloquence is thought winged with music. The infinite God is more perfectly worshipped with musical accompaniment because music goes beyond language and logic and opens up the vistas of faith through which can be seen the King in His beauty.

MUSIC AND RELIGION

'Let everything that hath breath praise the Lord.'—Psalm cl. 6.

I. All concerted music has an educational value far higher than that of music written for a single performer. It is the work of people associated together as they are in society, and thus it teaches the lesson of life to those who are willing to learn. For, first, it demands preparation, careful and continuous. And that—be sure of it—is one of the most valuable lessons that we can learn; we can compass nothing great, we cannot even understand anything great, without patience and pains. Once more. In life as in music we cannot all take leading parts. Most of us are but members of the great chorus, our voices serve to swell and deepen the harmonies of human life. In life as in music, perhaps many of us shall do our work the better the less we make a show of doing it publicly.

II. Music has an important office to fulfil in religion, in those great duties which we call duties to God. For noble music reveals to us that there is another world beside that which we can see; it gives expression to the inarticulate yearnings of our souls after something higher and better than earth can give. It is the language of emotion, as speech is the language of intellect. It speaks to us of that which we feel, as distinct from that which we can be said to know. Thus we put it to its worthiest and most fitting use when we employ it to express religious emotion, to be the vehicle of prayer and of praise. Religious music, then, is the language of religious emotions. Through it we express the unspeakable desire of our hearts. But religion is not altogether made up of emotion. Our feelings are so unstable and so changeful that they have to be controlled by intellect. And as the most perfectly developed man is he who has developed both his feelings and his reason, who is neither the slave of sentiment on the one hand, nor the slave of logic on the other, so the worthiest way we have of expressing the deliberate yet passionate devotion of thankful hearts is neither by words alone nor by music alone, but by song, by perfect music wedded to noble words.

III. And this perhaps explains for us in some measure those mysterious pictures in the Revelation of St. John of the employments of the saints in heaven. Every faculty, every instinct of their glorified humanity they consecrate to God's glory. How does St. John describe their occupation? He sums it up as eternal praise. Music is the symbol of perfect consecration, the consecration of body and soul to the glory and praise of God. And as the best incentive to faithful service here is that love of God in redemption which was consummated in the sacrifice of the Cross, so the perpetual burden of the Anthem of Saints is, Worthy the Lamb that was slain!—J. H. Bernard, *Via Domini*, p. 294.

References.—CL. 6.—A. W. Hare, *Alton Sermons*, p. 371. H. E. Manning, *Sermons*, vol. iii. p. 276.

PROVERBS

PROVERBS

CHAP. I.

Ruskin writes: 'Read this first of Proverbs with me, please. The Proverbs of Solomon, the son of David, king of Israel.

'"To *know* wisdom and instruction."

'(Not to opine them.)

'"To *perceive* the words of understanding."

'(He that hath eyes, let him read—he that hath ears, hear, and for the Blind and the Deaf,—if patient and silent by the roadside,—there may also be some one to say, "He is coming".)

'"To receive the instruction of Wisdom, Justice, and Judgment, and Equity."

'Four things,—Oh friends, which you have not only to *per*ceive but to *re*ceive.'—*Fors Clavigera*, Letter LXXVII.

References.—I. 1.—J. B. Mozley, *Sermons Parochial and Occasional*, p. 96. W. Arnot, *Laws from Heaven for Life on Earth*, p. 9. I. 1-19.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—Esther, Job, Proverbs*, etc., p. 71. I. 6.—W. Arnot, *Laws from Heaven for Life on Earth*, p. 14. I. 7.—Henry Alford, *Quebec Chapel Sermons*, vol. vii. p. 1. W. Arnot, *Laws from Heaven for Life on Earth*, p. 17. I. 8.—*Ibid.* p. 21. I. 9.—*Ibid.* p. 25.

TEMPTERS

'My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not.'—Proverbs I. 10.

I. A danger implied. It is the nature of sin to be aggressive. No person was ever guilty of only one sin. His first sin might aptly have been called Gad—'a troop cometh'. There was never one sinner yet who did not try to make another like himself. On earth there is a huge propaganda of evil. Hence this world is a place of danger to the young and inexperienced.

II. A method exposed—'entice'. The tempter proceeds *indirectly* and flatteringly. Among his enticements are (1) increase of knowledge, (2) pleasure, (3) love of liberty, (4) nobody will ever know.

III. Resistance enforced—'Consent thou not'. There must not be a particle of 'Yes' in your 'No'. Say it at the right time and in the right way. Remember these two maxims as regards our moral actions: the necessity of choice in matters of conduct; and when conscience is clear let there be no further parley.

IV. The safeguard of holy memories—'My son'. Open the book of memory at the page where a father's solicitude and a mother's love is recorded for you.

V. This may be viewed as the utterance of God. He unfolds to us His Fatherhood in Christ, and beseeches us to resist sin.—W. M. Taylor, *The Sermon Year Book*, 1891, p. 354.

TEMPTATION

'My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not.'—Proverbs I. 10.

If this book of Proverbs appeals so especially to the young, there is reason and justification for this. For the most part, youth has a decisive bearing upon after years. The principles must then be formed which shall govern the whole of life. Wisdom, therefore, makes an especial effort to rescue the young from danger, and to guide them into safety, peace, and life. There is appropriateness in dissuasion combined with precept.

I. Life a Scene of Temptation.—There are two things to be considered in order to understand this:—

1. *The instigations to evil* which from without beset and attack every human being, of whatever age and condition.

2. *The natural inclination towards evil*, which from within gives such force to the external invitations. The two, concurring and conspiring, render life an arena of moral conflict.

II. Youth Especially the Period of Temptation.—The wise man addresses his 'son,' sympathizing with the young, remembering his own youth, and anxious to deliver youthful pilgrims from the snares which abound in their path.

1. In youth the passions are strongest, by which human nature is often urged aside from the ways of wisdom and piety, of virtue and true happiness.

2. In youth the principles and habits are unformed.

3. In youth inexperience exposes to the arts of the crafty and the vile.

III. Evil Companionship a Powerful Means of Temptation.—Society is sought by the young, who look to this for much of their happiness. There is always danger lest they should be deceived by the speciousness of outward attractions, and should fail justly to estimate the character of associates. Thus they are liable to influence by—

1. The *example* of bad companions. 'Evil communications corrupt good manners.'

2. The actual *invitations* to sinful courses from those whose influence it is not easy to resist.

IV. Divine Grace should be Sought in Order to the Resistance of Temptation.—1. *Temptation may be withstood.* The excuse is sometimes made, 'The temptation was too strong for me'. But it is not the case that the temptation is too strong; rather is the tempted too weak. God with every temptation makes a way of escape, and men are not shut up to sin.

2. *Watchfulness and prayer* alone can preserve in the case of temptation. If the young set out upon their course relying upon their own wisdom and

strength, they will surely fall. Divine strength alone can overcome; there is no other safety than that which lies in distrust of self and confidence in God.

References.—I. 10.—W. Taylor, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xl. 1891, p. 81. F. B. Cowl, *Straight Tracks*, p. 82. W. Arnot, *Laws from Heaven for Life on Earth*. I. 19.—*Ibid.* p. 44. I. 20.—*Ibid.* p. 49. H. J. Wilmot-Buxton, *Sunday Lessons for Daily Life*, p. 147. E. A. Trench, *God's Message Through Modern Doubt*, p. 59. I. 20-33.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—Esther, Job, Proverbs*, etc., p. 77. I. 23.—G. Matheson, *Voices of the Spirit*, p. 56. W. Arnot, *Laws from Heaven for Life on Earth*, p. 55. I. 24-28.—*Ibid.* p. 59. I. 26.—N. D. Hillis, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lvii. 1900, p. 328. I. 30, 31.—F. B. Woodward, *Sermons* (2nd Series), p. 182. II. 1-5.—Harvey Goodwin, *Parish Sermons*, p. 239. II. 4, 5.—W. Arnot, *Laws from Heaven for Life on Earth*, p. 66. II. 10, 11.—*Ibid.* p. 77. A. Maclaren, *Outlines of Sermons on the Old Testament*, p. 156. II. 12-19.—W. Arnot, *Laws from Heaven for Life on Earth*, p. 72. II. 17.—Henry Alford, *Quebec Chapel Sermons*, vol. vii. p. 16. III. 1.—W. Arnot, *Laws from Heaven for Life on Earth*, p. 77. III. 1-10.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—Esther, Job, Proverbs*, etc., p. 84. III. 3.—H. Ward Beecher, *Sermons* (2nd Series), p. 271. W. Arnot, *Laws from Heaven for Life on Earth*, p. 81. III. 5.—*Ibid.* p. 85. G. Salmon, *Non-Miraculous Christianity*, p. 218.

SELF-RELIANT OR GOD-RELIANT?

'Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths.'—Proverbs iii. 5, 6.

No one who reads the book of Proverbs can fail to see that its maxims are of the utmost value. We should truly be the poorer without its pithy, practical sayings, which bear upon almost every phase of life.

How much we need to remember the verses that I read as our text.

I. It is Often Considered a Fine Thing to be Self-Reliant.—Many men boast that they rely only on themselves. A man will point with pride to his prosperous business and say, 'I worked all that up by myself from nothing'. Self-reliance is very good up to a certain point. It is all right if it does not make us forget God, from Whom all good things come, and in Whom we live and move and have our being. The man who trusts in God does not become slack and careless. He knows that if he is trusting in God for help in his daily work he must put forth his best energies in order to be worthy of God's help. When we trust in God we are, as it were, admitting Him into partnership with ourselves. It therefore becomes necessary to try to live up to our high position. I want you to think of this as a message from God to you in the height of your prosperity, it may be, when all is going well with you. After all there is not much to be said for the man who only pretends to trust in God when he is in adversity, and as it were so far in a corner that he cannot help himself. It may be that he learns his lesson at such a time, and by finding what God can do for him then, learns to trust Him at all times. The trust that honours God, and which He desires, is that which is accorded to Him at all times, in the time of prosperity quite as much as in the time of adversity, for though we may not feel the need of His help then so much as we do in the time of adversity, it is quite true that our times of prosperity are just the times when we are tempted to forget God, and think we can do without Him.

We need to bear in mind the next verse.

II. Those who have not Really Tried it, sometimes Think that to have God always in our Minds must make them Dull and Weary.—They think that it is all very well for Sundays or for times of prayer, but to acknowledge God at all times, to be thinking constantly of Him, to be continually consulting Him, this they imagine would rob life of its freedom and its brightness. What a mistake they make! It is only when we take God into our lives that we are able to enjoy life to its fullest extent. For when we do that, we look at the world in a new light. Everything is transformed because it becomes to us part of God's world. The beauties of nature are a thousand times more lovely when we see God's handiwork in them, and there is a new attraction in our fellow-men, when we realize that they are children of the same heavenly Father as ourselves.

III. You need not Hold Back because you are afraid, if you try to act up to the exhortation of our text, and acknowledge God in everything, that you will be deprived of happiness and your life made gloomy. No, your joys will be multiplied a thousandfold, and you will have God's help in your work in times of difficulty and perplexity as well. And how much of our life is of this latter nature. We can see so little of what is before us that we often know not what to do. We are uncertain what course to take or what plans to make. But if it is our habit to acknowledge God in everything, to seek His guidance and to trust in Him, we have the assurance of His Word that 'we shall not be disappointed'.

References. — III. 6.—J. R. Crookes, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxxiii. 1908, p. 170. III. 7, 8.—W. Arnot, *Laws from Heaven for Life on Earth*, p. 89. III. 9.—*Ibid.* p. 91. III. 9, 10.—J. Silvester, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxix. 1906, p. 245. III. 11, 12.—W. Arnot, *Laws from Heaven for Life on Earth*, p. 93. III. 11-24.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—Esther, Job, Proverbs*, etc., p. 88. III. 13-15.—W. Arnot, *Laws from Heaven for Life on Earth*, p. 99. III. 13, 19.—G. A. Chadwick, *The Intellect and the Heart*, p. 154. III. 14.—C. Perren, *Revival Sermons in Outline*, p. 252. III. 16, 17.—W. Arnot, *Laws from Heaven for Life on Earth*, p. 102. III. 19, 20.—*Ibid.* p. 105. III. 26.—*Ibid.* p. 107. III. 27, 28.—*Ibid.* p. 111. III. 28.—S. A. Tipple, *The Admiring Guest*, p. 122. III. 33.—W. Arnot, *Laws from Heaven for Life on Earth*, p. 115.

Proverbs iv. 5, 7.

I mean to follow Solomon's directions, 'get learning get understanding'. I find earlier days are gone by—I find that I can have no enjoyment in the world but continual drinking of knowledge.—Keats *to John Taylor* (1818).

References.—IV. 7.—J. T. Bramston, *Sermons to Boys* p. 152. A. E. Dunning, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xlviii

1895, p. 12. U. Thomas, *Ibid.* vol. liii. 1898, p. 163. IV. 10, 11.—W. Arnot, *Laws from Heaven for Life on Earth*, p. 117. 10-19.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—Esther*, IV. *Job, Proverbs*, etc., p. 96. IV. 12.—*Ibid.* p. 101. IV. 13.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxiv. No. 1418. J. S. Maver, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. liii. 1898, p. 318. W. Arnot, *Laws from Heaven for Life on Earth*, p. 119. IV. 14, 15.—F. W. Farrar, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xlvii. p. 344. "Plain Sermons" by contributors to the *Tracts for the Times*, vol. v. p. 208. IV. 18.—*Ibid.* vol. ii. p. 141. G. Body, *The Life of Justification*, p. 175. J. Hamilton, *Faith in God*, p. 324. A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—Esther, Job, Proverbs*, etc., p. 108. IV. 18, 19.—W. Arnot, *Laws from Heaven for Life on Earth*, p. 121. IV. 23.—Spurgeon *Sermons*, vol. iv. No. 179. J. Thain Davidson, *The City Youth*, p. 213. W. G. Elmslie, *British Weekly Pulpit*, vol. ii. p. 465. A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—Esther, Job, Proverbs*, etc., p. 116. E. Meyrick Goulburn, *Three Counsels of the Divine Master*, vol. i. p. 245. H. Harris, *Short Sermons*, vol. i. p. 202. "Plain Sermons" by contributors to the *Tracts for the Times*, vol. ix. p. 324. IV. 23-27.—W. Arnot, *Laws from Heaven for Life on Earth*, p. 124.

THE KEEPING OF THE HEART

'Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life.'—PROVERBS IV. 23.

I. How is this law of life to be obeyed? How is the heart to be kept?

If we are going to keep our hearts we must have disciplined imaginations. The relation between the two is of the most intimate nature. Now what is the work of the imagination? The imagination does this. It takes of abstract things and presents them in concrete forms to the heart. It takes of ideas and turns them into pictures; and by presenting these ideas like pictures or images to the heart, it provokes in the heart certain feelings. If the pictures appeal to fear, they produce in the heart the spirit of revulsion. If the pictures appeal to that which the heart delights in, it appeals in the form of attractions.

A disciplined imagination is the condition of a heart rightly regulated and of a life rightly shaped.

II. I believe myself that it is impossible to explain the phenomenon of our spiritual lives unless you recognize the fact that there is an organized power of evil that acts upon us from without. Whatever theological difficulties there may be in apprehending this truth I could not explain the facts of my own spiritual experience unless I knew there was some power without me that had power to stir thought within me; because continually these things that come to my imagination and propose themselves to my heart have not been self-sought, they have come upon me entirely without my own will; it is as if I had been walking in a road, and a pistol shot comes to me and I feel its effect immediately within; immediately the imagination is stirred into such activity with such persistency, with such fascination, that which whilst to my highest self it is a positive agony, it is yet to my lower nature a positive thing of delight.

III. I must, in some way or another, get master of my imagination; and as I beat down my body into subjection I must bring my imagination into subjection. How are you going to do it?

1. Pray about it.
2. Take care what you read.
3. Do everything that you can that will supply to the imagination wholesome food.

There is only one way of really getting the peace of the imagination; and that is by living with the eyes of the imagination continually gazing upon the vision of the beautiful.—G. BODY, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. LXXIII. 1908, p. 196.

PROVERBS IV. 23.

RUSKIN says: 'For all of us, the question is not at all to ascertain how much or how little corruption there is in human nature; but to ascertain whether, out of all the mass of that nature, we are of the sheep or the goat breed; whether we are people of upright heart, being shot at, or people of crooked heart, shooting. And, of all the texts bearing on the subject, this, which is a quite simple and practical order, is the one you have chiefly to hold in mind. "Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life."'—*Ethics of the Dust*, p. 101.

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SUPREME ACQUISITIONS

'For whoso findeth Me findeth life, and shall obtain favour of the Lord. But he that misseth Me wrongeth his own soul: all they that hate Me love death.'—PROVERBS VIII. 35, 36 (R.V.).

THIS striking contrast expresses the twofold universal classification of men—those who find and those who miss true wisdom in life.

I. Looking first at the darker side of the contrast

we see sin revealed as being both a missing of the Divine purpose and also a process of self-destruction. For to miss Christ either by reason of engaging the heart's attention with other things, by the fatal power of careless inattention, or by engrossment in the search after the merely secondary things of life, is to fail in apprehending that for which creation and redemption alike have marked us out. And his folly is eternal who misses Christ for the sake of gaining any or aught other.

For at the same time he wrongeth his own soul'. Sin is but long-drawn-out self-destruction. It confuses those powers of spiritual apprehension by which we are enabled to determine the will of God and so to steer a straight course. It outrages conscience, violating that organ of moral sensitiveness until its approving or reproving voice is entirely hushed. Sin paralyses will-power, exercising a kind of moral hypnotism from which men often try to arouse themselves in vain.

It is, however, by robbing the soul of its only possibility of development that sin, which is in some shape or other a missing of Christ, wrongs it most. Just as everything in Nature needs its own proper element and environment in order to ensure the development of all its possibilities, so the soul of man needs Christ in order to reach its highest and truest life.

II. The brighter side of the contrast is bright indeed. 'He that findeth Me findeth life,' which is the very antithesis of sin's result. For life is power to be and to do. Its manifestations are as visible and recognizable as are those of the sin to which allusion has been made. For with life comes the gift of vision—power to see and to understand the will of God as the law of daily living. It brings, too, a quickening of conscience—power to judge in matters of personal moral import. It imparts a strength of will—power to purpose according to the knowledge received and judgment recorded. Above all, life is the true environment for development—power to grow. In short Christ transforms the water of mere existence into the wine of true life.

III. It remains to be noted that this His wondrous gift is only made to him that 'findeth Me,' which is of course to him that seeketh. The man who wants to see Christ is always the man whom Christ wants to see, and he who sets his heart to know the life which He bestows is never disappointed of his desire.—J. Stuart Holden, *Redeeming Vision*, p. 114.

GOD'S DEEPEST HORROR IN SIN

'He that sinneth against Me wrongeth his own soul.'—Proverbs viii. 36.

I. This is not the common mode of thinking about sin. The common mode is to regard God's horror of sin as resulting from a sense of injury to Himself. Here, on the contrary, the Divine horror of sin is said to consist in the fact that it is an injury to *me*. A father says to a child, 'Do not go near the fire while I am out; if you do, I shall be very angry'. The child probably thinks that his anger will lie in the fact of being disobeyed. It will not lie there at all; it will be stirred purely by the fear that in its act of disobedience the child may have hurt itself. And if he finds that the child *has* hurt itself, his anger will be transmuted into the most intense pain.

II. Now, take what we call *hell*-fire. The heavenly Father cries to His children 'I command you not to go near it lest you get scorched'. What is the ground of that command? Is it the wish to exercise a Divine authority? No; startling as it may seem, it is the wish to avert a Divine fear. You have heard the expression, 'The fear of the Lord'. When I am exhorted to cultivate the fear of the Lord, what does that mean? It means that I am to get into my heart that fear which dwells in the heart of God, that I am to have for my brother the same dread which the heavenly Father has for His children. The fear of the Lord is the fear that His sons and daughters will touch the fire.

III. You speak of God's sovereign decrees. God has no sovereign decrees; God's decrees are all paternal. The decrees of a despot are meant to clip the subject's wings; those of the Father are meant to expand the wings. Why are you forbidden to hate? Because hatred cramps the soul. Why are you forbidden to be jealous? Because jealousy narrows the soul. Why are you forbidden to be selfish? Because selfishness locks the soul. Why are you commanded to love? Because love is liberty. Why are you commanded to pity? Because pity is power. Why are you commanded to sympathize? Because sympathy is the heart's soaring. The commands of your Father break the cage and set you free. He prescribes faith that you may fly. He offers grace that you may grow. He enjoins kindness that you may kindle. He exacts brotherhood that you may bloom. He requires service that you may sing. He invites prayer that you may prophesy. Not in His honour, but in yours, does He ask the homage of your heart; the Father has no glory but the enlargement of His child.—G. Matheson, *Messages of Hope*, p. 81.

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THE ABSOLUTE GOOD

'The blessing of the Lord, it maketh rich, and He addeth no sorrow therewith.'—PROVERBS X. 22.

THE ancients believed that the pyramids were so constructed that they cast no shadow; but few things in this world are wholly free from shadows. Well-nigh all circumstances and events, however propitious some may be, entail disadvantages. Absolute perfection is rare in any direction. Yet it is now our privilege to offer unqualified advantage, a gift without a backdraw, a blessing that is an unalloyed joy. In its most definite sense the blessing of the Lord is the fullness of the blessing of the Gospel of Christ; and we hope to show that a truly Christian life can bring men good, only good; that it implies no abatements whatever, but is a rich and an unadulterated blessing.

I. The influence of true religion upon character affords a proof of this. Here eminently 'the blessing of the Lord maketh rich'. On the banks of the Humber we have seen a vine growing in the open air. In the summer it put forth leaves, the fruit began to fashion, and one might have supposed that it was going to ripen into purple clusters; but it never came to perfection: the grapes remained paltry and green, withering on the tree. A vine planted in the open air in the North of England is always a pathetic spectacle. How different with the vine as it is seen growing in Italy. Its branches are flung abroad as though in conscious triumph, every leaf upon it is a poem, and the clusters gleam like purple constellations set in a firmament like unto an emerald. Here is the rapture of the poet, the dream of the artist, the joy of the vintner. Yet wide as is the distinction between the vine of the Humber and the vineyards of Italy, the difference is yet infinitely greater between character as it struggles in the chill air of secularism and as it ripens in the sunshine of Jesus Christ. 'I am the true Vine, and My Father is the Husbandman. I am the Vine, ye are the branches: he that abideth in Me, and I in him, the same beareth much fruit.' The true Vine is incomparable in the wealth and beauty of moral fruition; and the branches, sharing in His fatness, bear the richest fruits of holiness that ever ripened beneath the sun.

'And He addeth no sorrow therewith.' We are bold to maintain that the gain in character in Christ is attended by no drawback. It implies no sacrifice of strength; the active elements of mind and will are in nowise sapped by the passive. Our Master is foremost in the line of heroes, and He inspires His followers with His own strength and courage. The Christian character implies no sacrifice of tenderness. The passive qualities essential to the completeness of human nature are not invalidated by the active; multitudes follow in Christ's train who combine the tenacity of steel with the softness of silk. No sacrifice of self-respect is exacted. Whilst the Christian faith abases us for our sins, it assumes our greatness and respects our greatness at every step. No sacrifice of rationality is involved in Christian discipleship. No error is greater than to suppose that our faith puts any arbitrary limit to reason; the New Testament enlarges the human spirit without imposing upon it any narrowing or humiliating limitations. Nor are we called to make any sacrifice of practicability. Our aspirations are not mocked nor our strength wasted in the pursuit of unattainable standards. No sacrifice of individuality is implied. True piety destroys none of the charm of personality; on the contrary, it elicits, most fully, the special glory of the individual soul. And, finally, the moral ideal and discipline of the faith of Christ does not prejudice the humanness of its disciples. Whilst disclosing a higher world it does not forget that we are citizens of this, and members one of another. Looking to Jesus, and simply following Him, the integrity of our spirit can suffer in no respect or degree. In His own character is nothing defective or unbalanced; nor is there in the believer who is complete in Him.

II. The influence of true religion on society and its material conditions is equally benign. 'The blessing of the Lord' makes rich the community and its whole practical life. For generations the faith of Christ has purified public life; not a generation passes without some blighting thing passing with it.

III. The precious influence of the Christian faith on human experience is the last instance we will adduce of the truth of our text. Here 'the blessing of the Lord maketh rich'. The New Testament has little to say about the world we figure on the map, or the worlds around us with which astronomy is concerned; but it concerns itself largely with the world within us—the sphere of the spirit, the realm of thought, imagination, and feeling. As the ages progress this inner world, the world of self-consciousness, is ever seen more clearly to be the most important world with which we have to do. To enrich this world Christ came.

Nietzsche predicts that 'the religion of the future will be the religion of golden laughter'. The religion of the future, then, will be the religion of Jesus Christ. No better definition could be given of it. Laughter devoid of sorrow. That does not bespeak the vacant but the noble mind. That is without stain or folly. That is not like the crackling of thorns under a pot, but steady as a star. The laughter that comes last. Such are the peace and cheerfulness of the pure in heart.—W. L. WATKINSON, *The Fatal Barter*, pp. 213-27.

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THE CHRISTIAN'S HIGHEST REWARD

'The righteous shall be recompensed in the earth'—
PROVERBS XI. 31.

I. I UNDERSTAND the emphatic words to be, 'in the earth'. There never had been any doubt about the final reward of the righteous; but there were evidently some who were beginning to say: 'It must be reserved for another world; this earth of ours is indifferent to moral distinctions'. The writer of this proverb cries, 'No; my reward will be here'. I do not think he meant that it must come in his present life. Remember, the Jew held that he was to come back to this earth again on the Resurrection morning. The whole point of the passage is that, either now or hereafter, either to-day or to-morrow, the righteous man will see the rectification of things below—the crooked made straight, the rough places made plain, the mountains abased and the valleys exalted. I doubt if a son of Israel would have thanked you for the fairest flowers and the loveliest woods in a world divorced from earthly memories; his whole notion of immortality was the future glorifying of his present actions.

II. And I believe that this is also the immortal hope of every Christian. Did you ever ask yourself, what is that recompense which a Christian saint desires? Is it a paradise in the seventh heaven which the tumult of earth will not reach? Is it a flight to regions unknown and at present unknowable? Is it the wearing of foreign purple and the hearing of foreign music and the engagement in foreign embassies? A Christian in the future life may occasionally have all these things; but he will deem none of them his recompense. What he wants is not a redemption from the past but a redemption *of* the past. He seeks a river clear as crystal; but he seeks it in the muddy haunts of time—'in the midst of the street'. He desires a tree whose leaves are life-giving; but he wants it for 'the healing of the nations'. He craves a song of exquisite melody; but its subject is to be the glory of a human cross—'worthy is the Lamb that was slain'. He searches for a precious emerald; but he does so in a rainbow of earthly tears. He longs to be able to cry, 'Who are these that are arrayed in white robes?' but the answer he would like to receive is this: 'These are they that came out of great tribulation'.—G. MATHESON, *Messages of Hope*, p. 153.

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WASTED GAINS

'The slothful man roasteth not that which he took in hunting.'
—PROVERBS XII. 27.

I. By toil, by tears, by sharing in the toil and tears of others, our life is rich in gains. Trophies have fallen to our bow, and to the bow of the nation with which we are one, and to the bow of the Gospel we believe; and we have never roasted what we took in hunting. The gains are wasted; the trophies are unused.

1. I want to run that thought out into various spheres of life; and first, the wasted gains in *bodily life*. Take speech or sight. Compare the possibilities of sight with what you see. Contrast the possibilities of speech with what you say; and are not speech and sight terribly wasted gains?

2. There are wasted gains in our *social life*. Take friendship, for example. Think for a moment of the toil it cost to make a single friend. The tragedy is the passing of love's kindness; the sloth that lets us squander what we won; the waste of the sweet gains of golden days.

3. There are wasted gains in our *public* and our *national life*. Our privileges were bought for us at a great price. And oh, the pity of it, how we waste them!

There is our restful Sunday, and it was dearly bought. But every country road and country inn on Sunday is thronged with men who never think of God. There is the open Bible, and it was dearly bought, yet now it is every book before the Bible. There is our liberty of worship, and it was dearly bought, yet, come a rainy Sunday, and half the churches in the city are unfilled.

And there is our right of voting too, of moulding public life and sharing in it, and that was dearly bought. And hundreds of men and women are so careless that they will sit at home, or visit, or go to work, and never trouble to record their vote.

II. In our moral and spiritual life there is the same tale of wasted gains. Had we but used all we have learned; had we but held by all that suffering taught us; had we but clung to what we wrestled for, we should be nearer heaven. But we have squandered it like any prodigal, and flung it to the winds, and almost all the lessons are to learn again!

III. Squander your gains, and God will take them from you. Neglect your talents, and God will take your talents back. Misuse your sight, and God will rob you of the power to see. Despise your teachings, and God will not teach you any more.—G. H. MORRISON, *Sun-Rise*, p. 169.

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SIN AND ITS MOCKERS

'Fools make a mock at sin: but among the righteous there is favour.'—PROVERBS XIV. 9.

IT is one thing to mock in such a fashion as that the sinning person shall say, 'This thing which the mirror holds up to me is base, contemptible, unprofitable, and I will henceforth abjure it'; and another thing to laugh in such a fashion as to make him imagine 'This thing is trivial, it is of no serious import whatsoever, and I will therefore conduct myself as I like. The first kind of mockery is the austere, if somewhat cynical, expression of moral indignation; the second is the light, flippant sneer of moral indifference.

I. And this scoffing indifference, this tendency to levity in men's views and speeches and whole mental attitude to sin, when and how is it manifested?

1. It is manifested in those who make a mock at *the facts and realities* of sin. This is the most obvious and direct shape which the temptation assumes, and it exhibits itself in various directions. Take, for instance, *literature*. Take *conversation*.

2. It is possible to manifest the same tendency by making a mock at *the reprovers of sin*.

3. Take another phase of the self-same tendency. It appears, does it not, in the case of those who mock at *the fear of sin*?

4. The kind of mocking that associates itself with the thought of the *powers and the agencies of sin*.

II. Note certain obvious reasons why those who mock at it are fools:—

1. They are fools because *blind to their own real interests*. Safety is at stake. Self-preservation is at stake. Those who mock at sin are most apt to become the prey of sin.

2. Because *blind to the teaching of all observation and experience*. Consider what sin has wrought, consider what sin is working still; and apart from the tremendous revelations of Scripture, you may see enough round about to make you tremble, rather than scoff.

3. The man who mocks at sin is infatuated not only because blind to the interests of self and blind to the teachings of experience, but because *blind to the lessons of the Cross of Christ*.—W. A. GRAY, *British Weekly Pulpit*, vol. II. p. 573.

MAKING LIGHT OF SIN

'Fools make a mock at sin.'—PROVERBS XIV. 9.

WHEN we think of all the unhappiness sin causes, and of all the misery of which it is the parent, we might deem it to be a thing incredible that any person should make light of sin. Sin is the great power that makes for loneliness, as it is the power everywhere that makes for wreckage; and in the light of that knowledge, which is common property, to make a mock at sin might seem impossible. Still more might it seem to be impossible when we recall the teaching of our faith. If Christ has shown us what God thinks of goodness, He has also shown us what God thinks of sin. And the one fact that the Father gave the Son that He might die for sinners on the cross, might be thought to make such mockery incredible. Yet the fact remains that men do mock at sin. They treat it lightly and make a jest of it. They do not view it with that holy anger which is the constant attitude of God. Alive in a measure, as they all must be, to the handiwork of sin in human life, they are not moved by it as God is moved, nor stirred by it profoundly as was Jesus.

We see that, for instance, in the matter of confession, in the confession of our sins in prayer. No part of prayer is less real to most men than the part which voices the confession of sin.

Again we gather this prevailing lightness from the kind of way in which men talk of sin. They speak of it with a smile or with a jest, and cover it up under some pleasant name. When a man is dead in earnest in a matter you can generally infer it from his speech. When a man is dead in earnest in a matter it is then he begins to call a spade a spade. And the very fact that in men's common speech sin is not spoken of with such directness, is a straw that shows us how the wind is blowing.

Again we may gather how lightly men think of sin from the different standards by which they judge it. Sin is a very different thing in *us*, from what it is in the lives of *other* people.

Well, then, if that be the fact, can we discover the causes of that fact? There are some reasons which suggest themselves at once, and I shall mention one or two of them.

I. In the first place, men treat sin lightly just because they are so accustomed to it. It is so common that their hearts are hardened; so universal that they are never startled.

II. Again we are tempted to make light of sin because of its intertwining with the good. In deeper senses than the Psalmist thought of, we are fearfully and wonderfully made. If all that was bad in individual character stood by itself in visible isolation, then as we looked at a man and praised the good in him, we might feel the loathsomeness of what was bad. But human character is not constructed so, with separate stations for its good and evil: it is an intricate and inextricable tangle of what is brightest with what is very dark. Then I beheld, says Bunyan in his dream, and there was a way to hell from nigh the gate of heaven. I think that that is so with every man: his heaven and hell are never far apart.

III. Once more men are tempted to make light of sin because it veils its consequences with such con-

summate skill. Sin is the jauntiest of all adventurers, and sets its best foot forward gallantly. The certainty of sin is always this, that its to-morrow is a little worse. And so with consummate skill it hides to-morrow, and says in the very words of Christ *to-day*, and to-day is so exquisitely sweet and passionate that certainties of judgment are forgotten.

IV. Again, many make light of sin because no one knows sin's power till he resists it. It is a natural law in the spiritual world that power can be measured by resistance. Only when the life of grace begins, and a man awakes to all that life may be, does he learn the powerful swirl of that black river that flows in the dark places of his heart.—G. H. Morrison, *The Return of the Angels*, p. 214.

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LAUGHTER AND SORROW

'Even in laughter the heart is sorrowful.'—Proverbs xiv. 13.

I. The difference between outward and inward life.

Even in laughter, says Solomon, the heart is sorrowful. He is thinking of the duality of life.

You will not grasp the influence of Jesus, in all its wonderful impact on mankind, unless you bear in mind this strange duality. Under all outward seeming our Lord discerned the struggle of the heart; He was never misled by laughter or by speech; He never ignored all that we cannot utter.

II. Sorrow and joy are strangely knit together. Even in laughter the heart is sorrowful. There is a mystical union between our smiles and tears.

We see this in the lives of our greatest men, for instance. It is one of the lessons we learn from great biographies. The greatest are very seldom solemn, and certainly they are almost never joyless. True joy is not the mere escape from sorrow. It may be that the capacity for gladness is but the other side of the capacity for pain.

We find this also in our own greatest moments, when the fire of life flashes up in some fierce intensity. When the heart throbs, and feeling is enkindled, and every nerve is quivering with emotion, we scarcely know if we are sorry or glad. It is a master-touch of our master dramatist that in the very heart of his tragedies you will have some fool or jester. It means far more than a mere relief from the agony; it means that the light and the shadow are akin. There have come moments to every one of us, when sorrow and joy were strangely knit together.

And do you not think that is true of Jesus Christ? It is one of the mysteries of that perfect life. He was a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; His soul was exceeding sorrowful, even unto death. Yet through it all, and in the midst of it, our adorable Lord is talking of His joy.

III. Sorrow lies nearer to the heart of life than joy. Even in laughter the heart is sorrowful: at the back of all there is the heart's unrest.

I think that even language bears this out; and language becomes very illuminative when we study it. We never talk about a heavy joy: we only talk about a heavy grief. Happiness bubbles up or ripples over; there is some suggestion of the surface in it. But sorrow is heavy, and what that implies is this, that when God casts it into the sea of life it sinks by its own weight into the deeps.

Unless this proverb of Solomon prove itself true, the cross is not life's true interpretation. In the centre of history stands the cross of Calvary, and the cross is the epitome of woe. And if life's deepest secret be gladness and not sorrow, if laughter runs deeper into the heart than tears, then the cross, that professes to touch the deepest depths, can be nothing but a tragical mistake. I do not think that we have found it so. I do not think that the cross has ever failed us. The deepest music that our heart ever uttered has blended and chimed with the sad strain of Calvary.—G. H. Morrison, *Sun-Rise*, p. 43.

References.—XIV. 13.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—Esther, Job, Proverbs*, etc., p. 187.

SELF-CONTAINEDNESS

'A good man shall be satisfied from himself.'—Proverbs xiv. 14.

'A good man shall be satisfied from himself.' Then there can be a noble kind of self-satisfaction. There is a self-satisfaction which is repellent, an offensive form of conceit. This species of self-satisfaction must be altogether removed from our minds when we seek the interpretation of our text.

I. It is a very natural expectation that kindness should meet with the return of gratitude. We say there is some satisfaction in doing kindnesses if they are received by grateful hearts. But oftentimes the gratitude is withheld, and we are profoundly dissatisfied. Let us take the counsel of the text, and when gratitude is lacking, let us retire into our own hearts, and find satisfaction in the kindness itself. An act is more and finer than its consequences. God 'is kind to the unthankful'.

II. It seems to be a most fitting thing that duty should culminate in comfort. But we are confronted with the fact that comfort is not always the crown of duty. There are many people who are scrupulous and conscientious, but their sky is overcast. Their way abounds in thorns. What is the meaning of it all? Is it not intended to throw us back upon the true wealth, to urge us to seek our satisfaction not in the comfort that duty may bring, but in the duty itself? That is a very elevated word of the Psalmist —'I delight to do Thy will'.

III. The great principle has other applications. Let this one suffice. If there be any who are workers for the Lord, and who are cast down and disquieted because of apparently fruitless toil, get back into the consciousness of honest work honestly done, and you

shall find the brightness there. 'Light is sown for the righteous.' 'A good man shall be satisfied from himself.'—J. H. Jowett, *Meditations for Quiet Moments*, p. 26.

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THE NEARNESS OF THE ESSENTIAL IN LIFE'S DISCIPLINE

'Wisdom is before the face of him that hath understanding.'—Proverbs xvii. 24 (R.V.).

The fool is he who despises the actual and possible, and longs for what is not; he is never where his eyes are. The text is, then, a warning against vain conceits and regrets, against frittering away life sighing for impossible conditions, whilst missing the glory before our eyes, the treasures at our feet, the prizes within our grasp.

I. Do not despise the *familiar*. The elements of happiness, sources of improvement, and opportunities for service and sacrifice are never far to seek. Really no folly is more egregious than that of looking high and wide for the essential gifts and blessings as though God had forgotten or denied them. Our star is in our brain, not in the sky; our ship of gold is at the quay awaiting its discharge, and not upon the high seas; our fortune is at our feet, not at the foot of the rainbow. Let us lay it to heart, there is nothing better for us in the wide universe than the set of circumstances which constitute the frame-work of our contemporaneous life.

II. Do not despise the *mean*. 'Wisdom is before the face of him that hath understanding.' The wise see great significance and taste rich satisfactions in what appears to the carnal eye poor and base, the bread-and-butter life is lighted up by the beatific vision; on the other hand, the fool hates the drudgery of duty, the weariness of work, the monotonousness of mere faithfulness, and takes refuge in day-dreams and fiction generally. Let us beware of scorning the grey, coarse, beaten pathway; for it is a section of the King's highway, despite its dreariness. Do not despise common positions; they require splendid souls to fill them: do not despise common tasks; it requires rare souls to accomplish them. Only God's jewels can worthily work out His great purpose in humble places and things; and in thus working out His purpose they are proved and polished against the great day of coronation. Do not weaken the soul with vain longings and idealizations. There is no victory like that of the commonplace life bravely lived.

III. Do not despise the *small*. 'The eyes of a fool are in the ends of the earth seeking great things,' whilst in the apparently insignificant close at hand reside most momentous possibilities. The wise accept thankfully the small sphere, the one talent, the few things. In the most restricted sphere every noble quality of human nature may be illustrated, every grand work wrought.—W. L. Watkinson, *Themes for Hours of Meditation*, p. 86.

Proverbs xvii. 24.

A distinguished naturalist declares that the best bird-nester is the village simpleton. He starts on his quest without crediting the birds with any extraordinary subtlety, and at once lights upon their retreat; whilst other seekers, assuming an acuteness in the birds which they do not possess, waste the time in exploring hidden places, overlooking the nest right before their eyes. This is a parable of human life. Things of the greatest moment are being constantly overlooked because of the mistaken notion that whatever is of the first consequence is uncommon, hidden, and remote. —W. L. Watkinson, *Themes for Hours of Meditation*, p. 86.

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THE DEEPEST STAGE OF CALAMITY

'The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity; but a wounded spirit who can bear?'—Proverbs xviii. 14.

The idea is that a calamity affects us, not according to the weight of the stroke, but according to the state of our thoughts. The spirit of a man is his mental state as distinguished from his outward circumstances.

I. The proverb says that an outward misfortune influences the life, not in proportion to its actual severity, but in proportion to the resources of the mind. I am profoundly convinced that this is true. Two men take a fever at the same time; one dies, the other recovers. The popular view is that in the former case the physical stroke was more powerful. Yet in itself it may have been weaker. The man who died may have succumbed to the fever because he was down in spirit when the fever seized him.

II. That which prostrates us and that which supports us is in every case, not a thing, but a thought. We speak of the 'ills which flesh is heir to'. I think we look for the black in the wrong direction; we should say, the 'ills which spirit is heir to'. All the crowning calamities of life are in the thinking—not in the striking.

III. The crushing wound comes ever from within. The friend who is separated from you by death may be really less removed than the friend who goes from you to a foreign country; yet between the two cases there is no comparison in the degree of your sorrow. Why is this? It lies in the thought. The foreign country has a name in your heart; the dwelling-place of the dead has as yet no name. It is the *idea* that makes the difference between separation and bereavement. Both equally for the time miss 'the touch of a vanished hand, and the sound of a voice that is still'; but in the one there is the hope of future communion, in the other there may be a cloud which obscures to-morrow's sky.—G. Matheson, *Messages of Hope*, p. 141.

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THE SLUGGARD IN HARVEST

'The sluggard will not plough by reason of the cold; therefore shall he beg in harvest and have nothing.'—Proverbs xx. 4.

I. First, let us try to bring out the principles which are crystallized in this picturesque saying.

1. The first thought evidently is: *present conduct determines future conditions.* Life is a series of epochs, each of which has its destined work, and that being done, all is well; and that being left undone, all is ill. The mystic significance of the trivialities of life is that in them we largely make destiny, and in them we wholly make character.

2. *The easy road is generally the wrong one.* Never allow yourselves to be guided in your choice of a road by the consideration that the turf is smooth, and the flowers by the side of it sweet. Remember the sluggard would have been warmer, with a wholesome warmth, at the plough-tail than cowering in the chimney-corner. Fix it in your minds that nothing worth doing is done but at the cost of difficulty and toil.

3. *The season let slip is gone for ever.* Opportunity is bald behind, and must be grasped by the forelock. Life is full of tragic *might-have-beens.* The student who has spent the term in indolence, perhaps dissipation, has no time to get up his subject when he is in the examination room, with the paper before him. And life, and nature, and God's law, which is the Christian expression for the godless word *nature*, are stern taskmasters, and demand that the duty shall be done in its season or left undone for ever.

II. In the second place let me say a word—1. About the lowest sphere to which my text applies. This proverb is simply an inculcation of the duty of honest work, and of the necessity of being wide awake to opportunities in our daily work.

2. Let me apply the text in a somewhat higher direction. Carry these principles with you in the cultivation of that important part of yourself—your *intellects.* I should like all of you to make a conscience of making the best of your brains, as God has given them to you in trust. 'The sluggard will not plough by reason of the cold.' The dawdler will read no books that tax his intellect, therefore shall he beg in harvest and have nothing.

3. Again I may apply these principles to a higher work still—that of the *formation of character.* Nothing will come to you noble, great, or elevating in that direction unless it is sought, and sought with toil. In the making of character we have to work as a painter in fresco does, with a swift brush on the plaster while it is wet. It sets and hardens in an hour. And men drift into habits which become tyrannies and dominant, before they know where they are. Do not let yourselves be shaped by accident, by circumstance.

4. Let these principles be applied to *religion*, and teach us the wisdom and necessity of beginning the Christian life at the earliest moment.

5. But there is a more solemn thought still. This life as a whole is to the *future life* as the ploughing time is to the harvest, and there are awful words in Scripture, which seem to point in the same direction in reference to the irrevocable and irreversible issue of neglected opportunities on earth, as this proverb does in regard to the ploughing and harvests of this life. —A. Maclaren, *The Wearied Christ*, p. 137.

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'The slothful man saith, there is a lion without, I shall be slain in the streets.'—Proverbs xxii. 13.

In the text before us the slothful man is made to give the reason for his slothfulness. Of course it is easy to see that his reply is a mere excuse. He does not want to bestir himself. He much prefers the comfort of his own fireside. Still he must show some reason for his conduct. This lion is simply the creature of his lively imagination. Yet in his judgment any excuse is better than no excuse at all, hence his words 'There is a lion without, in the streets'.

I. No man can close his ears to the call of duty from either real or imaginary dangers without a tremendous loss to himself. 'The slothful man saith, there is a lion without, I shall be slain in the streets.' He refuses the call of duty in consequence. Does he remain the same as before? By no means. He is poorer in every way. He is poorer because he refuses that activity which is life to all created beings. It is a most instructive study to note how severely nature punishes all refusals to exercise that energy by which growth and progress are accomplished. What we call a freak in nature is, in almost every case, nature's punishment of the slothful. It is even so in the moral and spiritual world.

II. There is in that moral and spiritual world an universal duty relative to God on the one hand and man on the other. We are all brought face to face with a duty we owe to God, an obligation to worship Him in spirit and in truth. There is a call of His Spirit which comes to every man.

The slothful man knows full well that though the lion is but a mere excuse, the vain creation of his own imagination, yet there is involved in the call to action perils of a very real kind. The soul that arrays itself by the side of Jesus Christ, and in every thought, word, and deed, seeks to translate into its own life the spirit of the Lord, will find the lion without in the street.

The call of the human is as imperative and universal as the call of the Divine. God is calling us up in worship, and man is calling us out in service, and both unite in demanding that we should spend and be spent in the kingdom of Christ.

III. Let us consider the effect of the conduct of the slothful man upon himself. The path of the slothful endeth in death. He turns in upon himself, and feeds upon his own soul, and is as the camel in the desert who feeds upon its own hump, and when that is done dies. Christ has indicated the end of the slothful man. 'Whosoever shall save his life shall lose it.' His real danger is from within. He is his greatest enemy.—J. Gay, *Common Truths from Queer Texts*, p. 14.

Proverbs xxii. 13.

The greatest foe in Central Africa is the terrible sleep sickness. The victim gradually, but none the less surely, settles down into a sleep from which there is no awakening in this world. In its first stages at any rate activity is salvation. Slothfulness is a mental and moral sleep sickness. From its terrible end we may be saved if taken in time. But there is only one invariable effect. Its feet lead down to the valley of death. True life is the very opposite to the slothful, and is incompatible with luxury and ease.—J. Gay, *Common Truths from Queer Texts*, p. 23.

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THOUGHT

'As he thinketh in his heart, so is he.'—Proverbs xxiii. 7.

The capacity of thinking is a most wonderful thing. Here lies man's supremacy over all the visible world about him. All the mighty deeds that have blessed humanity were once thoughts. Before ever the angel's song was heard on the heights of Bethlehem Christ's atoning work was a Divine thought.

If such is the province and potency of thought, we see how the character of a man's thoughts determines the character of his life: for as he thinketh, so is he. His actions are inspired from within. The utterance of his mind is seen in the movement of his feet and hands continually.

I. Every product of the soul, whether it be an action or a purpose, is first a germ. There is not a Christian but owed his or her spiritual birth to the direct act of the Holy Ghost bringing home conviction to your souls. There was the first thought—I am a sinner; and the next thought—I need a Saviour,

and the next—that Christ is the Saviour for me; and out of that comes your hope for this world and for heaven. It is not only true that every Christian life is a germ awakened by the Holy Spirit, but all after-actions and plans of that life have their origin there.

II. Sin lies in the soul in germs—in germs as well as in actions. And, as good thoughts are to be nursed and encouraged and carried out, so the moral success of life consists in killing evil thoughts. Every sin was once a little thought. The guilt lies not in having the thought; for fearful thoughts often come to the godliest people. The guilt lies in what? In opening the door and giving them house-room and heart-room. The real difference between good men and bad men is largely this, that one fosters a thought of evil and the other quenches it. Every sin was once a thought. The indulgence of wicked thought makes sinners. The acting out of the thought makes the transgressor. The time to kill the serpent is in the egg. Extinguish fire by putting out sparks. Keep thy heart bolted against evil thoughts. For 'as a man thinketh in his heart, so is he'. The miser's thought is all dwindled to a sovereign or a penny, and he cannot see God or eternity. Let me know what your soul turns to and thinks most about when left to itself, and I will determine your spiritual character before God. And at last such shall it be before the judgment.

III. There are few purer and richer pleasures in this world than the enjoyment of sweet thoughts, happy thoughts, holy thoughts.

The heart determines our everlasting destiny. A heart without holiness never shall see the Lord.

Christ is the one only purifier of the heart. He can change the fountain-head. He can make it to send forth not bitter water, but sweet, pure, refreshing water.—T. L. Cuyler, *British Weekly Pulpit*, vol. II. p. 93.

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BUYING THE TRUTH

'Buy the truth, and sell it not.'—Proverbs xxiii. 23.

I. Let us consider the two exhortations set before us as they stand. First, 'Buy the truth'. The expression is, of course, metaphorical; still, it enshrines a reality. The truth, if it is to be possessed by us, must be bought; it is not to be had for nothing. And we go further. We may notice that it is customary for pious persons of all schools of thought in the Church of God to speak of the whole body of things to be believed, experienced, and done in order to get salvation as, in the language of our text, 'the truth'. Now the truth that is to be possessed by us has to be bought, and it teaches us two lessons: First, that there are difficulties in the way of its attainment; and secondly, that, were it not so—were truth to be had cheap—like other things which cost little, it might be liable to be lightly regarded. We cannot but be reminded of two other portions of Holy Scripture, one in the Old and the other in the New Testament, which administer this counsel, 'Buy the truth'. The first is the prophecy of Isaiah. 'Ho, every one that thirsteth,' cries the prophet, 'come ye to the water, and he that hath no money; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.' Truth, then (for the wine may be taken for the truth in its strength, and the milk for the truth in its simplicity), though it must be bought, is not, we see, to be purchased with wealth; no money can buy it. In respect of this it is as free to all as the very air that we breathe. 'No mention shall be made of coral, or of pearls: for the price of wisdom is above rubies.' The second portion of Holy Scripture which we may refer to is one of our Lord's own parables. He represents 'a merchantman seeking goodly pearls, who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had and bought it'. So here we see that the truth is not only to be bought, but that it may cost us dear. Something which, in some cases, it may be, means 'all that he hath,' has to be bartered or given in exchange for it. 'If life,' to quote an old saying, 'were merchandise which men could buy, The rich would live, the poor, alas! would die.' But this does not apply at all to the merchandise of truth. Here both rich and poor are on exactly the same level, and have, as a rule, to pay the same price; it is not money that buys truth. We must be prepared to sacrifice something for its acquisition and retention. We may be called upon to sacrifice popularity, ease, worldly honour, the support of the important, the good opinion of the powerful, the counsels of the learned, the goodwill of friends. The truth, if we buy it, may be of so high a price as to cost all this. And there are regions of truth, more especially of theological or moral or social distinction, which dawn, perhaps, upon only one noble mind in an age, and we find that such truths demand a high price. They who first promulgate them have indeed to pay a high price for them, as the lives of the prophets of old have shown. Great truths are dearly bought.

II. Let us now consider the selling of the truth. The possibility of its being sold is what we are here warned against. 'Buy the truth and sell it not.' Sell it not after that you have had to buy it and have had very possibly to pay dearly for it. How is this selling of the truth brought to pass? Why, in this way: A man in an evil hour may be tempted to look upon what he parted from in order to become possessor of the truth, and it seems to him that he has paid too dearly for it; he considers what his principles have cost him, and is disposed to think that his principles have cost him too much. Then

there are not wanting those around him to represent to him how much happier, richer, more prosperous, more respected perhaps, he might have been in the world had he not been so particular, so scrupulous, so conscientious, so uncompromising. And then, again, that liar, who from the beginning abode not in the truth, helps him to see even so, and he is at length prepared to sell the truth. And what does he expect to get by the sale of it? To regain popularity, to regain ease, to regain reputation, to regain the honour, the support, the counsels, the goodwill that he had to sacrifice in order to buy it. But, as in other cases, so in this—buying is one thing, selling is another. In selling a thing you rarely receive what you gave for it; if you buy dear you sell cheap. You may sell the truth, but it is not certain that you will regain any one of those things which you had to sacrifice when you bought it.

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WISDOM THE BUILDER

'Through wisdom is an house builded; and by understanding it is established: and by knowledge shall the chambers be filled with all precious and pleasant riches.'—Proverbs xxiv. 3, 4.

Men everywhere are engaged in house-building. Some in dreamy castle-building; some in material fortune-building; all in inward character-building, building up, each one of them, the history of a life, the destiny of an eternity.

I. To begin at the bottom of the scale, let us glance at that kind of building which with so many people is the first and chief concern of life—the building up of their material fortunes.

While heavenly wisdom will not permit us to make material success, the pursuit of mere fortune, a chief end of life, it is nevertheless true that the possession and practice of this wisdom has much to do, both in the individual life and on a larger scale in society, with the building up of a stable, a durable prosperity. We know very well that for sound, stable, durable prosperity in a country, as in the individual, we must have as a foundation, before all else, character, honesty, probity, reliableness; strict, just, and honourable dealing between man and man.

II. Turn now from this outward building to that which is at first sight its very opposite. But you see how closely they are connected. From the building up of material fortune, I mean, to the inward building up of character.

Every man, by every thought he thinks, by the habits he acquires, the actions he performs, is building up a house for himself, a habitation for his soul, none the less real that he cannot just walk out of it and leave it behind him when he wills. The mind is its own place, and may become to its possessor a palace or a prison. You enter one soul: it is a foul, contracted, base, poison-laden chamber, the inlets through which one might enter into it are choked up. You enter another soul: it is a broad and spacious habitation. There is a lofty and noble outlook, towards heaven and upon earth. And whence this difference? Simply that the one has been building without this heavenly wisdom, and the other has been building with it.

III. Take now another step, and look for a moment at the building up of a house of knowledge and art. It might seem at first as if knowledge, and certainly art, were independent of character, or of the possession of this moral wisdom. But in reality it is not so. The keystone of all true knowledge is found in reverence for God.

IV. In church building also we need the reminder of our text. The more evils abound around us, and the more we think they abound, the more earnestly we should set ourselves to what is specially the duty placed before us by Divine Wisdom Himself, the work, the task, of building up the kingdom of God in the hearts of men and in the world.—J. Orr, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxviii. 1905, p. 134.

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Proverbs xxiv. 12.

Ruskin says: 'The plea of ignorance will never take away our responsibilities. It is written, "If thou sayest, Behold we knew it not; doth not He that pondereth the heart consider it? and He that keepeth thy soul, doth not He know it?"'

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THE LEGS OF THE LAME ARE NOT EQUAL

'The legs of the lame are not equal.'—PROVERBS XXVI. 7.

'THE legs of the lame are not equal:' so, says the wise man, 'is a parable in the mouth of fools'. That is to say, the parable in the mouth of fools is not equal; it fails of an all-round interpretation which will carry conviction concerning the truth which it seeks to emphasize and enforce.

I. Some very good people pride themselves on the open mind. They look upon any one who may, upon any subject, arrive at any definite conclusion, which will commit them to any definite opinion, as narrow minded. They are broad enough to receive anything. These people look upon this open mind as a virtue; consequently they have no settled conviction, they walk as a lame man. Their legs are not equal. Their actions are uneven and unstable.

This type of mind which, like the fool's parable is loose, disjointed, and unequal, should not be confounded with that willingness to entertain truth, come it from whatever source it may be, an essential of the healthy and growing mind.

II. As far as the Gospel is concerned, there is absolutely no need for a lame leg. Granted, as the book does, 'In the beginning God,' and the whole plan of salvation, the whole doctrine of the atonement with all that that doctrine involves, is so clear and demonstrable that the lame leg, the uneven foot, the undecided step, is surely inexcusable. If God is, then Sinai and Calvary are as natural as the daylight, and as orderly as the sun rising.

Consider the character which this Gospel has produced, and let the fruit bear witness of the life within. But first of all what is this Gospel? It is the proclaiming of a character. The Gospel is the glad news concerning Jesus Christ. We cannot say the Gospel produced the character of Jesus Christ; but we can most truly affirm that His character produced the Gospel. And what a character it was, so strong, so decisive. He certainly knew how to obtain a determination. There was no suggestion of a limp in His walk, no evidence of looseness in His parable.

III. But this Gospel does produce a character. It is the character of Jesus Christ which is produced in those who believe on His name. Christ is begotten in the heart of the believer. And when that is done the lame leg disappears, the loose, ill-considered, disjointed parable vanishes. There is obtained that determination, 'the first requisite and indication of a rationally decisive character'.

Look at this indispensable fact in the lives of some of that mighty host who have followed Him. Take the first disciples. They furnish a striking and remarkable contrast before and after the resurrection of Christ.—J. GAY, *Common Truths from Queer Texts*, p. 5.

REFERENCES.—XXVI. 11.—W. Arnot, *Laws from Heaven for Life on Earth*, p. 523. XXVI. 13.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxviii. No. 1670. XXVI. 23.—F. B. Cowl, *Straight Tracks*, p. 88.

JOHN BUNYAN'S APPLICATION OF AN OLD TESTAMENT TEXT

'There are seven abominations in his heart.'—PROVERBS XXVI. 25.

I. WHAT were the 'Seven Abominations' John Bunyan discovered in his heart?

The fatal list is before us in *Grace Abounding*.

1. 'Inclinings to unbelief.' Whether we define 'unbelief' as failure to subscribe to a body of truth or as lack of personal trustfulness it is yet an 'abomination,' and 'inclinings' to one or other form of unbelief are an 'abomination'—unfashionable though it be to avow it in these days.

2. 'Suddenly to forget the love and mercy that Christ manifesteth.' Bunyan accurately depicts spiritual experience when he describes this process of forgetfulness as setting in 'suddenly'. In a trice we fall into this error. Or ever we were aware we forgot Christ's 'love and mercy'. Beware of despondency which springs from lapse of memory! Despondency is a murderer of souls.

3. 'A leaning to the works of the law.' Bunyan refers in this phrase to a disposition to trust in his own good deeds as the ground of acceptance with God. We must all lean to 'the works of the Law' as moral directions, but never as the condition of eternal salvation.

4. 'Wanderings and coldness in prayer.' 'Wanderings.' The heart plays truant whilst the body is being schooled to prayer. Memory is a traitor despite the loyalty of the lips. How prayer loses its potency by being degraded into a formality! 'Coldness' perhaps even oftener curses our devotions. There is no glow in the petition because there is no glow in the petitioner.

5. 'To forget to watch for that I pray for.' 'Watching thereunto' is one of Paul's great maxims of prayer. Yet it is a maxim often practically ignored. It shows a fearful lack of belief in prayer.

6. 'Apt to murmur because I have no more, and yet ready to abuse what I have.' What an affront this is upon the wisdom and love of our God. As if He did not know best what is 'convenient' for us. I murmur that I have not more light, yet I do not put to best use the light I have. I murmur that I have not more leisure, and yet I abuse the leisure I possess. I murmur that I have no more wealth, yet I often abuse the money I have.

7. 'I can do none of those things which God commands me, but my corruptions will thrust in themselves. When I would do good, evil is present with me.' 'Corruptions' is a technical term of Biblical and Puritan theology. It indicates the sins and sinful tendencies of human nature.

II. What was the Sevenfold Sanctification these Abominations wrought in John Bunyan?

1. 'They make me abhor myself.' Then by so much they were ordered for his good. All of the Pharisee must die out of us, and with the self-deprecatory publican we must range ourselves for all time. Repentance is a continual need of Christians.

2. 'They keep me from trusting my heart.' 'He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool,' and to that folly we are fearfully prone. But realize the innumerable evils of your heart and how can you trust it?

3. 'They convince me of the insufficiency of all inherent righteousness.' Inherent righteousness, or natural righteousness, can never meet the demands of the righteous and holy Lord. Seeing my abominations drive me to the ineffable and vicarious righteousness of Christ they abduce an immortal good.

4. 'They show me the necessity of fleeing to Jesus.' Only Jesus can deliver us from the guilt and dominion of our abominations. When I see my hurt I know my Physician.

5. 'They press me to pray unto God.' This has constantly been a fact of Christian experience. Our sinfulness drives us to God in prayer.

6. 'They show me the need I have to watch and be sober.' What provokes vigilance and gravity is a blessing in its result, however evil it may be in itself.

7. 'And provoke me to look to God, through Christ, to help me, and carry me through this world.'

If John Bunyan found that his various forms of indwelling sin provoked him to cast himself entirely upon God, through Christ, for help and guidance all his life long, then God had verily turned the curse into a blessing unto Him.—Dinsdale T. Young, *The Enthusiasm of God*, p. 174.

A THREEFOLD CORD

(*For the First Sunday of the Year*)

'Thou knowest not what a day may bring forth.'—Proverbs xxvii. 1.

This is not a commonplace. Nothing in God's Word is commonplace. Nothing inspired by the Holy Ghost could be commonplace. If you think it is a commonplace sentiment, I can tell you are commonplace. It is the deepest and truest philosophy of life. 'Thou knowest not what a day may bring forth.' And it is the very best philosophy by which to stimulate us Christians for the beginning of the new year.

First of all, there is the possibility that before the year is done you and I may have passed away. It may be in the sweet hope of the spring when everything is budding forth, or it may be in the brilliant summer-time, or it may be in the sad autumn. I do not know. It is far better that we should not know. While we breathe before God let us be happy men and women. We do not know what a day may bring forth, and it is very much better that we should not. But if we are uncertain about this, we ought to be certain about our God. No uncertainty there. You must know Him. You must know in whom you believe, and trust Him to the uttermost. You must have no uncertainty about God. Your mind must be sure and steadfast—made up. You must be able to say, like St. Paul, 'I am ready when the call comes. I have fought my own fight, I have kept my faith, and I am ready as He was ready'.

It is on the first Sunday of the year that we should look to the rock from which we are hewn and to the pit from which we are digged. We should make our calling and election sure. And having done all we can, let us stand upon our feet, and let the countenance of God shine on our face—uncertain about our days, but certain about our God. Look to-day straight up before the new year and say, 'O Lord, in Thee have I trusted; let me never be confounded'. And so I want to give you just a Scriptural cord to bind you to your God—a threefold cord, for it says a threefold cord cannot be broken.

I. The first part of the cord is this—Live by faith in the Son of God. You know where it comes from. Paul said, 'He loved me and gave Himself for me. The life that I live, I live by faith in the Son of God.' Then you become citizens, not of the moments, not of the hours, not of the days, not of the months, not of the years, not of the centuries, but citizens of Eternity. Live by faith in the Son of God, and the terrors of time will not affect you. Oh, how some men are terrified by the to-morrow! To them to-morrow is a terror; it whips and scourges them, holds them over the crater, and shows them the pit. To-morrow we may be ruined, our character gone. 'I cannot face it; I know not what it may bring forth.' What a mystery it is, this future! It is not only that God is a mystery, but you are a mystery, and a mystery to yourself. Live by faith in the Son of God, and then all things are yours—things past, things present, and things to come.

II. The second twist in the cord to bind you is this—Cast all your care upon God. Some of us hardly like to face the many cares. Civilization, instead of easing the burden of cares, only increases it. Then we have other cares which trouble us—the diffiulties, for instance, of this war, the difficulties of the Church, the difficulties amongst us. It is all natural. But here is my second point—Cast all your care upon Him, for He careth for you. That is abandonment. The most beautiful thing you can say about death is this—abandonment. You know nothing about the state after death, but you give yourself up: 'Into Thy hands I commend my spirit'. And the most beautiful action of life is abandonment into the hands of God—casting all your care upon God. It is the beautiful abandonment of life which is the best preparation for the abandonment of death, because, finding that the everlasting arms are round you, and that your God has not deserted you, it becomes a matter of experience, and you are not afraid to go. That is the way to learn to die.

III. And now another cord to make it strong—'My times are in Thy hands'. Does God know what will happen to me this next year? Poor dear heart! of course He does. Does He know every little thing that will happen to me this new year? Yes, everything. There is no past or future with God. There is only one thing: the Eternal Now—'I am'. God can never say of Himself, 'I was and I shall be'. God is 'I am'. He is the Eternal Now. When did He begin? From everlasting. When will He end? Everlasting. 'From everlasting to everlasting Thou art God.' It is sweet

to think that He Who brought me into the world, Whose hands made me, Whose heart redeemed me, settled the time when I should come into the world. I also want Him to settle the time when I go out.

Think of our Lord Himself. How did He speak of the future? Did He say, 'To-morrow at twelve o'clock?' No. Great minds use great words. He said, 'Hereafter'. That throws us forward right beyond temporal things. *Sursum corda.* Let your hearts go right up from the finite into the infinite Hereafter—out of time into Eternity. As the great historian begins his work: 'In the beginning God—' The Lord was never a pessimist. He could say to the people, 'Hereafter'. It was the same Lord who said to the poor snubbed publican, 'He is a son of Abraham'; the same Lord who said to the thief, 'To-day shalt thou be with Me in paradise'; and the same Lord who said, 'Hereafter ye shall see the Son of Man coming, and all the holy angels with Him'.

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THE WANDERING BIRD

'As a bird that wandereth from her nest, so is a man that wandereth from his place.'—Proverbs xxvii. 8.

I. You will note that the whole point of the rebuke lies in the emphasis we put on *wandering*. It is not the flying, it is the wandering bird that reads us a lesson on our discontent.

To all men come times when we must forward. The Christ-filled life has got its own ambition. The waters of God are not a stagnant pool. But all that earnest pressing forward, seizing new opportunities, taking the cross up—all *that* stands separated as by the poles asunder from the fickle, restless, discontented spirit that is the spirit of the wandering bird.

II. Sometimes, of course, we do not know our place. I mean, we are almost certain this is not our place, and it is only afterwards we find it was. So when our dear Redeemer hung on Calvary, the whole world said, That is no place for God! And it has taken the centuries to teach us that the love of God came to its beauty there. It is not the place that makes the man: it is the man and his heart who make the place.

III. I have two thoughts to give you:—

(*a*) That as a bird that *never* wanders from her nest, so Jesus never wandered from His place. Through sun and tempest, through censure and through praise, in youth and manhood, in agony and death, Jesus was true to His redeeming work.

(*b*) The true place of our deepest life is God. It is not *self*—we are growing tired of self. It is not the *world*—we can embrace the world; and ever, for the spirit, there is a beyond. It is when the roots of my being run down to the Divine; it is when, beneath all other facts for me, there lies the great fact of a living, moving God; it is when my life is hid with Christ in God, that my wandering spirit is in its proper place.—G. H. Morrison, *Flood-Tide*, p. 262.

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THE VISION WHICH SAVES

'Where there is no vision, the people perish.—Proverbs xxix. 18.

Of all the blessings for which we thank God, none are greater than the light and the powers of sight which we possess. Obvious as are the advantages of the powers of physical sight, they only emphasize a condition which is indispensable in the moral and spiritual sphere. The wise man is thinking of the catastrophes which await those who for any reason are blind to the truth about life and who are 'destroyed for lack of knowledge'.

I. History contains many sad records of such catastrophes from the wilful refusal to behold the vision of life and duty.

1. We remember in the history of Israel how the people could not wait in patience for the revelation God would make known to them through Moses.

2. Again, in the judgment that came upon Eli and his sons we are told significantly, 'The word of the Lord was rare in those days. There was no open vision.'

3. In the days of Isaiah, because of the iniquity of the people, the punishment which shall fall upon them is spoken of as a penal visitation of blindness.

4. So true is it that men, having eyes, see not; they will not look beyond the fleeting, changing scene which allures them, to the vision of unchanging eternal reality, and therefore they perish. The sad lament never rang more pathetically than when at last it was said of Jerusalem: 'If thou hadst known in this thy day the things which belong unto thy peace, but now they are hid from thine eyes'.

II. The gift of vision. The greatest gift of God to man has been the revelation of truth which has been vouchsafed in the person of the Eternal Son, Jesus Christ. The vision of truth and the meaning of life has been finally manifested to mankind in the intelligible form of a human life. God has vouchsafed the vision of truth, which is 'the Light of Life'; but He has also given power to take in the vision, insight into the veiled mystery of truth, discernment of the inner reality which lies behind the transitory shapes of things which meet our eyes. 'He hath given unto us His Holy Spirit.'

III. Such is the gift. Consider how its inexhaustible benefits are conveyed to mankind. The gift is for the enrichment of human life, that men 'may have life, and have it more abundantly'. The interpreters of Divine messages, whether through the medium of paint or marble, through intellectual pursuits or discovery, as men of action or as thinkers, have been men of vision, 'the seers,' and are among 'the goodly fellowship of the prophets'.

At every crisis in the world's or our nation's history salvation or destruction has depended upon the capacity of men to see beyond the present, and the resolution to pursue with inflexible determination the vision which had been revealed.—J. P. Maud, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxxii., 1907, p. 55.

References.—XXIX. 18.—Lyman Abbott, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xlviii. 1895, p. 170. A. E. Garvie, *ibid.* vol. lxv. 1904, p. 27. J. P. Maud, *ibid.* vol. lxxii. 1907, p. 55. J. Pulsford, *Our Deathless Hope*, p. 157. XXIX. 25.—W. Arnot, *Laws from Heaven for Life on Earth*, p. 550. XXX. 1-9.—*Ibid.* p. 559. XXX. 2.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxxvi. No. 2140.

GOD'S RIDDLE

'Who hath gathered the wind in His fists? who hath bound the waters in a garment? who hath established all the ends of the earth? what is His name, and what is His Son's name? Canst thou tell?'—Proverbs xxx. 4.

'What is His name? and what is His Son's name? Canst thou tell?'

It is God Almighty's great conundrum spoken out of eternity into time; it is the riddle propounded by the Supreme Intelligence to the heart and reason of every man born into the world.

I. 'Canst thou tell?' The history of humanity is little else than one long wrestle with God's infinite conundrum. And there are noble souls and able thinkers who never guess the riddle here, though who can dare to doubt that the solution comes to them hereafter? Never be a giver-up of God's riddles; work at them till you die. The position of a giver-up of God's riddle is dreary and paralysing; it declares that the riddle is unanswerable, and that the name of Him 'who holds the wind in His fists' is unknowable.

Is it unknowable? I believe that every man born into the world possessed once the solution of the riddle, when, 'trailing clouds of glory,' the immortal part 'came from God who is its home' into the prison-house of human birth.

It is a sweet legend of the Talmud that the indentation upon the upper lip of every man born into the world is a mark of the finger of God touching the mouth at birth and saying, 'Child, thou knowest, but thou shalt not be able to reveal that which thou knowest till thou hast learnt it by the things which thou shalt suffer in the infant school of human life'.

II. 'O our God, what is Thy name?' Canst thou tell? There are tens of thousands who can tell. The Divine Man of Nazareth is the Sacrament of God, He is the outward and visible sign of the heart of universal Fatherhood; and to know it with an intense spiritual conviction that is beyond expression is to know the answer to God's riddle about Himself. It is to give Him back the answer: 'We have found out Thy secret'.

No man can force another man to believe it, there is co-operation necessary between his volition and the power of the Holy Spirit; but to believe it is to view the world and its problems from that moment with new eyes. And, moreover, it is to learn a new motive for purity, watchfulness, self-control.

III. But this is not all the riddle. 'What is His name? *and what is His Son's name?* Canst thou tell?' Thy son's name, O God, is Man; the human family itself, in all ages and in all conditions, the sum total of human flesh and blood, illumined by its heroism, its nobility, its victories, weighted with its crimes, its brutalities, its degradations. O God, alienated humanity may be, but it is Thy son.

And do you not see that here, and here only, is the impregnable foundation of the eternal hope for the race? The inexhaustible and ultimately effectual remedy for human depravity is the central, indwelling, immortal, Divine sonship in man. The Divine spark is inextinguishable. The Jew of old would keep his feet from treading upon a morsel of paper, however soiled, lest the name of Yahveh might be written thereon. Keep thy foot when thou art tempted to trample on thy brother man! The name of thy Father is written on his heart.

But how intensely does this magnificent truth emphasize the obligations of human brotherhood! The 'solidarity of the race' which we talk about so glibly is not a German epigram, but a Divine truth. It is a truth that, in spite of all our glorious assurance, will cause yearning anguish to the heart that realizes it most. Upon such a heart 'the Lord lays the iniquity of all'. Only One so realized the unity of the race of which He was the Archetypal Representative, that every sin and God-defiance in the world thrilled through Him, and it broke His heart far more surely than the soldier's spear.—Archdeacon Wilberforce, *Sermons Preached in Westminster Abbey*, p. 15.

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vol. ii. p. 401. XXXI. 20.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons on the Apocalypse*, etc., p. 275. XXXI. 21.—*Ibid.* p. 281. XXXI. 22.—*Ibid.* p. 287. XXXI. 23.—*Ibid.* p. 294. XXXI. 24.—*Ibid.* p. 303. XXXI. 25.—*Ibid.* p. 309. XXXI. 25, 26.—C. Gore, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lix. 1901, p. 72. XXXI. 26.—A. F. Winnington Ingram, *The After-glow of a Great Reign*, p. 48. XXXI. 26.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons on the Apocalypse*, etc., p. 317. XXXI. 28.—H. C. G. Moule, *My Brethren and Companions*, p. 81. XXXI. 29.—J. H. Hitchins, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxxvii. 1890, p. 109. H. P. Hughes, *ibid.* vol. lix. 1901, p. 82. XXXI. 30.—G. Bainton, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxxviii. 1890, p. 122. XXXI. 30, 31.—H. Broughton Barnes, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxvii. 1905, p. 83. W. Arnot, *Laws from Heaven for Life on Earth*, p. 578. XXXI. 31.—G. Bainton, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxxviii. 1890, p. 410.

ECCLESIASTES

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THE VERDICT OF LIFE

'Vanity of vanities, saith the Preacher; all is vanity.'—
Ecclesiastes i. 2.

The verdict of this book seems to be no hasty verdict, but a settled deliberate conclusion. It is not due to a temporary fit of depression, or some passing adverse circumstance, but it seems the result of experience arrived at after mature thought. And there are plenty to-day who have arrived at the same conclusion. All is vanity. Life is hard and cruel and disappointing, and not worth the living. They tell you it is a weary struggle in which most fail. That the disappointed men in life are not to be found only in night shelters and casual wards, but in the Houses of Parliament, in the salons of society, in the mansions of Park Lane.

I. Now, is this the true Verdict of Life? Is it all emptiness and vexation? If so, it seems strange that God should have put us here at all. Let us look and see the circumstances under which it was given. It is a very significant thing, that this conclusion of life is not the outcome of trouble. It is not the verdict of a man dogged by continuous misfortune, or persistent ill-health.

II. The truth is, he was a disappointed man, and there are two sorts of disappointed men in life. There is the man who is disappointed because he does not get, and there is the man who is disappointed because he does get, and the latter is by far the worse of the two. The man who is disappointed because he has not got, may have still the fascination of his hopes before him. But the man who has got what he desires and is then disappointed, has pricked the bubble, and knows the meaning of emptiness and vexation of spirit. And the last was the disappointment of Solomon. The selfish man is always a disappointed man. What an utter selfishness this book reveals. Take this second chapter, it is all I, I, I—I made, I got, I did, I had, I sought, and this is the end of it all. If you want to know the best life has to give, live for others.—E. E. Cleal, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxxiv. p. 38.

'Vanity of vanities; all is vanity.'—Ecclesiastes i. 2 f.

'There is an old Eastern fable about a traveller in the Steppes who is attacked by a furious wild beast. To save himself the traveller gets into a dried-up well; but at the bottom of it he sees a dragon with its jaws wide open to devour him. The unhappy man dares not get out for fear of the wild beast, and dares not descend for fear of the dragon, so he catches hold of the branch of a wild plant growing in a crevice of the well. His arms soon grow tired, and he feels that he must soon perish, death waiting for him on either side. But he holds on still: and then he sees two mice, one black and one white, gnawing through the trunk of the wild plant, as they gradually and evenly make their way round it. The plant must soon give way, break off, and he must fall into the jaws of the dragon. The traveller sees this, and knows that he will inevitably perish; but, while still hanging on, he looks around him, and, finding some drops of honey on the leaves of the wild plant, he stretches out his tongue and licks them.' After quoting this fable (translated, by the way, from Ruckert, into English verse by Archbishop Trench, in his *Poems*, p. 266), Tolstoy (in *My Confession*) proceeds to apply it to modern life. He quotes the opening chapters of Ecclesiastes as an expression of this Epicurean escape from the terrible plight in which people find themselves as they awaken to the fact of existence. The issue 'consists in recognizing the hopelessness of life, and yet taking advantage of every good in it, in avoiding the sight of the dragon and mice, and in seeking the honey as best we can, especially where there is most of it. . . . Such is the way in which most people, who belong to the circle in which I move, reconcile themselves to their fate, and make living possible. They know more of the good than the evil of life from the circumstances of their position, and their blunted moral perceptions enable them to forget that all their advantages are accidental. . . . The dullness of their imaginations enables these men to forget what destroyed the peace of Buddha, the inevitable sickness, old age, and death, which to-morrow if not to-day must be the end of all their pleasures.'

Thomas Boston of Ettrick closes his *Memoirs* with these words: 'And thus have I given some account of the days of my vanity. The world hath all along been a step-dame unto me; and wheresoever I would have attempted to nestle in it, there was a thorn of uneasiness laid for me. Man is born crying, lives complaining, and dies disappointed from that quarter. *All is vanity and vexation of spirit.—I have waited for Thy salvation, O Lord.*'

Ecclesiastes and Proverbs display a larger compass of thought and of experience than seem to belong to a Jew or to a king.—Gibbon.

After the fifth century the world lived on these words: *Vanity of vanities . . . one thing is needful.* The *Imitatio Christi* is undoubtedly the most perfect and attractive expression of this great poetic system; but a modern mind cannot accept it save with considerable reserve. Mysticism overlooked that innate quality of human nature, curiosity, which makes men penetrate the secret of things, and become, as Leibnitz says, the mirror of the universe. . . . Ecclesiastes took the heavens to be a solid roof, and the sun a globe suspended some miles up in the air; history, that other world, had no existence for him. Ecclesiastes, I am willing to believe, had felt all that man's heart could feel; but he had no suspicion of what man is allowed to know. The human mind in his day overpowered science; in our day it is science that overpowers the human mind.—Renan.

References.—I. 2.—E. W. Attwood, *Sermons for Clergy and Laity*, p. 428. G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 20.

Ecclesiastes I. 2, 3.

The general drift of this book of Ecclesiastes is peculiar to itself. It gives us an estimate of life which, to a certain extent, reappears in our Lord's teaching, but which is generally speaking in the background throughout the Old Testament. Our text is the keynote of the book. The word 'vanity' occurs thirty-seven times in it, and it means properly speaking a breath of wind; and thus it comes to mean something fictitious and unsubstantial. The vanity of life, and of that which encompasses it, has been brooded over by the human mind under the influence of very different moods of thought. But it was neither subtle pride, nor weary disgust, nor a refined mysticism that prompted this language of Solomon.

The preacher does not ignore the circumstances and duties of this life, while he insists that this life does not really satisfy. The true lesson of the text before us is that this earthly life cannot possibly satisfy a being like man if it be lived apart from God. The reason is threefold.

I. All that belongs to created life has on it the mark of failure. Man is conscious of this. The warp and weakness of his will, the tyranny of circumstance, the fatal inclination downwards, of which he is constantly conscious, tell a tale of some past catastrophe from which human life has suffered deeply. And nature, too, with its weird mysteries of waste and pain, speaks of some great failure.

II. Life and nature are finite. The human soul, itself finite, is made for the infinite. God has set eternity in the human heart, and man has a profound mistrust of his splendid destiny.

III. All that belongs to created life has on it the mark of approaching dissolution. This is a commonplace, but commonplaces are apt to be forgotten from their very truth and obviousness. Personality survives with its moral history intact, all else goes and is forgotten. What profit hath a man of all his labour? The answer is, no profit at all, if he is working only for himself; but most abundant profit if he is working for God and eternity. Christ has passed His pierced hands in blessing over human life in all its aspects. He has washed and invigorated not merely the souls, but the activities of men, in His own cleansing blood. When death is near we read this verse with new eyes, and realize that this is a world of shadows, that the real and abiding is beyond.—H. P. Liddon, *Clerical Library*, vol. II. p. 162.

References.—I. 2-11.—C. Finlayson, *A Practical Exposition of Ecclesiastes*, p. 27. R. Buchanan, *Ecclesiastes; its Meaning and Lessons*, p. 22. G. G. Bradley, *Lectures on Ecclesiastes*, p. 29.

THE ETERNITY OF GOD

'One generation cometh and another generation passeth away: but the earth abideth for ever.'—Ecclesiastes I. 4.

I. The Fleetingness of Human Life.—There are many now who are depressed by this sense of the premanency and power of the material world; when the earth receives, and reduces to itself, the frame which was once instinct with thought and will, man seems to be dethroned from his pre-eminence and life to be trampled out. There are some who resent the thought of passing away and being forgotten; it has been their ambition to leave on the face of the earth some permanent mark which should keep their name alive. The pyramids of Egypt have served this purpose; and yet what irony there is in that very success. We have new standards of glory, new ideals of government; to us these monuments speak less of the magnificence of the monarchy in the Nile Valley than of the oppression by which it accomplished its purpose. There is, perhaps, a deeper pathos when the works men wrought survive their memory altogether; those who look at the ruined cities of Mashonaland, or even at our own Dyke at Newmarket, can only guess dimly who planned these things, and what purpose they serve. The oblivion that has overtaken such great workers and builders demonstrates the fleetingness of human life and effort, and this may come home to us even more forcibly when we see the abandonment of great works that were meant to be of permanent and abiding use, and to serve purposes with which we sympathize. Yet in their very desolation and decay these things have a message of hope; at first sight it might seem that as the Preacher felt, all is vanity; that even the noblest aims and deepest devotion of human life pass into nothingness. But we have had deeper insight vouchsafed us; we can gauge better what remains, as the ages pass; the material embodiment of human purpose, however high and noble, is superseded and decays; but the endeavour, conscious or unconscious, to do God's work in the world has an undying worth. The things of sense are not, after all, that which really lasts; there is a glorious heritage of law and order, and welfare, and duty to God and man, to which each generation has been called in turn to make its contribution. That heritage remains while the jealousies and petty ambitions, like the fashions of yesterday, are done with.

II. God only is Eternal.—For, indeed it is God, and God only, that is eternal, that stays abidingly through all the changes of this mortal life, through all the coming into being of the great system of which our earth is a portion. He is the source of all good—of all earthly good—in the physical surroundings which form man's home; in the vigour of life and the faculties with which man is endowed; and above all, of all mortal and spiritual good, of those qualities and activities in which man can most closely ally himself to and most fully express the thoughts and character of God. To appreciate the good that God has given to and wrought through those who have passed away is to enter into the communion of saints, and to realize our union with those whom our eyes have never seen is the deepest and most abiding thing of life.—W. Cunningham, *Church Family Newspaper*, vol. lxxi. p. 536.

References.—I. 4.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—Ecclesiastes*, p. 297. J. Hamilton, *Works*, vol. vi. p. 484. J. Foster, *Lectures* (2nd Series), p. 117. I. 4-10.—H. Macmillan, *Bible Teaching in Nature*, p. 312. I. 4-11.—J. Bennett, *The Wisdom of the King*, p. 60.

THE DISCONTENT OF THE TIMES

Ecclesiastes i. 7, 8, 9, 10.

There is in our time a widespread spirit of discontent which prevails widely among the sober and industrious classes.

I. What are the sources of this discontent?

(*a*) The wealth of all civilized countries has been immensely and rapidly increasing in recent years.

(*b*) They have suddenly become possessed of enormous wealth.

(*c*) There is a growing tendency to make wealth hereditary.

(*d*) The popular estimate of wealth has become enormously exaggerated.

II. There is a wide feeling that the industrial classes are not gaining their fair share of this enormous and rapid accumulation of wealth. Man, when he gains one level, wants immediately to attain a higher; it is the prophecy of immortality in him.

III. It is love, and not mere greed which is at the bottom of very much of the existing discontent. A man feels that if he is equal before the contemplation of the law when he stands beside others, equal before God the Creator and God the Governor, he must have equal rights in the world; not to the property which others have acquired, but to the opportunities to acquire such property for himself, to give his household the advantage of it.

IV. It is generically the same force which took our ancestral pirates and painted savages and built them up into a Christian Commonwealth. It is just his unsatisfied aspiration which God has planted in its element in the human soul, and to which He presents the hidden riches of the earth, which a man must work for that he may gain them, but which he can gain if he will patiently and courageously work.

V. Wealth if it comes is to be used honestly, nobly, beneficently, but that wealth is not the chief good of human life; it is only an instrument of that which is better and higher, and 'a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth'.—R. S. Storrs, *British Weekly Pulpit*, vol. iii. p. 513.

References.—I. 7.—Spurgeon, *Evening by Evening*, p. 302. H. J. Wilmot-Buxton, *Waterside Mission Sermons* (2nd Series), p. 122.

Ecclesiastes i. 8; ii. 10, 11, etc.

When I was a boy, I used to care about pretty stones. I got some Bristol diamonds at Bristol, and some dog-tooth spar in Derbyshire; my whole collection had cost perhaps three half-crowns, and was worth considerably less; and I knew nothing whatever, rightly, about any single stone in it—could not even spell their names; but words cannot tell the joy they used to give me. Now, I have a collection of minerals worth, perhaps, from two to three thousand pounds; and I know more about some of them than most other people. But I am not a whit happier, either for my knowledge or possession, for other geologists dispute my theories, to my grievous indignation and discontentment; and I am miserable about all my best specimens, because there are better in the British Museum. No, I assure you, knowledge by itself will not make you happy.—Ruskin in *Fors Clavigera*.

See also the discussion of this in Bacon's *Advancement of Learning*, i. i-iii, and Ruskin's further apostrophe in *The Eagle's Nest*, 80.

Consciousness of happiness, above all, will not choose the intellect as a hiding-place for the treasure it holds most precious.—Maeterlinck.

Ecclesiastes i. 9.

We marvel at the prodigality of Nature, but how marvellous, too, the economy! The old cycles are for ever renewed, and it is no paradox that he who would advance can never cling too close to the past. *The thing that has been is the thing that will be again*; if we realize that, we may avoid many of the disillusions, miseries, insanities, that for ever accompany the throes of new birth. Set your shoulder joyously to the world's wheel; you may spare yourself some unhappiness if, beforehand, you slip the book of Ecclesiastes beneath your arm.—Havelock Ellis.

Compare Jowett's *Sermons on Faith and Doctrine*, pp. 282, 283.

'Nothing new under the sun.'—Ecclesiastes i. 9.

Alas! this fame is the mockery of God, with which we are so familiar—that cruel irony which is ever the same. The *blasé* King of Israel and Judah said with truth 'There is nothing new under the sun'. Perhaps the sun itself is but an old warmed-up piece of pleasantry, which, decked out with new rays, now glitters with such imposing splendour!—Heine.

If in a sense the whole beauty of art is an expression of the mood of Ecclesiastes, if the passion of the ways of the heart, and the light of the eyes, and the plenitude and magnificence of life beneath the sun, have

most intimate and intense significance when discerned as in an interval of clear and sweet light between the lifting and the falling of darkness, it must be as the incentive to concentrated appreciation of opportunity that the fleetingness of life affects the thought of the painter. He is pledged to discern and express the beauty that can never fade into nothingness, to show life touching life with immortality. It is impossible for him, whose art is formal, for whom only formal beauty and impressiveness exist within the term of his art, to declaim the *vanitas vanitatum* of the Preacher to our minds, and yet preserve the appeal of beauty, that is his medium of reaching our sense. —R. E. D. Sketchley, *Watts*, p. 58.

References.—1. 9.—E. A. Bray, *Sermons*, vol. ii. p. 61. A. Maclaren *Expositions of Holy Scripture—Ecclesiastes*, p. 307.

'I was king in Jerusalem.'—Ecclesiastes i. 12.

The possession of a throne could never yet afford a lasting satisfaction to an ambitious mind. This melancholy truth was felt and acknowledged by Severus. Fortune and merit had, from an humble station, elevated him to the first place among mankind. 'He had been all things,' as he said himself, 'and all were of little value.'—Gibbon.

'I the Preacher was king in Jerusalem.'—Ecclesiastes i. 12 f.

See C. G. Rossetti's poem, 'A Testimony'; also her verses on 'Vanity of Vanities,' 'Days of Vanity,' 'Cardinal Newman,' and 'The Heart Knoweth its own Bitterness'.

A word must be said about those exquisite gems of verse which are contained in the *Greek Anthology*. . . . The motto which is written on the pages as a whole is the same as that of the book of Ecclesiastes, 'Vanity of vanities,' and the dominant side of sadness deepens the farther we follow the poems into Roman times. Herodotus (v. 4) tells us of a Tracian tribe, whose custom it was to wail over the birth of a child, and to bury the dead with festive joy, as being released from their troubles. 'Let us praise the Tracians,' says a writer in the *Anthology*, 'in that they mourn for their sons as they come forth from their mother's womb into the sunlight, while those again they count blessed who have left life, snatched away by unseen Doom, the servant of the Fates.' One who had looked upon the course of the world and the treacherous ways of fortune is forced to exclaim: 'I hate the world for its mystery'.—S. H. Butcher.

Ecclesiastes i. 12, 13.

To grow old, learning and unlearning, is such the conclusion? Conclusion or no conclusion, such, alas! appears to be our inevitable lot, the fixed ordinance of the life we live. 'Every new lesson,' saith the Oriental proverb, 'is another grey hair; and time will pluck out this also.' And what saith the Preacher? 'I, the Preacher, was king over Israel in Jerusalem. And I gave my heart to seek and search out by wisdom concerning all things that are done under the heavens; this sore travail hath God given to the sons of men to be exercised therewith.' *Perchè pensa? Pensando s'invecchia*, said the young unthinking Italian to the grave German sitting by him in the diligence, whose name was Goethe. Is it true?

Nevertheless, to say something, to talk to one's fellow-creatures, to relieve oneself by a little exchange of ideas, is there no good, is there no harm, in that? Prove to the utmost the imperfection of our views, our thoughts, our conclusions; yet you will not have established the uselessness of writing.

References.—I. 12.—A. W. Momerie, *Agnosticism*, p. 190. I. 12-14.—C. Kingsley, *The Water of Life*, p. 175. I. 12-18.—J. J. S. Perowne, *Expositor* (1st Series), vol. x. p. 61. R. Buchanan, *Ecclesiastes, its Meaning and Lessons*, p. 36. I. 13.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—Ecclesiastes*, p. 317.

'All is vanity.'—Ecclesiastes i. 14.

Nature has furnished man with a rich provision of force, activity, and toughness. But what most often comes to his help is his unconquerable levity. By this he becomes capable of renouncing particular things at each moment, if he can only grasp at something new in the next. Thus unconsciously we are constantly renewing our whole lives. We put one passion in place of another; business, inclinations, amusements, hobbies, we prove them all one after another, only to cry out that 'all is vanity'. No one is shocked at this false, nay, blasphemous speech. Nay, every one thinks that in uttering it he has said something wise and unanswerable. Few indeed are those who are strong enough to anticipate such unbearable feelings, and, in order to escape from all partial renunciations, to perform one all-embracing act of renunciation. These are the men who convince themselves of the existence of the eternal, of the necessary, of the universal, and who seek to form conceptions which cannot fail them, yea, which are not disturbed, but rather confirmed, by the contemplation of that which passes away.—Goethe.

SEEN ALL

'I have seen all the works that are done under the sun.'—Ecclesiastes i. 14.

In a certain broad, rough, superficial sense this is possible. It is ineffably disappointing; it is spiritually and fruitfully, poetically and morally, most suggestive. It is easy to see what the man has been looking at; he has, so to say, been counting the wrong things, or has been counting them in a wrong spirit, or has been longing for the end. There is a contentment that is mean, soulless, and utterly pitiable; there is a discontent that is ineffable, inspired, quick with holy ambition; not a foolish discontent, pining and whining, but a discontent which says, God meant me to see more and to be more and to do more, and I want to succeed in executing the full purpose of God. That is the Christian life, that is Christian prophecy, Christian discipline and Christian perfectness.

I. A sad thing it is for a man to think he has seen all the landscape which lies before his window. He wants change of scene, and no wonder, for he has

seen nothing; he wants change of air, and what wonder, if the air has brought him no music from the organ of the morning? There are some poets who have not yet seen the whole of their little back garden; there is hardly room in it for another geranium, but that little back garden is a three-volume romance, is the beginning of Paradise Regained, is a history of faithful industry and hopefulness, and is a pledge that the rest will be paid at God's counter in God's time.

II. 'I have seen all the letters of the alphabet.' Can you read? 'No, but I have seen all the letters of the alphabet, and I know them one from another, and I can write every one of them in three different ways; I am absolutely perfect in the use of the alphabet.' Hear how this poor soul chatters about his alphabet! He has counted the alphabet, he has seen all the letters that are written under the sun: the one thing he cannot do is to put the letters together, and turn them into syllables and words and sentences and poems and philosophies. Are we to take the criticism of such a man as an estimate of literature? He is as perfect in his alphabet as Aristotle was in his. Aristotle could not teach this man anything about the alphabet that the man does not know already: the only thing is the man cannot read, cannot use his own alphabet, cannot employ his own tools.

III. I have seen a man have so much money that he had not enough. Let him stand before the tollkeeper of this turnpike; the charge for passing the tollgate is sixpence: can he pay the money? He cannot; hear him, for he hath a speech: 'Allow me to pass, or give me change for this note, value one thousand pounds; it is all the money I have at command'. He might as well hand a piece of blank paper to the tollkeeper, it is blank paper to that functionary; it is so much as to be too little, it fails on the negative side, the plus quantity becomes a minus quantity. Life is full of these contradictions and ironies and perplexities; we had better get down to the solid rock of common sense and know that a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth, and get to know that he who has one little loaf of bread is better off in the time of hunger than the man who has ten thousand acres which have not yet brought forth their harvest.

IV. There is no satisfaction in the finite. Why does not man find satisfaction in the finite? Because he himself is not finite in the same sense, he is finite in another and better sense, but man stands next to God in the great catalogue of names—'In the beginning God created man in His own image and likeness, in the image and likeness of God created He him'. The seen is meant to be an emblem of the unseen; the things we see are hints of the things we cannot yet discern; we are living in a region of beginnings; by the very greatness of our nature we claim to be immortal, by the very passion of our desires we know that no good power can have given us so much with the intention of finally disappointing us.—Joseph Parker, *City Temple Pulpit*, vol. vii. p. 30.

References.—I. 14.—Spurgeon, *Evening by Evening*, p. 339. C. D. Bell, *The Name Above Every Name*, p. 124.

'And I gave my heart to know wisdom, and to know madness and folly.'—Ecclesiastes i. 17 f.

See Mozley's *Parochial and Occasional Sermons* (number xii.).

References.—I. 18.—S. A. Brooke, *Christ in Modern Life*, pp. 230, 243. II. 1-3.—J. J. S. Perowne, *Expositor* (1st Series), vol. x. p. 165. II. 2.—H. Melville, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 2532.

Ecclesiastes ii. 4.

He who watches winds that blow
May too long neglect to sow;
He who waits lest clouds should rain
Harvest never shall obtain.

Signs and tokens false may prove;
Trust thou in a Saviour's love,
In His sacrifice for sin,
And His Spirit's power within.

Faith in God, if such be thine,
Shall be found thy safest sign,
And obedience to His will
Prove the best of tokens still.

—Bernard Barton.

Ecclesiastes ii. 4-6, 8, 11.

If any resemblance with Tennyson's poetry is to be found in Ecclesiastes, it should be with the 'Palace of Art'.—Sir Alfred Lyall.

See Byron's *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, canto i. iv. vi., for the description of the dull satiety that follows self-indulgence.

Reference.—II. 4-11.—J. J. S. Perowne, *Expositor* (1st (Series), vol. x. p. 313.

'I withheld not my heart from any joy.'—Ecclesiastes ii. 10.

He rushed through life. . . . He desired too much; he wished strongly and greedily to taste life in one draught, thoroughly; he did not glean or taste it, he tore it off like a bunch of grapes, pressing it, crushing it, twisting it; and he remained with stained hands, just as thirsty as before. Then broke forth sobs which found an echo in all hearts.—Taine on *Alfred de Musset*.

'Then I looked on all the labour I had laboured to do; and, behold, all was vanity.'—Ecclesiastes ii. 11.

All is vanity; that is the low cry of the tired heart when the buoyant strength of youth dies away, and when the brave shows of the glittering world, the harsh inspiriting music of affairs, the ambition to speak and strive, to sway heart and minds or destinies, fade into the darkness of the end. Against the assaults of this nameless fear men hold out what shields they can; the shield of honour, the shield of labour, and, best of all, the shield of faith. But there are some who have found no armour to help them, and who can but sink to the ground, covering their face beneath the open eye of heaven, and say with Fitz Gerald, 'It is He that hath made us,' resigning the mystery into the hands of the power that

formed us and bade us be. For behind the loud and confident voice of work and politics and creeds there must still lurk the thought that whatever aims we propose to ourselves, though they be hallowed with centuries of endeavour and consecration, we cannot know what awaits us or what we shall be.—A. C. Benson.

Reference.—II. 12-23.—T. C. Finlayson, *A Practical Exposition of Ecclesiastes*, p. 49.

'So I hated life.'—Ecclesiastes ii. 17.

Mr. Arthur Symons, discussing Villiers, the French decadent, in his *Symbolist Movement in Literature* (pp. 56 f.), quotes the poet thus: '"As at the play, in a central stall, one sits out, so as not to disturb one's neighbours—out of courtesy, in a word—some play written in a wearisome style, and of which one does not like the subject, so I lived, out of politeness": *je vivais par politesse*. In this haughtiness towards life, in this disdain of ordinary human motives and ordinary human beings, there is at once the distinction and the weakness of Villiers.'

See Quarles's *Emblems*, book i. 6, and *Religio Medici*, ii. sec. xiv. (close).

Ecclesiastes ii. 19.

In Cromwell's fourth speech to the Parliament of 1655, he discusses, towards the end, the pressing question of the government in relation to his own family. He declares that he has been ever opposed to making his office hereditary. 'I am speaking as to my judgment against making government hereditary. To have men chosen for their love to God, and to truth and justice; and not to have it hereditary. For as it is in the Ecclesiastes: "Who knoweth whether he may beget a fool or a wise man?" Honest or not honest, whatever they be, they must come in, on that plan; because the government is made a patrimony.'

'What hath man of all his labour?'—Ecclesiastes ii. 22 f.

What a deal of cold business doth a man misspend the better part of life in! in scattering compliments, tendering visits, gathering and venting news, following feasts and plays, making a little winter-love in a dark corner.—Ben Jonson.

'To every thing there is a season.'—Ecclesiastes iii. 1.

How for everything there is a time and a season, and then how does the glory of a thing pass from it, even like the flower of the grass. This is a truism, but it is one of those which are continually forcing themselves upon the mind.—Borrow's *Lavengro*, xxvi.

He is a good time-server that finds out the fittest opportunity for every action. God hath made *a time for everything under the sun*, save only for that which we do at all times—to wit, sin.—Thomas Fuller.

References.—III. 1-8.—R. Buchanan, *Ecclesiastes: its Meaning and Lessons*, p. 92. Bishop Harvey Goodwin, *Parish Sermons* (3rd Series), p. 334.

'A time to plant, and a time to pluck up that which is planted.'—Ecclesiastes iii. 2.

The second of these may describe the times of analysis which often succeed periods of creation. They are not necessarily bad, for they may detect things evil and hollow; but they are times of distrust and unsettlement, and they easily go to excess. Everything is doubted, and in some minds this leads to universal scepticism. We are in such a period now, and it gives the feeling as if the ages of faith were past, and bare rationalism lord of the future. This would resolve everything into dust and death.—Dr. John Ker's *Thoughts for Heart and Life*, p. 153.

Compare J. S. Mill's *Autobiography*, p. 137.

References.—III. 2.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons Preached in Sackville College Chapel*, vol. i. p. 57. A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—Ecclesiastes*, p. 323.

'There is a time . . . to laugh.'—Ecclesiastes iii. 4.

Men thin away to insignificance quite as often by not making the most of good spirits when they have them, as by lacking good spirits when they are indispensable.—Thomas Hardy.

If cheerfulness knocks at our door we should throw it wide open, for it never comes inopportunely; instead of that we often make scruples about letting it in. Cheerfulness is a direct and immediate gain—the very coin, as it were, of happiness, and not, like all else, merely a cheque upon the bank.—Schopenhauer.

'Don't tell me,' William Pitt once cried, 'of a man's being able to talk sense, every one can talk sense; can he talk nonsense?'

A sense of humour preserves all who have it from extremes. It warns away from the confines of the petty and ridiculous, and produces very often the same tolerant effects as magnanimity, revealing through laughter that reasonable line of thought which was obscured by logic.—*Spectator*, 27 May, 1905, p. 778.

'A time to mourn.'—Ecclesiastes iii. 4.

Last July, at an evening concert in the Kursaal of Sestroretz, a fashionable seaside resort near St. Petersburg, a number of the audience loudly insisted upon funeral music being played in memory of those who had perished in the St. Petersburg massacres of 22 January. The demonstrators shouted, 'This is no time for pleasure'.

References.—III. 4.—W. C. Wheeler, *Sermons and Addresses*, p. 56. W. Brock, *Midsummer Morning Sermons*, p. 118.

'A time to speak.'—Ecclesiastes iii. 7.

Luther begins the dedicatory letter to Amsdorf, prefixed to his epoch-making 'Appeal to the Christian Nobility of the German Nation,' with these words:—

'The time for silence is gone, and the time to speak has come, as we read in Ecclesiastes.'

It was this treatise which, in 1520, first gave voice to the conscience of the nation

'A time to keep silence.'—Ecclesiastes iii. 7.

When hearts are overfull they seldom run to speech. When sorrow has broken in on love, love left alone again, is hesitant and shy, more prone to look and kiss and hold than to mend his wounds with words.—Katherine Cecil Thurston in *The Circle*.

THOUGHTS ON SILENCE

'A time to keep silence.'—Ecclesiastes iii. 7.

'Speech is silvern, silence is golden,' saith the proverb. But there are many kinds of silence. There is a silence that is trying, and another that is fearful: as also there is a silence that is wholesome, one that is acceptable, one that is instructive, and still another that is blessed.

I. There is a Silence which is Good and Wholesome, viz. when a man sets a guard over his tongue and keeps silence from idle, vain, hurtful words. It has been well said that he who would speak well must speak little. Silence is a most wholesome restraint, a most helpful discipline, especially for those who are much pressed with engagements and have little time to themselves.

II. There is a Silence that is Acceptable to God and Well Pleasing in His Sight.—When things go wrong; when people are careless, or stupid, or perverse; when we feel irritated or annoyed; when the cutting speech, or the angry word, or the impatient exclamation rises to our lips; then 'the prudent shall keep silence in that time; for it is an evil time'. Or when we are blamed unjustly; when our actions are misjudged, and our intentions misconstrued; when we have laid to our charge things that we know not; when we are maligned, insulted, or reviled; then is the time to keep silence. At such times let us strive to imitate our Blessed Lord, 'Who when He was reviled, reviled not again; when He suffered He threatened not'.

III. There is a Silence which is Sweet, Comforting and Blessed, and of which we read 'there was silence in heaven about the space of half an hour'. As though in the midst of the songs and praises and rejoicings of the Holy Angels the Lord God Almighty ordered silence, and bid them pause awhile that the prayers and cries and tears of men might the better rise up to heaven, and enter into His ears. Not that God is deaf or can ever be distracted. His piercing eye takes in everything at a glance. His loving ear is attentive to the faintest whisper of His children. But He condescends to our weakness and ignorance by speaking to us in the language of men. God hears the faintest whisper of His servants' hearts. His ear is always open day and night unto their prayers; nevertheless, at the crisis of a life, as in the last great crisis of the world's history—the opening of the Seventh Seal—*silence* is kept in heaven, that there may be help upon earth.

'A time to keep silence.' Whilst at times we keep silence before men, let us talk unceasingly to God and pour out our hearts before Him. Let us tell Him our wants, our weakness, our hopes, our fears, our desires, and never fear of wearying His all-loving, all-sympathizing ear.

'There is a time . . . to hate.'—Ecclesiastes iii. 8.

'Ah, Sam!' said Carlyle once to Froude, apropos of Bishop Wilberforce, 'he is a very clever fellow; I do not hate him near as much as I fear I ought to do.'

Compare Newman's lines on *Zeal and Love*.

'I believe,' said Prof. W. K. Clifford upon one occasion, 'that if all the murderers and all the priests and all the liars in the world were united into one man, and he came suddenly upon me round a corner and said, *How do you do?* in a smiling way, I could not be rude to him.'

Reference.—III. 9-22.—R. Buchanan, *Ecclesiastes: its Meaning and Lessons*, p. 107.

Ecclesiastes iii. 11.

'What we mean to insist upon is, that in finding out the works of God, the intellect must labour, workmanlike, under the direction of the architect—Imagination. . . . "He hath set the world in man's heart," not in his understanding, and the heart must open the door to the understanding. It is the far-seeing imagination which beholds what might be a form of things, and says to the intellect, "Try whether that may not be the form of these things".' So George Macdonald writes in his essay on *The Imagination*, which he concludes by quoting Ecclesiastes iii. 10, 11, over again as 'setting forth both the necessity we are under to imagine, and the comfort that our imagining cannot outstrip God's making. Thus,' he comments, 'thus to be playfellows with God in this game, the little ones may gather their daisies and follow their painted moths; the child of the kingdom may pore upon the lilies of the field, and gather faith as the birds of the air their food from the leafless hawthorn, ruddy with the stores God has laid up for them; and the man of science—

> May sit, and rightly spell
> Of every star that heaven doth show,
> And every herb that sips the dew;
> Till old experience doth attain
> To something like prophetic strain.'

'He hath set eternity in their heart.'—Ecclesiastes iii. 11.

So might we sum up the spirit of Israel. But the Jewish ideal simplified life by leaving half of it untouched. It remained for Greece to make the earth a home, ordered and well equipped for the race, if not indeed for the individual. Greece supplied the lacking elements—art, science, secular poetry, philosophy, political life, social intercourse. . . . Hebraism and Hellenism stand out distinct, the one in all the intensity of its religious life, the other in the wealth and diversity of its secular gifts and graces.

> Thus the sharp contrasts of the Sculptor's plan
> Showed the two primal paths our race has trod;—
> Hellas, the nurse of man complete as man,
> Judaea pregnant with the living God.

—Butcher, *Harvard Lectures on Greek Subjects*, pp. 42, 43.

'He hath set eternity in their heart, so that man cannot find out the work that God hath done from the beginning even unto the end.'—Ecclesiastes iii. 11.

'Within me there is more.' So runs the fine device inscribed upon the beams and pediment of an old patrician mansion at Bruges, which every traveller visits; filling a corner of one of those tender and melancholy quays, that are as forlorn and lifeless as though they existed only on canvas. So too might man exclaim, 'Within me there is more': every law of morality, every intelligible mystery.—Maeterlinck.

THE JUDGMENT

'God hath set eternity in the heart of every man.'—Ecclesiastes iii. 11.

I. Some idea of 'Judgment' is practically universal. The reasons seem to be:—

(*a*) The intrinsic incompleteness of life.

(*b*) The fact that character continues to grow after faculties decline.

(*c*) The imperious clamour of the affections.

II. The prominent place of the idea in the teaching of Jesus.

(*a*) Its immediate expectation by the early Church.

(*b*) Chiliasm—'Millenarianism'—'Second Adventists,' etc.

(*c*) The popular notion that the record is incomplete for each individual at death.

III. Christ sets it much farther forward.

(*a*) The things which must first occur.

(*b*) That it will be a humane judgment.

(*c*) A perfectly correct judgment. 'The books opened'—all relevant facts exposed. If arbitrary this would not be emphasized.

IV. Whom He condemns—and approves.

'He hath made everything beautiful in His time.'—Ecclesiastes iii. 11.

'The woods,' says Ruskin in *Præterita*, 'which I had only looked on as wilderness, fulfilled, I then saw, in their beauty the same laws which guided the clouds, divided the light, and balanced the wave. "He hath made everything beautiful in His time," became for me thenceforward the interpretation of the bond between the human mind and all visible things.'

'Everything beautiful in His time.—Ecclesiastes iii. 11.

The tree of life is always in bloom somewhere, if we only know where to look.—Havelock Ellis.

ALL THINGS BEAUTIFUL IN THEIR SEASON

'He hath made everything beautiful in its time.'—Ecclesiastes iii. 11.

The sentiment of the beautiful is universal. The beautiful is much more than a mere gratification of the senses.

I. God's manifest delight in beauty. Beauty is essentially inwrought into God's works; every little flower, every blade of grass, every fitful shape, every vagrant twig, exemplifies it. Beauty is God's taste, God's art, God's manner of workmanship.

II. Beauty is the necessary conception of the Creator's thought, the necessary product of His hand; variety in beauty is the necessary expression of His infinite mind. Even decay, disorganization, feculence, have an iridescence of their own.

III. Beauty is part of our human perfection also. Unbeautiful things are defective things. Beauty is not intended to minister to a mere idle sentiment. It is a minister to our moral nature. It is the deeper, more pervading sense of God; it is the religious sentiment of the soul.—H. Allon, *Harvest and Thanksgiving Services*, p. 17.

References.—III. 11.—A. Maclaren, *Sermons Preached in Manchester* (3rd Series), p. 209. W. Park, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxviii. p. 259. A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—Ecclesiastes*, p. 334. III. 16-22.—T. C. Finlayson, *A Practical Exposition of Ecclesiastes*, p. 87. III. 14, 15.—J. C. M. Bellew, *Christ in Life: Life in Christ*, p. 237. III. 15.—W. R. Owen, *A Book of Lay Sermons*, p. 73. III. 19-21.—W. L. Alexander, *Sermons*, p. 238.

'All go unto one place.'—Ecclesiastes iii. 20.

After all it comes to the same thing in the end, how we make our grand tour—be it afoot, or on horseback, or on board ship. We all arrive at the same hostelry at last—the same poor inn, whose door is opened with a spade—and where the appointed chamber is so narrow, cold, and dreary; but there we sleep well, almost too well.—Heine.

'I considered oppressions.'—Ecclesiastes iv. 1, 2.

Compare John Morley's *Critical Miscellanies*, I. pp. 84 f.

Reference.—IV. 1.—A. W. Momerie, *Agnosticism*, p. 204.

'He hath neither child nor brother; yet is there no end of his labour.'—Ecclesiastes iv. 8.

See Quarles's *Emblems*, II. 2.

'Two are better than one.'—Ecclesiastes iv. 9.

'The best things come, as a general thing,' says Mr. Henry James in his Monograph on Hawthorne (p. 81), 'from the talents that are members of a group; every man works better when he has companions working in the same line, and yielding the stimulus of suggestion, comparison, emulation. Great things of course have been done by solitary workers; but they have usually been done with double the pains they would have cost if they had been produced in more genial circumstances. The solitary worker loses the profit of example and discussion.'

Hopeful.—I acknowledge myself in a fault, and had I been here alone, I had by sleeping run the danger of death. I see it is true that the wise man saith, *Two are better than one.* Hitherto hath thy company been my mercy.—Bunyan.

Reference.—IV. 9, 10.—R. D. B. Rawnsley, *Sermons for the Christian Year*, p. 512.

'Woe to him that is alone when he falleth.'—Ecclesiastes iv. 10.

I drown the past in still hoping for the future, but God knows whether futurity will be as great a cheat as ever. I sometimes think it will. I tell you candidly, I am sometimes out of spirits, and have need of *co-operation*, or Heaven knows yet what will

become of my fine castles in the air. So you must bring *spirits, spirits, spirits.*—Cobden to his *Brother.*

'A threefold cord is not quickly broken.'—Ecclesiastes iv. 12.

'We are three people, but only one soul,' said Coleridge, speaking of Wordsworth, Dorothy Wordsworth, and himself.

THE THREEFOLD CORD

'A threefold cord is not quickly broken.'—Ecclesiastes iv. 12.

It is sometimes good to ask ourselves what are the real roots or foundations of our personal religion, apart from what we receive as revealed truth. The answer, if we can find it, will give us the contents of our natural religion, our faith apart from revelation and authority.

I. What are the marks or tests which give some of our experiences a much higher value than others, so that we feel that there is something Divine about them?

(*a*) They bring with them their own satisfaction. We feel that they are a positive, absolute value.

(*b*) They have a universal quality. They take us out of ourselves, out of the small circle of our private personal interests.

(*c*) They delight and uplift us in such a way that when they are gone we feel that we are still the better for having had them.

These are the three marks of what St. Paul calls the things of the Spirit—the higher and better world which is all about us and among us and within us, but which is not to be seen by everybody, nor by anybody at all times. The things of the Spirit are first precious for their own sake; they have God and not our little selves for their centre; and they bring us a peace and happiness which does not wholly perish when they are gone.

II. Now what are the experiences which have these qualities? They are of three kinds.

(*a*) First of all, contact with moral goodness has this character. So far as we are brought close to goodness, and especially goodness in the form of disinterestedness, sympathy, love, we feel that we have reached the heart of life, that we are lifted out of ourselves, and that we are enjoying a happiness which, come what may, will make us richer for life. This is one strand in our threefold cord.

(*b*) There is the love of truth—this is the second strand in our threefold cord. No matter in what field we are seeking the truth, we feel, when we have found it, that here is something which exists in its own right, which stands proudly aloof from our little personal schemes, and which we are permanently the better for having found.

(*c*) The third strand in our threefold cord is the appreciation of beauty. And surely this mysterious sense of beauty, which seems to serve very few practical uses in human life, in proportion to its strength and diffusion, must have been given us by God as a revelation of Himself. It has the three marks of spirituality which I have mentioned. It takes us out of ourselves, as pure affection, and pure seeking after truth take us out of ourselves; and it is, or should be, in its own degree a permanent enrichment of our life. There is then a sacredness about these three experiences, which we should all feel. The good, the true, and the beautiful, are attributes of God's nature, and we stand on holy ground when we are brought into contact with them.—W. R. Inge, *All Saints' Sermons*, p. 211.

References.—IV. 12.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons Preached in a Religious House*, vol. i. p. 156. J. Keble, *Sermons from Ascension Day to Trinity Sunday*, p. 395. V. 1.—G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 253. V. 1-9.—T. C. Finlayson, *A Practical Exposition of Ecclesiastes*, p. 125. V. 1-12.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—Ecclesiastes*, p. 350.

'Let not thine heart be hasty to utter any thing before God.'—Ecclesiastes v. 2 f.

To bind myself to diligence in seeking the Lord, and to stir me up thereto, I made a vow to pray so many times a day; how many times I cannot be positive; but it was at least thrice. It was the goodness of God to me, that it was made only for a definite space of time; but I found it so far from being a help, that it was really a hindrance to my devotion, making me more heartless in, and averse to, duty, through the corruption of my nature. I got the pain of it driven out accordingly; but I never durst make another of that nature since, nor so bind up myself, where God had left me at liberty.—Thomas Boston.

'Be not rash with thy mouth.'—Ecclesiastes v. 2.

'Suddenly and offhand,' says Köstlin, 'Luther was hurried into a most momentous decision. Towards the end of June, 1505, when several Church festivals fall together, he paid a visit to his home at Mansfeld in quest, very possibly, of rest and comfort to his mind. Returning on 2nd July, the feast of the Visitation of the Virgin Mary, he was already near Erfurt, when, at the village of Stotternheim, a terrific storm broke over his head. A fearful flash of lightning darted from heaven before his eyes. Trembling with fear, he fell to the earth and exclaimed, "Help, Anna, beloved Saint! I will be a monk!" A few days after, when quietly settled at Erfurt, he repented having used these words. But he felt that he had taken a vow.'

Do not accustom yourself to enchain your volatility with vows; they will sometimes leave a thorn in your mind, which you will, perhaps, never be able to extract or eject. Take this warning; it is of great importance.—Johnson to *Boswell.*

'Let thy words be few.'—Ecclesiastes v. 2.

What people call fluency, and the gift of prayer, is often delusive; it is mere excitement from the presence of others, and from the sound of our own voice.—F. W. Robertson.

There is no need to say much to God. One often does not talk much to a friend whom one is delighted to see; one enjoys looking at him, and one says some few words which are purely matter of feeling. One

does not so much seek interchange of thought as rest and communion of heart with one's friend. Even so it should be with God—a word, a sigh, a thought, a feeling, says everything.—Fénelon.

Reference.—V. 2.—J. T. Bramston, *Sermons to Boys*, p. 116.

If thou seest the oppression of the poor, and violent perverting of justice in a province, marvel not at the matter. For He that is higher than the highest regardeth; and there be higher than they.'—Ecclesiastes v. 8.

In describing the need for the reforms of Cæsar under the new monarchy, Mommsen (*History of Rome*, book v. xi.) declares that 'the most incurable wounds were inflicted as justice by the doings of the advocates. In proportion as the parasitic plant of Roman forensic eloquence flourished, all positive ideas of right became broken up. . . . A plain, simple defendant, says a Roman advocate of much experience at this period, may be accused of any crime at pleasure which he has, or has not, committed, and will be certainly condemned.'

For a tear is an intellectual thing.
And a sigh is the sword of an Angel king,
And the bitter groan of a martyr's woe
Is an arrow from the Almighty bow.

—Blake.

There are some persons of that reach of soul that they would like to live 250 years hence, to see to what height of empire America will have grown up in that period, or whether the English constitution will last so long. These are points beyond me. But I confess I should like to live to see the downfall of the Bourbons. That is a vital question with me; and I shall like it the better, the sooner it happens.—Hazlitt.

See Lowell's poem, *Villa Franca*.

The repugnance of man to injustice is with him an early and favourite topic of proof.—Gladstone on *Butler*.

Reference.—V. 8.—A. W. Momerie, *Agnosticism*, p. 219.

'He that loveth silver shall not be satisfied with silver.'—Ecclesiastes v. 10.

See Ruskin's *On the Old Road* (II. sec. 162) for a comment on a 'lover of silver'.

'Riches kept for the owners thereof to their hurt.'—Ecclesiastes v. 13 f.

To acquire interest on money, and to acquire interest in life are *not* the same thing.—Edward Carpenter.

References.—V. 13-20.—R. Buchanan, *Ecclesiastes: its Meaning and Lessons*, p. 191. V. 15.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—Ecclesiastes*, p. 358.

'Better is the sight of the eyes than the wandering of the desire.'—Ecclesiastes vi. 9.

Perhaps the inherent force of a nature is shown even more in its passive and negative than in its active and positive self-expressions. In its power of voluntarily limiting its own horizon; of setting itself arbitrary boundaries; of saying 'Thus far will I go, see, admit, and no further'. For it takes a lot of latent strength to sit, either mentally or physically, really still. Not to fidget. To 'stay put,' in short.—Lucas Malet's *Wages of Sin*, book iv. v.

Nor until a man has rid himself of all pretension, and taken refuge in mere unembellished existence, can he gain that peace of mind which is the foundation of human happiness.—Schopenhauer.

You may paddle all day long; but it is when you come back at nightfall and look in at the familiar room, that you find Love or Death awaiting you beside the stove; and the most beautiful adventures are not those we go to seek.—R. L. Stevenson.

References.—VI. 12.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xlii. No. 2462. VII. 1.—*Ibid.* vol. xxvii. No. 1588.

'It is better to go to the house of mourning.'—Ecclesiastes vii. 2 f.

We are apt to blame society for being constrained and artificial, but its conventionalities are only the result of the limitations of man's own nature. How much, for instance, of what is called 'reserve' belongs to this life, and passes away with its waning, and the waxing of the new life! We can say to the dying, and hear from them things that, in the fullness of health and vigour, could not be imparted without violence to some inward instinct. And this is one reason, among many others, why it is so *good* to be in the house of mourning, the chamber of death. It is there more easy to be *natural*,—to be true, I mean, to that which is deepest within us. Is there not something in the daily familiar course of life, which seems in a strange way to veil its true aspect? It is not Death, but Life, which wraps us about with shroud and cerement.—Dora Greenwell, *Two Friends*, pp. 38, 39.

Compare Sterne's famous sermon on this text:—

'So strange and unaccountable a creature is man! He is so framed that he cannot but pursue happiness, and yet, unless he is made sometimes miserable, how apt he is to mistake the way which can only lead him to the accomplishment of his own wishes,' etc.

'The living will lay it to his heart.'—Ecclesiastes vii. 2.

Every one observes how temperate and reasonable men are when humbled and brought low by afflictions, in comparison of what they are in high prosperity. By this voluntary resort unto the house of mourning, which is here recommended, we might learn all these useful instructions which calamities teach, without undergoing them ourselves, and grow wiser and better at a more easy rate than men commonly do. . . . This would correct the florid and gaudy prospects and expectations which we are too apt to indulge, teach us to lower our notions of happiness and enjoyment, bring them down to the reality of things, to what is attainable.—Bishop Butler.

Sorrow, terror, anguish, despair itself, are often the chosen expressions of an approximation to the highest good. Our sympathy in tragic fiction depends on this principle; tragedy delights by affording a shadow of the pleasure which exists in pain. This is the

source also of the melancholy which is inseparable from the sweetest melody. The pleasure that is in sorrow is sweeter than the pleasure of pleasure itself. And hence the saying, *It is better to go to the house of mourning than to the house of mirth.*—SHELLEY.

'It is better to hear the rebuke of the wise, than for a man to hear the song of fools.'—ECCLESIASTES VII. 5.

IT is the sinful unhappiness of some men's minds that they usually disaffect those that cross them in their corrupt proceedings, and plainly tell them of their faults. They are ready to judge of the reprover's spirit by their own, and to think that all such sharp reproofs proceed from some disaffection to their persons, or partial opposition to the opinions which they hold. But plain dealers are always approved in the end, and the time is at hand when you shall confess these were your truest friends.—RICHARD BAXTER, Preface to the *Reformed Pastor.*

A TRUTH told us is harder to bear than a hundred which we tell ourselves.—FÉNELON.

'As is the crackling of thorns under a pot, so is the laughter of the fool.'—ECCLESIASTES VII. 6.

NOTHING serves better to illustrate a man's character than what he finds ridiculous.—GOETHE.

'DURING that time' (his agitation on behalf of Calas' descendants) 'not a smile escaped me without my reproaching myself for it, as for a crime.'—VOLTAIRE.

'FROUDE,' said Keble once to Hurrell Froude, 'you said you thought Law's *Serious Call* was a clever book; it seemed to me as if you had said the Day of Judgment will be a pretty sight.'

'The patient in spirit is better than the proud in spirit. Be not hasty in thy spirit to be angry.'—ECCLESIASTES VII. 8, 9.

THERE is not a greater foe to spirituality than wrath; and wrath even in a righteous cause distempers the heart.—CHALMERS.

REFERENCE.—VII. 8.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—Ecclesiastes*, p. 363.

PAST AND PRESENT

'Say not thou, What is the cause that the former days were better than these? for thou dost not enquire wisely concerning this.'—ECCLESIASTES VII. 10.

THE actual connexion of these words of the text is quite in keeping with the tone and temper of the writer of this book. He does not mean, at least as the chief purpose of this rebuke, to glorify the present with its opportunities and possibilities at the expense of the past. It would hardly be in accordance with the prevailing pessimism of the writer to strike here a hopeful and inspiring note. The whole trend of his teaching is that life is illusive, and a man should not build his hopes too high, and look for permanence in any source of joy. Moderation is the great secret.

I. It is a common infirmity of old age, but it is not confined to age, to disparage the present and to glorify the past. It is a merciful provision of our nature which makes us forget the pains and sorrows of the past, and when we do remember them sets them in a soft and tender light, letting us see some of the good which has come from them. And as the sorrows of the past seem diminished by distance, by a strange reversion the joys loom larger and finer. To a reflective mind the pleasures of memory are sweeter than the pleasures of possession or even the pleasures of anticipation. And this tendency seen in our everyday life is also reflected on a larger scale in history. All old institutions gain allies for their existence in sentiment and respect for what has displayed the quality of permanence. We judge of the past by what has come down to us of the past, and make unfavourable comparison of the present with it. We forget among other things the greatly extended sphere for human activity now; and we forget that with the treasures of the past which we possess time has weeded out much that was inferior.

II. It is a natural bias of the mind, and in many respects a very beautiful thing, to glorify the past. The danger of it comes in when it makes light of the present, and destroys the healthful faith that would save the present from despair. We must not let the past sit on us like an old man of the sea, choking us and fettering our movements. It is for this stupid purpose that the past is generally used by the ordinary *laudator temporis acti.* The underlying idea is that anything that now can be done must be feeble and not worth doing. Such an idea kills effort and robs life of dignity. It paralyses the present and mutilates the future. On the one hand we have ever with us the man whose attitude to life is summed up in the dictum, 'Whatever is, is right,' who opposes change of all sorts, and is quite content with the actual state of affairs. On the other hand, some adopt the opposite, and equally false, statement as a motto, 'Whatever is, is wrong'. Strange though it may appear, the two positions may be the fruit of the self-same spirit, and have their origin in the same point of view. In their essence they have both their cause in want of faith. The man who is content with the present does not see that it exists to be carried forward into a nobler future; and the man who disparages the present and glorifies the past does not see that the very same causes are at work, that the present is really the outcome and fruition of the past which he praises, and if he be right the poverty of the present stultifies the past he loves. And both attitudes, that of the unreasoning conservative who will not look forward, and that of the sentimental mediævalist who will only look back, deprive us of the hope and vigour to make our days true and noble.

III. To have the manly, hopeful attitude instead of the despairing one of our text, we do not need to believe in the perfectibility of the race; we only need to believe in its improvability under the right conditions. Our days are better than former days in this. But we have greater opportunities, to us have come the wisdom of the ancients, the ripe fruit of experience, advantages of knowledge, wider outlets for every gift. All this will be of none avail if we love not faith. Without faith we have no sure guarantee

that will make effort purposeful, and we will sigh for a mythical golden age lying behind us as a race. The golden age is before us if God leads us on. With such faith we need not look back upon former days longingly, upheld in our own day by the thought of God's presence.—Hugh Black, *University Sermons*, p. 293

References.—VII. 10.—C. Kingsley, *The Water of Life*. VII. 11-29.—Buchanan, *Ecclesiastes: its Meaning and Lessons*, p. 250.

'Say not thou, What is the cause that the former days were better than these?'—Ecclesiastes vii. 10.

The best gift that history can give us is the enthusiasm it arouses.—Goethe.

Both in politics and in art Plato seems to have seen no way of bringing order out of disorder, except by taking a step backwards. Antiquity, compared with the world in which he lived, had a sacredness and authority for him; the men of a former age were supposed by him to have had a sense of reverence which was wanting among his contemporaries.—Jowett.

An obsolete discipline may be a present heresy.—Newman.

See also Ben Jonson's *Discoveries*, secs. xxi. cxxiii.

'Carlyle,' said Maurice, 'believes in a God who lived till the death of Oliver Cromwell.'

THE GOODNESS OF GLADNESS

'In the day of prosperity be joyful.'—Ecclesiastes vii. 14.

I. Well that, you say, we can very easily do. Our difficulty up to the present time has not been to be joyful when prosperity has smiled upon us, but to find that prosperity which should bring us joy. Is that true? Or is it not rather true, as Bishop Butler has told us in his solemn way, that 'Prosperity itself, while anything supposed desirable is not ours, begets extravagant and unbounded thoughts,' and that prosperity itself is a real and lasting source of danger. Is it not a matter of common observation that the danger which prosperity sets up is precisely this, the danger of discontent.

II. But literally this advice is, *In the day of good be good!* And perhaps that brings out the meaning to us better than a better reading would. If God gives you happiness, be happy in it; if light, walk in the light; if joy, enjoy it! We are sharers of the glorious Gospel of the happy God. People are too often afraid of happiness. And they are afraid of admitting that they have reason to be happy.

III. It would be nice to think that this only pointed to a modesty which was unable to boast of anything, even to God's good gifts. But it points to nothing of the kind. If we could trace it back we should find that it points away to the old notion about jealous Gods, and to the superstition that they were always waiting to pounce down upon you if things were going too well. God, the God of Love, Whom Jesus taught us to call Father, jealous of the deepest, highest virtue of our souls which makes us likest Him!—C. F. Aked, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxxii., 1907, p. 110.

THE EQUIPOISE OF GOD

'God also hath set the one over against the other.'—Ecclesiastes vii. 14.

The thought which occupies the writer's mind here is that of the compensations of experience. He has lit on the great truth that human life is very subtly and finely equalized. He is not preaching the doctrine of equality, as if there were no difference between man and man. He is too honest to assert, as Pope asserted, that whatever is, is right. But he is preaching that, in individual lives, there is such an exquisite balancing of things, that a man has little cause for discontent, or for murmuring at the providence of God.

I. The Balancing of Our Gifts.—Think, for example, of the gift of genius. Genius is one of the most godlike gifts that has ever been granted to the human family. It is more than ability. It is more than talent. Genius is talent with the lamp lit. Genius is insight—enthusiastic insight, that sees, and seeing loves, and loving, speaks. And yet this genius, so choice and rare a gift that there is never an ardent youth but covets it, wears a crown of thorns upon its head. Do not be envious of the man of genius. The man of genius is the man of sorrows. There are joys for you, there are quiet and happy blessings, to which the genius shall always be a stranger. He has his work to do, and he must do it, and the world will be nearer God because of Him; but God has set one thing over against the other.

II. The Balancing of Our Powers.—Take for example the power of an iron will. An iron will always commands respect. There is something in it we cannot help admiring. It is a gallant thing, that high persistence, which nothing can daunt or baffle or depress. And every valley is exalted for it, and every mountain is brought low before it, and it will cleave its path through thickest forest, and find a ford across the swiftest river. There is something godlike in that spectacle. It is a power that is largely coveted. And yet how often the man of iron will misses the best that life has got to offer! He misses all its sweetness and its kindness, and the love that lingers in the sunny meadow, and he is lonely when other hearts are glad, and pitiless where other hearts are pitiful. It is not all gain, that iron will. There is often a certain loss with all the gain. There is a loss of sympathy, of happy brotherhood, of the kindliness which makes us glad to-night. Therefore do not be angry with your Maker if you can never be a determined person. He hath set one thing over against the other.

Or shall we take the power of imagination? That is one of the most blessed of our powers. It is a shelter when the blast is on the wall.

III. The Balance of Experience.—Consider the experience of prosperity. It seems so easy to be good when one is prosperous. It seems such a pleasant thing to be alive. It is so different from battling

with adversity, and living always on the brink of failure. And yet I question if these battling people are not as a rule far happier than the rich. I question if they are not generally more contented than the man who has everything the world can offer. There are boys who were in school with me who have been so prosperous that I never meet them without saying, 'God pity you!' Everything fine and delicate and generous seems to have dried up and worn away. Prosperity does not always mean contentment. It does not always mean the singing heart. Without the leaven of the grace of God, it very generally means the opposite. And therefore the wise man does not fret himself over him who prospereth in his way. He knows that God sets one thing over against the other.—G. H. Morrison, *The Return of the Angels*, p. 87.

References.—VII. 14.—J. Bowstead, *Practical Sermons*, vol. i. p. 142. W. L. Alexander, *Sermons*, p. 215. J. Vaughan, *Fifty Sermons* (8th Series), pp. 68, 74.

'There is a wicked man that prolongeth his life in his wickedness.'—Ecclesiastes vii. 15.

The two main qualities for a long life are a good body and a bad heart.—Fontenelle.

Compare M. Arnold's *Mycerinus*.

Reference.—VII. 15-18.—T. C. Finlayson, *A Practical Exposition of Ecclesiastes*, p. 165.

OVER-RIGHTEOUSNESS

'Be not righteous over much.'—Ecclesiastes vii. 16.

The words, righteous over much, are apt to be a good deal in the mouths of sinners when they are pressed by their own consciences, or their spiritual guides and advisers, to practise some unpleasant duty or reform some pleasant vice.

I. How far is this manner of speaking justifiable in the persons who use it? The text is oftener quoted in a mood half-sportive, and as a short way of silencing unpleasant discussion, than as a serious ground of argument. But the misery of it is, that men act on it quite in earnest. They cannot themselves believe that it will bear the weight they lay upon it, and yet they are not afraid to conduct themselves as if it were the only commandment God had ever given.

II. How far is it warranted by the generel tenor of Scripture?

(*a*) This action of over-righteousness cannot stand with that precious corner-stone of our faith, the Doctrine of the Atonement.

(*b*) Another test is the doctrine of sanctification.

(*c*) Another great doctrine, which is utterly inconsistent with the vulgar use of the text, is the inequality of the future remarks of the blessed in heaven.

(*d*) When the analogy of faith, and the clear words of our Saviour, and the lives and deaths of all the Saints are against a doctrine, it is quite certain that any single expression which may seem to assert it must be wrongly interpreted.

III. The text was intended as a warning against the very error which it is so often and so unfortunately used to encourage. Nothing could be further from the Wise Man's intentions than that construction which the too subtle apologists of lukewarmness in religion are so ready to fasten on the text.—John Keble, *Sermons Occasional and Parochial*, p. 1.

'Be not righteous over much.'—Ecclesiastes vii. 16.

The book has been said, and with justice, to breathe *resignation at the grave of Israel*. . . . Attempts at a philosophic indifference appear, at a sceptical suspension of judgment, at an easy *ne quid nimis* (vii. 16). Vain attempts, even at a moment which favoured them! shows of scepticism, vanishing as soon as uttered before the intractable conscientiousness of Israel.—*Literature and Dogma*, ii.

Let not the frailty of man go on thus inventing needless troubles to itself, to groan under the false imagination of a strictness never imposed from above; enjoining that for duty which is an impossible and vain supererogating. *Be not righteous over much*, is the counsel of Ecclesiastes; *why shouldest thou destroy thyself?* let us not be thus over-anxious to strain at atoms, and yet to stop every vent and cranny of permissive liberty, lest nature, wanting these needful pores and breathing places, which God hath not debarred our weakness, either suddenly burst out into some wide rupture of open vice or frantic heresy, or else fester with repressing and blasphemous thoughts, under an unreasonable and fruitless rigour of unwarranted law.—Milton.

Man is neither angel nor brute, and the misfortune is that whoever would play the angel plays the brute.—Pascal.

As an aged man of the world, whose recollections went back into the last century, is reported to have said: 'When I was young, nobody was religious; now that I am old, everybody is religious, and they are *both* wrong'.—Jowett.

No man undertakes to do a thing for God, and lays it aside because he finds perseverance in it too much for him, without his soul being seriously damaged by it. He has taken up a disadvantageous position. This is not a reason for not trying, but it is a reason for trying soberly, discreetly, and with deliberation. —F. W. Faber.

Almost everybody you see in Oxford believes either too much or too little.—Phillips Brooks.

RIGHTEOUS OVER MUCH

'Be not righteous over much; neither make thyself over wise: why shouldest thou destroy thyself? Be not over much wicked, neither be thou foolish: why shouldest thou die before thy time?'—Ecclesiastes vii. 16, 17.

Our text is characteristic of one of the lines of thought which run through this strange book. The book is autobiographical in the true sense, that it gives a record of personal thought and experience. The book is the fruit of the contact of a Jew with

alien philosophy and civilization, the author had seen the world and had tried the different ways of life which have ever been possible to men. The book is full of world-weariness. The satiety which comes from such a life seems at first to have destroyed all serious earnest purpose; and he pronounced upon all things the verdict of vanity, that everything was equally worthless, and nothing counted much anyway. The withered world-weary life, so frankly revealed in this autobiography, is itself the most terrible sermon that could be preached from the book, of the vanity of a life lived apart from God.

I. The words of our text with their doctrine of moderation suggest a common thought in Greek philosophy. It might be called the very central thought of Aristotle's Ethics that virtue is moderation, not of course meaning moderation in indulging in anything wrong, but that wrong itself means either excess or deficiency. He defines virtue as a habit or trained faculty of choice, the characteristic of which lies in observing the mean. 'And it is a moderation firstly, inasmuch as it comes in the middle or mean between two vices, one on the side of excess, the other on the side of defect; and secondly, inasmuch as, while these vices fall short of, or exceed, the due measures in feeling and in action, it finds and chooses the mean or moderate amount.'

II. There is much to be said for this doctrine of moderation even in what is called righteousness, at a time like that in which the writer lived, when righteousness was looked on by most as external ceremonies and keeping of endless rules, rather than as spiritual passion. There is often much justification for the sneer at overmuch righteousness at all times, when the soul has died out of religion and the punctilious keeper of the law becomes self-complacent and censorious of others. It is, however, only in a very limited degree, and only when the true meaning of righteousness is obscured, that there is any truth in the cynical counsel. If righteousness is inward conformity to the holy will of God, then there can be no limitations set to the standard of righteousness. From this point of view the prudential policy of our text is really a terrible moral degradation. Our Lord pronounces this ineffable blessing upon the very men whom this worldly wisdom sneers at. 'Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness.' They may not have the success and popularity which the prudent trimmer achieves. They have not the pleasant satisfaction and easy contentment which come to the dulled soul. They are weighted by the consciousness of sin and are driven by a sense of spiritual want. They are tormented by a passion for purity, and they pine after holiness, and nothing but God can fill the aching void of heart. But how can there be blessing along with pining, with want, with hunger and thirst, with unappeased desire? Wherein are they blessed? In this way, that desire is ever a note of life. When life begins, need begins. Life is a bundle of want. And the higher the desire, the higher the life. The mind hungers and thirsts for knowledge; and when desire stops, mental development stops. The work of spiritual life is spiritual desire, a moral longing for conformity to the will of God.—Hugh Black, *University Sermons*, p. 20.

WISE OVER MUCH

'Neither make thyself over wise; why shouldest thou destroy thyself?'—Ecclesiastes vii. 16.

Here the doctrine of moderation is extended to the intellectual sphere, that the safest course is to avoid extremes and to do nothing in excess. The truth of this advice is seen more clearly if we translate the word 'destroy' a little more fully. The primary idea of the word is that of silence, being put to silence, and thus it came to mean to be laid waste or destroyed. But the root meaning is to be made desolate, solitary, and was sometimes used of a lonely solitary way. So that the question of the writer might be put, Why make thyself solitary? Why isolate thyself? The exceptional always isolates. The ordinary man of the street cannot see your far-away visions of truth or beauty or holiness. The thinker is lonely.

I. How pitifully true this is can be seen in the whole history of human thoughts. In loneliness, in sickness of heart, in despair of the unknown, has every inch of ground been gained for the mind of man. Further there is justification for it even from a moral point of view. As the temptation of the over-righteous is censoriousness and self-satisfaction, so the temptation of the overwise is what St. Paul calls the vainly puffed-up mind, a besotted conceit and pride, as if wisdom will die with them, and which looks down with contempt on the vulgar, unlettered throng.

II. But as censoriousness came not from too much righteousness, but from too little, so contemptuous pride is the failing not of real but of spurious wisdom when wisdom is supposed to be information. Knowledge of facts, knowledge of books, it lends itself to the puffed-up mind. But these things, scientific facts, literature, are not wisdom; they are only the implements of wisdom, the material with which wisdom works—wisdom is always humble, for it knows how little it knows. Quite apart, however, from the possibility of this mistake which gives a kind of colour to his sneer, the advice of Ecclesiastes appeals to us to-day because it fits in with our modern temper. Ours is a time when the supremacy of the practical over the speculative is complete. In politics we say that we do not want theories, and ideal reforms, and Utopian schemes; we want the practical, the thing that is expedient at the moment. In religion we are told that theology, opinions, beliefs, convictions do not count, but only the plain duties of life, the practical virtues, kindness, tolerance and such like. Even in science the speculative is ruled out, or must take a back seat.

III. It is true that in all these regions, in politics, and religion, and science, the test of the tree must be its fruit. But we are inclined to take too narrow a

view of what the fruits are, and we can easily overreach ourselves by our exclusive standard of what is practical. These practical things on which we lay so much stress do not arrive ready-made but are the results from a hidden source. In politics will the fruit of expediency not wither when the root principle is cut away from it? In religion will the plain moral duties remain when faith is dead? In science even the practical man can only apply the discoveries and ascertained truths acquired by the natural philosophers. In all branches of life, though it may not pay to be overwise, and though the secret of success may be to confine yourself to the narrow limits of practical things, yet the progress of the world has been due, and must always be due, to these very same eager, strenuous searchers after truth, to those who sought for knowledge as for hid treasure, to those finely tuned spirits who have followed truth though it led them into the wilderness.—Hugh Black, *University Sermons*, p. 32.

References.—VII. 16.—J. Budgen, *Parochial Sermons*, vol. ii. p. 327. VII. 17.—J. Martineau, *Endeavours After the Christian Life*, p. 110.

'It is good that thou shouldest take hold of this; yea, also from that withdraw not thine hand.'—Ecclesiastes vii. 18.

Of little threads our life is spun, and he spins ill who misses one.—M. Arnold.

Reference.—VII. 18.—T. C. Finlayson, *A Practical Exposition of Ecclesiastes*, p. 175.

'Take no heed unto all words that are spoken.'—Ecclesiastes vii. 21.

Here is commended the provident stay of inquiry of that which we would be loth to find: as it was judged great wisdom in Pompeius Magnus that he burned Sertorius' papers unperused.—Bacon.

THE LAW OF EQUIVALENTS

'For oftentimes also thine own heart knoweth that thou thyself likewise——.'—Ecclesiastes vii. 22.

The meaning would seem to be: Take no heed of tale-bearing; do not attach too much importance to words that are spoken in secret and not intended for thine own ear. Do not listen to servants talking about thee in the kitchen; do not be distressed by what men say about thee in the streets; do not judge thyself too much by thy nickname: 'for oftentimes also thine own heart knoweth that thou thyself likewise——'

I. This is the law of equivalents. Men hear what they have spoken. If you have sowed the air with pearly words, you will reap a pearly harvest. 'Be not deceived, God is not mocked; whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.' Do not play the eavesdropper. Otherwise thou shalt hear no good of thyself. If thy servants curse thee, or speak unkindly of thee, think, for oftentimes also thine own heart knoweth that thou thyself likewise hast cursed them.

II. Now there is another application, and it is, that what we ourselves have done we should not condemn in others. Christianity is in this section of the Scriptures very practical. There is no hymn-singing down these dales, it is a cruel east wind that blows in our face.

Is there a Spirit in the air, in the speaking heavens, that takes record and note of what we are about? I believe there is, I am sure there is. Is there a Spirit that deals out a series of equivalents—as thou, so he; as he, so thou? Yes, we are not so ill-treated as we first thought; we did intend to get up a case against this man, a case of libel, and we, the plaintiff, may be the greater libellist of the two.

There is a great deal of negative ill. We do not tell lies, we act them. How awful a thing living is! Do not make remarks upon some other man, but scrutinize and sit in judgment upon thyself; be jealous about thine own integrity, and thou wilt be merciful to other men's infirmities. But where would be conversation? There would be none, until men learned to speak about great subjects, the very speaking about them cleansing the mouth and purifying the heart, the very eloquence of the tongue being as a baptism of the heavens. Let us get into great themes, noble contemplations, then we shall be advancing towards the pure heavens, with all their untold star jewels.

III. Every man sins according to his own peculiar infirmity, and every man cultivates some specific and favourite virtue. What we have to aim at is wholeness of character. We have a very imperfect vocabulary; but we are going to learn the vocabulary of God, and then we shall be able to say what our new feelings are like. I cannot see much now, but I believe it is there to be seen. That is the great faith that comforts and inspires us.—Joseph Parker, *City Temple Pulpit*, vol. vi. p. 233.

'All this have I proved by wisdom.'—Ecclesiastes vii. 23 f.

Perhaps the best part of old age is its sense of proportion which enables us to estimate misfortunes, or what seem to be such, at their true proportions.—James Payn in *Nineteenth Century*, September, 1897.

THE REASON OF THINGS

'I applied mine heart to know, and to search, and to seek out wisdom, and the reason of things.'—Ecclesiastes vii. 25.

'I applied mine heart to seek out the reason' is enough; 'of things' is a phrase put in by men who, with mistaken generousness, desire to assist inspiration.

I. He is a very foolish man who wants to pry too much into the reason of things. A good many things in life have to be taken just as they are and just as they come, and the Lord permits a ready simple reading of many things which might be so taken as to perplex faith and bewilder imagination. Men are in some instances made to pry; they cannot be content with what is known and visible and accessible; some men cannot live on the commonplace, some dainty souls could never live upon simple mother-made bread, they must have other things to eat, and they cannot

get them, and in a vain futile endeavour to get these other things their souls wither and perish and pass away. Do not be too wise; be not righteous over much, neither make thyself over wise: why shouldest thou destroy thyself? These are the inquiries of the wise man himself.

II. We cannot, however, all avoid looking round and wondering at the marvellous structure and economy and intermixture and dramatic interplay of things. It is a right wonderful universe so far as we can see it, and that is a very little way and a very little portion; still, if things be so mysterious, at once so august and so abject within the little sphere that is visible or accessible, what may they be, what must they be, on the wider lines, on the complete outline, as God has figured and controlled it? For my own part, and this is a matter upon which personal testimony must be taken for what it is worth, I have come to the conclusion that there is no explanation of life, nature, and all things under the sun and above the sun that we have heard anything about that is so simple, so complete, and so satisfactory as that they were all made and are all under the gentle and mighty control of a living personal God.

Some of the reasons of things may be discovered almost immediately by a test which we call by the Latin word conduct. The reason is written upon the very face of the situation. That is very good up to a given point; that did not escape the keen eyes of Solomon, and he therefore says, 'There is a just man that perisheth in his righteousness, and there is a wicked man that prolongeth his life in wickedness'. That is the side that must be taken in if we would institute a complete and just purview of the conditions and issues of human life so far as they are known to us.

III. The religious explanation is to my own mind the largest and truest that has as yet been suggested. Certainly it leaves mysteries, but it also interposes this consideration, You are finite, God is infinite, you can see but a very small portion of any case or situation just now; by and by the clouds will be dispersed and God will accompany you over the whole line of His providence so far as you are concerned, and He will give you the explanation, the answer shall follow the enigma, the solution shall quickly ensue upon the problem, and one day you will be able to see and to say that God has even in the night-time been working for the culture and the final sanctification and uttermost benediction of human nature.

1. The religious conception of all these things is ennobling, it enables the soul to say, It is the Lord, let Him do what seemeth good in His sight; it is the Lord, let Him turn my tears into telescopes through which I can see the farthest stars in His empire; it is the Lord, let Him tear me to pieces that He may build me up again a stronger, truer, and manlier man. These are the teachings of the Christian religion.

2. The Christian conception is not only ennobling, it is tranquillizing; one of the special miracles of the Gospel of Christ is that it works peace in the heart.

3. The religious conception is inspiring. Watchman, what of the night? He says, I see a quivering as of an awakening star. Again we ask, and he says, The dawn is already on the hilltop. Again, and he says, Awake and rise, for the sun is here, and to feel it claims your service and promises you a great reward. —Joseph Parker *City Temple Pulpit*, vol. vii. p. 89.

'One man among a thousand have I found.'—Ecclesiastes vii. 28.

There are only two good men: one is not born yet, and the other is dead.—Confucius.

I began to . . . get an especial scorn for that scorn of mankind which is a transmuted disappointment of preposterous claims.—George Eliot.

See Lowell's *Sonnets*, iv.

'A woman among all those have I not found.'—Ecclesiastes vii. 28.

Charles Kingsley objects to Fénelon's *Télémaque*, that 'no woman in it exercises influence over man, except for evil. . . . Woman—as the old monk held, who derived *femina* from *fe*—faith, and *minus*—less, because women have less faith than men—is in *Télémaque*, whenever she thinks or acts, the temptress, the enchantress.

'I wish,' writes Maeterlinck in *The Treasure of the Humble*, 'that all who have suffered at woman's hands and found them evil, would loudly proclaim it and give us their reasons; and if those reasons be well founded, we shall indeed be surprised. . . . It is women who preserve here below the pure fragrance of our soul, like some jewel from heaven, which none knows how to use; and were they to depart, the spirit would reign alone in a desert. Those who complain of them know not the heights whereon the true kisses are found, and verily I do pity them.'

'God hath made man upright; but they have sought out many inventions.'—Ecclesiastes vii. 29.

You have had false prophets among you—for centuries you have had them—solemnly warned against them though you were; false prophets, who have told you that all men are nothing but fiends and wolves, half beast, half devil. Believe that, and indeed you may sink to that. But refuse that, and have faith that God 'made you upright,' though *you* have sought out many inventions; so, you will strive daily to become more what your Maker meant and means you to be, and daily gives you also the grace to be.—Ruskin, *Crown of Wild Olive*, Lect. iii.

'Every one,' says Cervantes, 'is as God made him, and often a great deal worse.'

THE STATE OF INNOCENCE

'God hath made man upright; but they have sought out many inventions.'—Ecclesiastes vii. 29.

Adam and Eve were placed in a garden to cultivate it; how much is implied even in this! 'The Lord God took the man and put him into the Garden of Eden, to dress it and to keep it.' If there was a

mode of life free from tumult, anxiety, excitement, and fever of mind, it was the care of a garden. Adam was a hermit, whether he would or no. True; but does not this very circumstance that God made him such point out to us what is our true happiness, if we were given it, which we are not? At least we see in type what our perfection is, in these first specimens of our nature, which need not, unless God had so willed, have been created in this solitary state, but might have been myriads at once, as the angels were created. And let it be noted, that, when the Second Adam came, He returned, nay, more than returned to that life which the first had originally been allotted. He too was alone, and lived alone, the immaculate Son of a Virgin Mother; and He chose the mountain summit or the garden as His home. Save always, that in His case sorrow and pain went with His loneliness; not, like Adam, eating freely of all trees but one, but fasting in the wilderness for forty days—not tempted to eat of that one through wantonness, but urged in utter destitution of food to provide Himself with some necessary bread,—not as a king giving names to fawning brutes, but one among the wild beasts,—not granted a helpmeet for His support, but praying alone in the dark morning,—not dressing the herbs and flowers, but dropping blood upon the ground in agony,—not falling into a deep sleep in His garden, but buried there after His passion; yet still like the first Adam, solitary,—like the first Adam, living with His God and Holy Angels.—J. H. Newman.

Reference.—VIII. 4.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxviii. No. 1697.

Ecclesiastes viii. 8.

Compare Ruskin's *Time and Tide* (Letter xxiv.) for an application of the words, *There is no discharge in that war;* also Kipling's *The Five Nations*, pp. 185 f.

References.—VIII. 8.—S. H. Tying, *American Pulpit of To-day*, vol. i. p. 623. VIII. 10.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. iv. No. 200.

Ecclesiastes viii. 11. Cf. vii. 7, etc.

Swift once asked Delany whether the 'corruptions and villanies of men in power did not eat his flesh and exhaust his spirits?' 'No,' said Delany. 'Why, how can you help it?' said Swift. 'Because,' replied Delany, 'I am commanded to the contrary—*fret not thyself because of the ungodly.*' That, like other wise maxims, is capable of an ambiguous application. As Delany took it, Swift might perhaps have replied that it was a very comfortable maxim—for the ungodly. His own application of Scripture is different. It tells us, he says, in his proposal for using Irish manufactures, that 'oppression makes a wise man mad'. If, therefore, some men are not mad, it must be because they are not wise. In truth, it is characteristic of Swift that he could never learn the great lesson of submission even to the inevitable. His rage, which could find no better outlet, burnt inwardly and drove him mad.—Leslie Stephen's *Swift*, pp. 165, 166.

Compare Sterne's *Sermons* (No. XXXIII.).

References.—VIII. 11.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—Ecclesiastes*, p. 367. VIII. 12.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. iii. No. 1487. VIII. 16.—A. W. Momerie, *Agnosticism*, p. 252.

'There is one event to the righteous, and to the wicked.'—Ecclesiastes ix. 2.

It is verbally true, that in the sacred Scriptures it is written: *As is the good, so is the sinner, and he that sweareth as he that feareth an oath. A man hath no better thing under the sun, than to eat, drink, and be merry*, etc. But he who should repeat these words, and this assurance, to an ignorant man in the hour of his temptation, lingering at the door of an ale-house, or hesitating as to the testimony required of him in the court of justice, would, spite of this verbal truth, be a liar, and the murderer of his brother's conscience.—Coleridge, *The Friend*, v.

References.—IX. 3.—G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 64. IX. 7, 8.—J. Keble, *Sermons for Ascension Day to Trinity Sunday*, p. 315. J. Thomas, *Myrtle Street Pulpit*, vol. iii. p. 334. IX. 8.—H. J. Wilmot-Buxton, *Common Life Religion*, p. 117. S. Baring-Gould, *Village Preaching for a Year* (2nd Series), vol. ii. p. 226.

'Live joyfully with the wife whom thou lovest all the days of thy vanity.'—Ecclesiastes ix. 9.

Do you know what it is to love and to be loved? Do you know—not by hearsay merely, but by experience—this absorption of the life of one human being in another, the one man in the one woman, the one woman in the one man? For the time they, each to each, alike the centre and the sum, the very end and purpose of creation; the rest vague, phantasmal—they, each to each, the only abiding reality. For the time they, each through the other, possessors and interpreters of all things; this immense universe a setting merely, the sights and sounds, the glory and wonder of it, but ministers to their delight in one another. For them stars rise and set, and the wheat waves under the summer wind. For them the sea grows white westward, at evening, meeting the sky in long embrace. For them all fair pictures are painted; all songs sung; and even common things become instinct with a strange sacramental grace. For them the oracles are no longer dumb, the mysteries lie open, they walk with the gods.

This is the crown and triumph of the riddle of sex; wherein, for the time, the long torment, shame, and anguish of it is forgotten, so that man's curse becomes, for the time, his most exquisite blessing—a blessing in which body and spirit equally participate.—Lucas Malet.

It is not by renouncing the joys which lie close to us that we shall grow wise. As we grow wise, we unconsciously abandon the joys that now are beneath us.—Maeterlinck.

See also Mark Rutherford's *Autobiography*, p. 8 (Preface to second edition), and R. L. Stevenson's lines on 'The Celestial Surgeon' (in *Underwoods*).

'I SHALL marry Charlotte, we shall live here together all our lives and die here,' thought Barnabas, as he went up the hill. 'I shall lie in my coffin in the north room, and it will all be over.' But his heart leaped with joy. He stepped out proudly like a soldier in a battalion.'—M. E. WILKINS in *Pembroke*.

THE LAPSE OF TIME

'Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest.'—ECCLESIASTES IX. 10.

LIFE is ever crumbling away under us. What should we say to a man, who was placed on some precipitous ground, which was ever crumbling under his feet, and affording less and less secure footing, yet was careless about it? Or what should we say to one who suffered some precious liquor to run from its receptacle into the thoroughfare of men, without a thought to stop it? who carelessly looked on and saw the waste of it, becoming greater and greater every minute? But what treasure can equal time? It is the seed of eternity: yet we suffer ourselves to go on, year after year, hardly using it at all in God's service, or thinking it enough to give Him at most a tithe or a seventh of it, while we strenuously and heartily sow to the flesh, that from the flesh we may reap corruption. We try how little we can safely give to religion, instead of having the grace to give abundantly.—J. H. NEWMAN.

ECCLESIASTES IX. 10.

NOBLE, upright, self-relying Toil! who that knows thy solid worth and value, would be ashamed of thy hard hands, and thy obscure tasks, thy humble cottage, and hard couch, and homely fare! Save for thee and thy lessons, man in society would everywhere sink into a sad compound of the fiend and the wild beast; and this fallen world would be as certainly a moral as a natural wilderness. But I little thought of the excellence of thy character and of thy teachings, when, with a heavy heart, I set out on a morning of early spring, to take my first lesson from thee in a sandstone quarry.—HUGH MILLER, *My Schools and Schoolmasters*, chap. VIII.

'Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work . . . in the grave, whither thou goest.'—ECCLESIASTES IX. 10.

I LIE down on my child's grave and fill my mouth with the clay, and say nothing. . . . But then, dear Mosley, do not think that I do not react under the stroke: I am not merely passive. *This is* my action. Death teaches me to *act thus*—to cling with tenfold tenacity to those that remain. A man might, indeed, argue thus. The pain of separation from those we love is so intense that I will *not love*, or, at least, I will withdraw myself into a delicate suspension of bias, so that when the time comes I may not feel the pang, or hardly feel it. This would be the *economical* view, and a sufficiently base one. But I am taught by death to run the fullest flood into my family relations. The ground is this. *He* is gone: I have no certain ground whatever for expecting that that relation can be renewed. Therefore, I am thankful that I actualized it intensely, ardently, and effectually, while it existed; and now I will do the same for what is left to me; nay, I will do much more; for I did not *do enough*. He and I might have been intertwined a great deal more, and that we were not appears to me now a great loss. In this, as in everything else, I accept the words of the Ecclesiast—'What thine hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for'—you know the rest.—*Letters of* T. E. BROWN, vol. I. pp. 88, 89.

'Do it with thy might.'—ECCLESIASTES IX. 10.

HIS career was one of unbroken shame. He did not drink, he was exactly honest, he was never rude to his employers, yet he was everywhere discharged. Bringing no interest to his duties, he brought no attention; his day was a tissue of things neglected and things done amiss; and from place to place and from town to town he carried the character of one thoroughly incompetent.—R. L. STEVENSON, *The Ebb Tide*, I.

SEE RUSKIN'S *Lectures on Art*, p. 86.

HERE on earth we are as soldiers, fighting in a foreign land, that understand not the plan of the campaign, and have no need to understand it; seeing well what is at our hand to be done. Let us do it like soldiers, with submission, with courage, with a heroic joy. *Whatever thy hand findeth to do, do it with all thy might.*—CARLYLE.

REFERENCES.—IX. 10.—*Penny Pulpit*, No. 1605, p. 239. W. Brock, *Midsummer Morning Sermons*, p. 155. H. M. Butler, *Harrow School Sermons*, p. 398. J. H. Newman, *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, vol. vii. p. 1. C. Bosanquet, *Blossoms for the King's Garden*, p. 125. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. v. No. 259. *Ibid.* vol. xix. No. 1119. IX. 10, 11.—J. C. M. Bellew, *Sermons*, vol. iii. p. 35.

'The race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong.'—ECCLESIASTES IX. 11.

BETWEEN unarmed men the battle is to the strong, where the strong is no blunderer.—GEORGE ELIOT.

BORROW, writing in *Lavengro* of his father's abilities and misfortunes, declares that, 'with far inferior qualifications many a man has become a field-marshal or general . . . but the race is not always for the swift, nor the battle for the strong; indeed, I ought rather to say very seldom; certain it is that my father, with all his high military qualifications, never became emperor, field-marshal, or even general'.

SEE JOWETT'S *College Sermons*, pp. 244 f.

THE RACE NOT TO THE SWIFT

'I returned, and saw under the sun, that the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong.'—ECCLESIASTES IX. 11.

I. ONE of the favourite words of Dr. John Brown—the gentle author of *Rab and His Friends*—one of the words that was often on his lips was the word *unexpectedness*. And as we look on the men whom we have known since childhood, and whose lives we have watched unrolling in the years, there are very few of us who cannot discern that unexpected element.

(*a*) We may trace our text through all kinds of achievement. You have but to think of the books by which we live, or of those lives of thought or action which are our richest heritage, to be face to face with the incalculable element which lies in the Divine method of surprise. There is a hand at work we cannot stay, and it hath exalted those of low degree.

(*b*) Our text has singular significance in that universal search, the search for happiness. It is not those who have most to make them happy who always prove themselves the happy people.

And this is conspicuously true of Jesus Christ, the Man of Sorrows and acquainted with grief. I like sometimes to contrast the Man of Nazareth with the Emperor who was reigning then, Tiberius.

(*c*) Our text applies to the spiritual life, for not many wise, not many mighty are called. God hath chosen the weak things of the world to bring to naught those that are strong in battle. I know no sphere in human life where the element of unexpectedness so largely enters as in the sphere that we call spiritual, and in the movements and changes of the soul.

II. Let me suggest to you some of the moral values of this truth: (1) It is mighty to keep us from discouragement, and to cheer us when the lights are burning dim. It gives a chance to mediocre people, to commonplace and undistinguished thousands, when above all might and brilliance is a power that has a way of working to unexpected ends. (2) It is meant to wean us from all pride, and to keep us watchful, humble, and dependent. (3) It clears the ground for God, and leaves a space to recognize Him in. If the strongest were sure of triumph in every battle there would be little room on the field for the Divine. Just because *He* reigns, the battle is not always to the strong. — G. H. Morrison, *The Wings of the Morning*, p. 66.

References.—IX. 11-18.—T. C. Finlayson, *A Practical Exposition of Ecclesiastes*, p. 213. R. Buchanan, *Ecclesiastes; its Meaning and Lessons*, p. 344. IX. 12.—S. A. Brooke, *Sermons* (2nd Series), p. 178.

'Yet no man remembered that same poor man.'—Ecclesiastes ix. 14, 15.

Here the corruption of states is set forth, that esteem not virtue or merit longer than they have use of it. —Bacon.

See Spenser's *Ruines of Time*, p. 422 f. Also Addison in *The Spectator* (No. 464).

Schopenhauer somewhere observes that 'people in general have eyes and ears, but not much else—little judgment and even little memory. There are many services to the State quite beyond the range of their understanding.'

References.—IX. 14, 15.—J. Thomas, *Myrtle Street Pulpit*, vol. ii. p. 97. S. Baring-Gould, *One Hundred Sermon-Sketches*, p. 95. X. 1.—*Ibid.* p. 10. X. 7. — Spurgeon, *Morning by Morning*, p. 140.

FENCES AND SERPENTS

'Whoso breaketh an hedge, a serpent shall bite him.'—Ecclesiastes x. 8.

Any attempt to transgress the laws of life which God has enjoined is sure to bring out the hissing snake with its poison.

I. All life is given us rigidly walled up. The walls are blessings, like the parapet on a mountain road, that keeps the traveller from toppling over the face of the cliff.

II. Every attempt to break down these limitations brings poison into the life. Some serpents' bites inflame, some paralyse; and either an inflamed or a palsied conscience is the result of all wrongdoing.

III. All the poison may be got out of your veins if you like. When Moses lifted up the serpent the people had but to look upon it to be cured.—A. Maclaren, *The Freeman*, 13 April, 1888.

References.—X. 8.—G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p 345. A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—Ecclesiastes*, p. 372.

'The lips of a fool will swallow up himself . . . and the end of his talk is mischievous madness.'—Ecclesiastes x. 12 f.

No world, or thing here below, ever fell into misery without having first fallen into folly.—Carlyle.

The incendiary and his kindling combustibles had been already sketched by Solomon with the rapid yet faithful outline of a master in the art: *The beginning of the words of his mouth is foolishness and the end of his talk mischievous madness.* If in the spirit of prophecy the wise ruler had been present to our own times and their procedures; if while he sojourned in the valley of vision he had actually heard the very harangues of our reigning demagogues to the convened populace; could he have more faithfully characterized either the speakers or the speeches? Whether in spoken or in printed addresses, whether in periodical journals or in yet cheaper implements of irritation, the ends are the same, the process is the same, and the same is their general line of conduct. On all occasions, but most of all and with a more bustling malignity whenever any public distress inclines the lower classes to turbulence and renders them more apt to be alienated from the government of their country—in all places and at every opportunity pleading to the poor and ignorant, nowhere and at no time are they found actually pleading for them. —Coleridge.

I have seen wicked men and fools, a great many of both; and I believe they both get paid in the end, but the fools first.—R. L. Stevenson.

'A fool also multiplieth words.'—Ecclesiastes x. 14.

A large number of people seem to be conscious of existence only when they are making a noise.—Schopenhauer.

Reference.—X. 15.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—Ecclesiastes*, p. 381.

'Curse not the king, no not in thy thought; and curse not the rich in thy bedchamber: for a bird of the air shall carry the voice, and that which hath wings shall tell the matter.'—Ecclesiastes x. 20.

At Siena I was tabled in the house of one Alberto Scipioni, an old Roman courtier, in dangerous times. . . . At my departure for Rome I had won confidence enough to beg his advice how I might carry myself securely there, without offence of others, or of mine own conscience. 'Signor Arrigo mio,' says he, '*pensieri stretti ed il viso sciolto* (thoughts close, countenance open) will go safely over the whole world.'—Sir Henry Wotton to *Milton*.

In *The Life of a Scottish Probationer* (p. 114) there is an extract from a sermon preached by Thomas Davidson to the troops at Aldershot, which opens thus:—

'Over the entrance of a very old house in an ancient Scottish town, I read, not long ago, the following inscription:—

Since word is thrall and thought is free,
Keep well thy tongue, I counsel thee;

that is to say, "Speech is liable to criticism, and may bring you into trouble; be wise and careful, therefore, in the exercise of it". The inscription, however, gathers additional significance from the fact that the house in question stands within a hundred yards of a royal residence, and must have been built at a time when a more stringent law of treason rendered it very dangerous to make very free, even in the most private of conversations, with anything appertaining to constituted authority.'

References.—XI.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxxviii. No. 2264.

SOWING AND REAPING

'Cast thy bread upon the waters: for thou shalt find it after many days.'—Ecclesiastes xi. 1.

By general consent the primary reference of the text is to the Egyptian custom of scattering seed upon the oozy soil formed by the overflowing of the Nile. To the thoughtful mind there is a remarkable resemblance between the laws of the physical and the moral harvest:—

I. The Natural Harvest.—The golden grain once more gathered in reveals:—

(*a*) The power of God. Think of the vast machinery that He employs to produce our daily bread.

(*b*) The wisdom of God. The electric telegraph, the steam engine, and all the other wonderful inventions of men are clumsy when compared with the skill of God in rearing a stalk of corn.

(*c*) The goodness of God. Every autumn the race is within a month of starvation. But though so near the end of our food supplies we have never passed or even reached the verge of universal famine. Seed time and harvest have never failed.

II. The Spiritual Harvest.—We will look at the same three aspects of the Lord's work in the moral world:—

(*a*) The power of God. Never doubt who grasps the sceptre. 'The Lord reigneth.' Neither let us fret or despair because we think the kingdom of God is spreading slowly.

(*b*) The wisdom of God has its supreme manifestation in the plan of salvation. Christ is the only founder of a religious system who does not speak with a provincial accent, because he is a teacher sent from God. In Christ are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

(*c*) The goodness of God. He delighteth not in the death of the wicked. He will love all men to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth.

'Cast thy bread upon the waters. . . . Give a portion to seven and also to eight.'—Ecclesiastes xi. 1, 2.

It is 'Cast thy bread upon the waters'. All we can do is to cast the bread. The waters run and sway to and fro, and swallow the bread. But we have nothing to do but to cast it. 'In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thy hand, for thou knowest not which shall prosper.' And we have nothing to do but sow. Fifty years of preaching seems like fifty years of beating the air; yet every Truth has a vitality like a grain of corn. And though we never may know it, many a Truth strikes root.—Cardinal Manning.

References.—XI. 1.—J. Hamilton, *The Royal Preacher*, p. 197. T. C. Finlayson, *A Practical Exposition of Ecclesiastes*, p. 239. H. J. Wilmot-Buxton, *Sunday Lessons for Daily Life*, p. 325. E. A. Askew, *Sermons Preached in Greystoke Church*, p. 225. XI. 1-6.—R. Buchanan, *Ecclesiastes: its Meaning and Lessons*, p. 391.

'He that regardeth the clouds shall not reap.'—Ecclesiastes xi. 4.

We ought to gather in souls as the farmer gathers under a lowering sky in autumn, believing that the storm may next day rush down upon his fields.—A. A. Bonar.

The man who will not work becomes an astrologer.—Arabian Proverb.

There is no greater impediment of action than an over-curious observance of decency, and the guide of decency, which is time and season. For, as Solomon saith, *He that observeth the wind shall not sow:* a man must make his opportunity as oft as find it.—Bacon.

See also Bacon's *Essays*, lii.

WEATHER-WISE

'He that observeth the wind shall not sow; and he that regardeth the cloud shall not reap.'—Ecclesiastes xi. 4.

Work was once the recreation of Paradise; it is now the stern necessity of daily life. It is the tax we pay for life.

I. The text exhibits the indolent and undecided.

(*a*) Inaction may spring from indolence.

(*b*) Spiritual idleness prevails.

(*c*) Excessive prudence — may apply to some churches, to spiritual prospects, to conversion of individuals.

II. Folly seen when we consider that the present

alone is ours. God is frugal of time; gives but one moment at a time; does not give a second until He withdraws the first. The best way to prepare for the last moment is to use the present well.

III. Regularity of nature encourages the farmer, but it may mislead those who think that length of day must be theirs, that gracious opportunity must come with constancy of the seasons. God has a right to set bounds beyond which we cannot pass. —J. R. Gregory, *Harvest and Thanksgiving Services*, p. 192.

THE FAULT OF OVER-PRUDENCE

'He that observeth the wind shall not sow; and he that regardeth the clouds shall not reap.'—Ecclesiastes xi. 4.

Just as a man may fail through too much zeal, so may a man fail through too much prudence.

I. Apply our text to the important matter of our bodily health. If a man is always thinking of his health, the chances are he will have a sorry harvest. I am not speaking of reasonable care; I am speaking of morbid and worrying anxiety.

II. Apply our text to the difficulties that beset our daily work, for we may so fix our eyes upon these difficulties that all the strength is taken from the arm. Genius is prodigal, and scatters its pearls abroad; genius, like childhood, is equal to its problem. It is men of the one talent and mediocre mind who are tempted to the sin of over-prudence. I have known so many average men who failed, because they were waiting for an impossible perfection.

III. Apply our text to moral effort, and to the battles we fight against besetting sins. Sometimes in such hours we fail through recklessness, but far more often through some over-prudence. There are times when it is folly to observe the winds. There are times when it is madness to regard the clouds. Past failures—all that your friends may say—'What is that to thee? Follow thou Me.' In all high venture there is a glorious blindness—blindness to everything except the beckoning hand.

IV. Our text has notable application in the great work of national reform. A certain disregard of obvious difficulties, and all that would discourage lesser spirits, has ever been one mark of great reformers whether in the Church or in the State.

It is an easy thing to make fun of the enthusiast who is so terribly in earnest that he is not wise. But I will tell you the man who is a thousand times more fatal to any cause in Church and State than the enthusiast, and that is the man who always eyes the clouds and spends his days in shrinking from the wind.

V. Apply our text to the great matter of decision for Christ Jesus. Think of Peter when he walked upon the sea to get to Christ. 'Lord, if it be Thou, bid me come to Thee,' and Jesus across the water cried to Peter, 'Come'; whereupon Peter leaped out of the ship and walked upon the water to his Lord. Then he regarded the clouds—how the wild rack was flying! He observed the wind—how boisterous it was!—and so observing, he began to sink, and had to cry, 'Lord, save me, or I perish'.—G. H. Morrison, *The Wings of the Morning*, p. 207.

Illustration.—When told that Duke George of Saxony was lying in wait for him, 'I would go,' said Luther, 'if it rained Duke Georges'. When told that the devil would catch him if he went to the diet, 'I would go if there were as many devils in Worms as there are tiles upon the housetops'. The winds were bitter and the clouds black as midnight, and Luther sowed and reaped because he disregarded them.—G. H. Morrison, *The Wings of the Morning*, p. 213.

References.—XI. 4.—J. Bateman, *Sermons Preached in Guernsey*, p. 223. J. L. Richardson, *Sermons for Harvest*, p. 76. H. P. Liddon, *Old Testament Outlines*, p. 163. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxxviii. No. 2264. XI. 6.—Spurgeon, *Evening by Evening*, p. 266. XI. 6-10.—*Ibid. Sermons*, vol. lii. No. 3001.

'Truly the light is sweet.'—Ecclesiastes xi. 7.

Beside this passage one may set the conversation between Lavengro and Mr. Petulengro, the gipsy, in the twenty-fifth chapter of Borrow's *Lavengro*:—

'Life is sweet, brother.'

'Do you think so?'

'Think so!—There's night and day, brother, both sweet things; sun, moon, and stars, brother, all sweet things; there's likewise a wind on the heath. Life is very sweet, brother; who would wish to die? Wish to die, indeed! A Rommany chal would wish to live for ever.'

'In sickness, Jasper?'

'There's the sun and stars, brother.'

'In blindness, Jasper?'

'There's the wind on the heath, brother; if I could only feel that, I would gladly live for ever.'

'A pleasant thing it is for the eyes to behold the sun.'—Ecclesiastes xi. 7.

'A pleasant thing it is to behold the sun,' these first Gothic builders would seem to have said to themselves; and at Amiens, for instance, the walls have disappeared; the entire building is composed of its windows.—Pater's *Miscellaneous Studies*, p. 110.

The great sunlit square is silent—silent, that is, for the largest city on earth. A slumberous silence of abundant light, of the full summer day, of the high flood of summer hours whose tide can rise no higher. A time to linger and dream under the beautiful breast of heaven, heaven brooding and descending in pure light upon man's handiwork. If the light shall thus come in, and of its mere loveliness overcome every aspect of dreariness, why shall not the light of thought, and hope—the light of the soul—overcome and sweep away the dust of our lives?—Richard Jefferies, *Sunlight in a London Square*.

Reference.—XI. 7.—S. Gregory, *How to Steer a Ship*, p. 126.

'Let him remember the days of darkness.'—Ecclesiastes xi. 8.

Dean Stanley 'told me that except the phrase ἡλίου δύντος αὐγοῖς he could hardly remember an instance

in which a classical writer referred to the setting sun; the fact was, that they disliked the idea of sunset, and recoiled from the end of everything. Whether he was right—nay, whether he was quite serious in this opinion, I am not certain. At any rate, in modern as well as in ancient times, the *finifugal* tendency, as we may call it, is apparent. It takes manifold forms and disguises. It is especially noticeable in friends who, like Shelley, have a morbid abhorrence of wishing one good-bye; who feel this abhorrence strongly in proportion as they like one, and are fearful that they will never see one again; and who, though truthful in other matters, will resort to any evasion or artifice to throw dust in one's eyes as to the day of their departure.'—Tollemache's *Safe Studies*, p. 374.

'Let him remember the days of darkness. . . . For all these things God will bring thee into judgment.'—Ecclesiastes xi. 8 f.

'Would you judge of the lawfulness or unlawfulness of pleasure,' she said, 'take this rule: whatever weakens your reason, impairs the tenderness of your conscience, obscures your sense of God, or takes off the relish of spiritual things;—in short, whatever increases the strength and authority of your body over your mind, that thing is sin to you, however innocent it may be in itself.' Well might Wesley consult upon such questions a mother who was capable of reasoning and writing thus. His father expressed a different opinion: 'All men,' he said, 'were apt to verge towards extremes, but mortification was still an indispensable Christian duty. If the young man will *rejoice in his youth*, let him take care that his joys are innocent; this, only this, remember, that *for all these things* God will bring him into judgment.'—Southey's *Life of Wesley*.

The old rigid order in Greece breaks down; a new power appears on the scene. It is the Athenian genius, with its freedom from restraint, its flexibility, its bold reason, its keen enjoyment of life. Well, let it try what it can do. Up to a certain point it is clearly in the right; possibly it may be in the right altogether. Let it have free play, and show what it can do. *In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thine hand; for thou knowest not whether shall prosper, either this or that, or whether they both shall be alike good.* Whether the old wine is good, or the new wine, or whether they are both of them good, and must both of them be used, cannot be known without trying. Let the Athenians try, therefore, and let their genius have full swing. 'Rejoice; walk in the ways of thine heart and in the sight of thine eyes; *but know thou that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment.*' In other words, your enjoyment of life, your freedom from restraint, your clear and bold reason, your flexibility, are natural and excellent; but on condition that you know how to live with them, that you make a real success of them.—M. Arnold (Speech at Eton).

'Rejoice, . . . but remember.'—Ecclesiastes xi. 9-xii. 1.

When I first entered Ranelagh, it gave an expansion and gay sensation to my mind, such as I never experienced anywhere else. But . . . it went to my heart to consider that there was not one in all that brilliant circle that was not afraid to go home and think.—Johnson to *Boswell*.

Compare *Rasselas*, xvi.

We have got a new family life, which is infinitely genial and charming and natural, which gives free vent to the feelings, and cares liberally for culture and advancement in life. Only the sense of obligation, of duty to God, of living forward into eternity, has disappeared.—C. H. Pearson.

See Jowett's *College Sermons*, pp. 133 f.

References.—XI. 9.—J. Thomas, *Myrtle Street Pulpit*, vol. iii. p. 381. A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—Ecclesiastes*, p. 391.

'Remove sorrow from thy heart.'—Ecclesiastes xi. 10.

We are grateful to anyone who reminds us that there is nothing especially meritorious in gloom. Virtue will not be its own reward unless we have the honesty to admit that we have not given up anything much pleasanter for its sake. *Un saint triste est un triste saint.* (The nearest thing in English may perhaps be 'a sad saint is a sorry saint'.) Apparently, too, people are apt to forget that cheerfulness of mind is a habit which requires cultivation like any other.—From *The Spectator*, 27 August, 1904, p. 281.

Compare Dante's *Inferno*, vii. 121 f.

References.—XII.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxxviii. No. 2264. *Ibid.* vol. l. No. 3001.

'Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth.'—Ecclesiastes xii. 1.

Samuel Rutherford, in some letters addressed to young Scotchmen, often enlarges on this idea. 'A young man is often a dressed lodging for the devil to dwell in.' 'I know that missive letters go between the devil and young blood. Satan hath a friend at court in the heart of youth; and there pride, luxury, lust, revenge, forgetfulness of God, are hired agents.' 'Youth ordinarily is a fast and ready servant for Satan to run errands.' 'Believe it, my lord,'—this in a letter to a young Scottish nobleman—'it is hardly credible what a nest of dangerous temptations youth is; how inconsiderate, foolish, proud, vain, heady, rash, profane, and careless of God, this piece of your life is. . . . For then affections are on horseback, lofty and stirring, and therefore, oh, what a sweet couple, what a glorious yoke are youth and grace, Christ and a young man! This is a meeting not to be found in every town.'

Kingsley, in *North Devon*, describing the wreck of a ship on the Hartland Cliffs, tells of the sad records found in her log-book. 'Notice after notice, "on this day such an one died," "on this day such an one was washed away"—the log kept up to the last, even when there was only that to tell, by the stern, business-like

merchant skipper, whoever he was; and how at last, when there was neither food nor water, the strong man's heart seemed to have quailed, or, perhaps, risen with a prayer, jotted down in the log, "The Lord have mercy on us!"—and then a blank of several pages, and, scribbled with a famine-shaken hand, "Remember thy Creator in the days of thy youth"—and so the log and the ship were left to the rats, which covered the deck when our men boarded her.'

'While the evil days come not.'—Ecclesiastes xii. 1.

I have made a sketch of a golden twelve-rayed sun with the clock in the centre. The rays correspond to the hours, and in each of the golden points a word is painted in Gothic letters. Here they are as they stand in succession: I. we begin, II. we want, III. we learn, IIII. we obey, V. we love, VI. we hope, VII. we search, VIII. we suffer, IX. we wait, X. we forgive, XI. we resign, XII. we end. The advancing handle marks the hour and its word, and there is many a one we should like to pass quickly by, so as to tarry longer at others—but we must accept all the hours, the good and the bad ones, as they follow each other on life's inexorable great clock.—*The Letters Which Never Reached Him*, p. 206.

See Jowett's *College Sermons*, pp. 1 f.

References.—XII. 1.—W. Brock, *Midsummer Morning Sermons*, p. 68. XII. 1, 2.—W. H. Simcox, *The Cessation of Prophecy*, p. 201. XII. 1, 6, 7.—J. M. C. Bellew, *Sermons*, vol. ii. p. 289. XII. 1-7, 13, 14.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—Ecclesiastes*, p. 402.

'The clouds return after the rain.—Ecclesiastes xii. 2.

Things are alive, and the life at the heart of them, that keeps them going, is the great, beautiful God. So the sun returns for ever after the clouds. A doubting man, like him who wrote Ecclesiastes, puts the evil last, and says *the clouds return after the rain;* but the Christian knows that One has mastery who makes the joy the last in every song.—George Macdonald.

'The sound of the grinding is low.'—Ecclesiastes xii. 3, 4.

After the water-skins a pair of mill-stones is the most necessary husbandry in an Arabian household. To grind their corn is the housewives' labour; and the dull rumour of the running mill-stones is as it were a comfortable voice of food in an Arabian village, when in the long sunny hours there is often none other human sound. The drone of mill-stones may be heard before the daylight in the nomad menzils.—Doughty's *Arabia Deserta*, ii. p. 180.

'Man goeth to his long home.'—Ecclesiastes xii. 5.

Solomon saith, *Man goeth to his long home.* Short preparation will not fit so long a journey. O let me not put it off till the last, to have my oil to buy, when I am to burn it, but let me so dispose of myself, that when I am to die I may have nothing to do but to die.—Thomas Fuller.

References.—XII. 5.—E. A. Askew, *Sermons Preached in Greystoke Church*, p. 156. D. Swing, *American Pulpit of To-day*, vol. i. p. 205. J. M. Neale, *Sermons for Some Feast Days in the Christian Year*, p. 177.

THE INDIVIDUALITY OF THE SOUL

'The spirit shall return unto God Who gave it.'—Ecclesiastes xii. 7.

Survey some populous town: crowds are pouring through the streets; some on foot, some in carriages; while the shops are full, and the houses too, could we see into them. Every part of it is full of life. Hence we gain a general idea of splendour, magnificence, opulence, and energy. But what is the truth? why, that every being in that great concourse is his own centre and all things about him are but shades, but a 'vain shadow,' in which he 'walketh and disquieteth himself in vain'. He has his own hopes and fears, desires, judgments, and aims; he is everything to himself, and no one else is really anything. No one outside of him can really touch him, can touch his soul, his immortality; he must live with himself for ever. He has a depth within him unfathomable, an infinite abyss of existence; and the scene in which he bears part for the moment is but like a gleam of sunshine upon its surface. When we read history, we meet with accounts of great slaughters and massacres, great pestilences, famines, conflagrations, and so on; and here again we are accustomed in an especial way to regard collections of people as if individual units. We cannot understand that a multitude is a collection of immortal souls. I say immortal souls: each of those multitudes, not only had while He was upon earth, but has a soul, which did in its own time but return to God who gave it, and not perish, and which now lives unto Him. All those millions upon millions of human beings who ever trod the earth and saw the sun successively, are at this very moment in existence all together. . . . We may recollect when children, perhaps, once seeing a certain person, and it is almost like a dream to us now that we did. It seems like an accident which goes and is all over, like some creature of the moment, which has no existence beyond it. The rain falls, and the wind blows; and showers and storms have no existence beyond the time when we felt them; they are nothing in themselves. But if we have but once seen any child of Adam, we have seen an immortal soul. It has not passed away as a breeze or sunshine, but it lives; it lives at this moment in one of those many places, whether of bliss or misery, in which all souls are reserved until the end.—J. H. Newman.

THE TWO RETURNS

'Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God Who gave it.'—Ecclesiastes xii. 7.

The book of Ecclesiastes has been described as the 'confession of a man of wide experience, looking back upon his past life, and looking out upon the disorders and calamities which surround him'.

The subject of the paragraph is the wisdom of remembering God in youth. A lively picture is drawn

of the infirmities and incapacities of old age, as the best of reasons why the great 'remembering' should not be deferred till that part of life. Let us consider the great end which is before each of us—an end in which each must be alone—an end which is also a beginning. The fact of death, the corporeal fact, is full of significance, and should never be frowned away. If this fact were pondered over, if it even were rehearsed to ourselves morning by morning, it would cause some alterations in the habits which we allow, and in the lives which we live. It is, however, the other half of the text which gives the chief solemnity even to this. If the whole of dying were just the getting rid of the mortal then there would be no positive 'sting' in death. But 'the spirit must return unto God who gave it'. It is commonly said that the Old Testament has no revelation of immortality. What can we say of the text? Is it consistent with the dream of extinction, of absorption, of annihilation? Why not say then at once, dust and spirit together shall return to earth as they were? This we say—that no saint of God from first days till latest was ever left destitute of the instinct of immortality.

I. 'The spirit. It is one half of us. It contains the 'willing' of which the body does the 'running'. This spirit is God's gift. Angel, I must be, or else devil, in virtue of this gift.

II. The return. The spirit has to go back to its Giver. It was not for Solomon to enter into niceties and subtleties such as those of the intermediate state, the Hades, between death and resurrection. Enough for him to see the 'return'.

III. The receiver. 'To God Who gave it.' That spirit as it came from God's hand was not necessitated to evil. In what state, of what colour does it return? Oh, to think of carrying all this filth into heaven! to think of going back to the Father of Spirits with that lie, with that lust black and hideous upon thee! It is this which frightens and confounds us. The Gospel of our Lord does not leave us in despair: 'Come unto Me,' I will save, My rod and staff shall support.—C. J. Vaughan, *The Clerical Library*, vol. II. p. 165.

References.—XII. 7.—W. H. Hutchings, *Sermon-Sketches*, p. 319. J. C. M. Bellew, *Sermons*, vol. III. p. 81.

THE PESSIMISTIC AND OPTIMISTIC VIEWS OF LIFE

'Vanity of vanities, saith the preacher, all is vanity.'—Ecclesiastes xii. 8.

'Jesus saith, I am come that ye might have life and might have it more abundantly.'—John x. 10.

These two texts, one of the Old Testament and one of the New, mark very pointedly the eternal contrast between the two ways of life possible to man, the one way darkened with the riddle of an inscrutable mystery, the other brightened with the Gospel message of a coming King.

I. 'What is the plan of life,' men ask its purpose, its aim? And to that riddle of the Sphinx there are always two answers. 'There is no plan,' cries the old Jewish sceptic. 'Life itself, human life, is but a grim game of chance played by a silent angel who seems to play with loaded dice.' In the end the dust is laid upon us; we go down into the darkness of the tomb and all is soundless and silent. And on the other hand, there is the Gospel answer of joy and hope and victory. Christ has come that we might have life, and might have it more abundantly. God has a plan for the world in Christ, a great educational plan by which both the perfection of the individual and the perfection of the race is to be accomplished. To the dark riddle of life, which is the true answer?

II. There are few more tragic books in all sacred literature than the book of Ecclesiastes, in which the old Jewish sage preaches to mankind his sad and mournful sermon. We know how, in his later life, he had fallen from his great estate, and to gratify his passion and pride had outraged the most sacred ordinances, neglected the most sacred duties that can cluster round life. It is at that time, when the bloom of purity and grace had gone out of him, when his sin had made him blind to his blessings of nature, and home, and God, and his bad life had drawn bad men towards him and driven good men away, when his relation to women is such as to drive him from the presence of such pure and noble women as, thank God, never failed out of the world—it is then that Solomon is represented as writing his cynical estimate of God and nature, life and death, men and women. Some centuries after this first sad sermon upon the meaning of life was written, there came to that same land and people another teacher born, it was said, after the flesh of the same royal line as the first, and upon Him as upon His earthly ancestor long before it was laid to preach upon the same mighty theme. That sermon as you know is handed down to us, and the distance between the two sermons bridges the whole distance between the two great estimates of life taught on this side by Jesus and on that by Solomon. Take the kernel of each in a representative sentence. 'Vanity of vanities, all is vanity,' cries the first preacher. 'Blessed are the poor, blessed are the merciful, blessed are the frank and open-hearted, blessed are the hungry for justice, blessed are the forgiving, blessed are the pure, blessed are the peacemakers, blessed are the sufferers for right,' says the second.

III. It is possible of course to regard the teaching of Jesus under very many different aspects, but if you are studying it as a way of life and are putting it into comparison with some such philosophy as that to be found in the book of Ecclesiastes, there are two principles which by and by you will find fundamental in Christ's teaching, and which have absolutely no place in the scheme of the old Jewish sceptic and his modern representatives. Those principles are these: first God has a plan for the world, a great educational plan, by which both the perfection of the individual and the perfection of the race is to be accomplished; secondly God means man to co-operate

with him in the working out of the plan.—C. W. Stubbs, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxxii. 1907, p. 113.

References.—XII. 8-14.—T. C. Finlayson, *A Practical Exposition of Ecclesiastes*, p. 267.

'He . . . set in order many proverbs.'—Ecclesiastes xii. 9.

That which the droning world, chained to appearances, will not allow the realist to say in his own words, it will suffer him to say in proverbs without contradiction. And this law of laws (i.e. Nemesis) which the pulpit, the senate, and the college deny, is hourly preached in all markets and workshops by flight of proverbs, whose teaching is as true and as omnipresent as that of birds and flies.—Emerson.

References.—XII. 9, 10.—R. Buchanan, *Ecclesiastes: its Meaning and Lessons*, p. 422. J. H. Jowett, *Contemporary Pulpit*, vol. vi. p. 204.

REQUIREMENTS AND DIFFICULTIES OF THE PREACHER

'The preacher sought to find out acceptable words,' etc.—Ecclesiastes xii. 10, 11.

The preacher's work is a serious business for three reasons:—

I. Because it is his duty to speak for God. He is an apostle, a man with a message. He preaches not in his own name. He is one who is sent to declare the counsel of the Most High God. A man may philosophize as much as he pleases, but when he preaches he must speak for God and keep within the horizon of that which is clearly revealed. He is an ambassador. With what fidelity and with what searching of heart, and communion with the Holy Spirit, he should declare in the words of man the counsel of God.

II. Preaching is a serious business, because it is speaking about the interests of the soul. That is a liberal definition of the objects of preaching. The preacher's duty is to convince men of sin and lead them to salvation from sin; and sin of whatever origin ends, unless it is cured, in death, and salvation, wherever it begins to work, brings the gift of God through Jesus Christ, which is eternal life. The preacher must serve His Master rationally, freely, carefully, speaking the truth in love upon every subject that has a bearing upon the welfare of the soul.

III. There are certain difficulties which ought to be remembered. For one thing, preaching has been going on in the world for a long time, and that is a fact which makes absolute originality difficult, if not impossible. And yet there are people who demand originality as if it were more important than the truth. Another difficulty that the preacher has to face is the intense competition of other claims upon the interests of the people. The real thing is the advance, the forward movement, and if it can be done with the joy and courage and inspiration and happiness within you, so much the better, so much the surer.—H. Van Dyke, *Homiletic Review*, vol. lii. 1906, p. 461.

'The words of the wise are as goads.'—Ecclesiastes xii. 11.

Bentham used to declare that his own thoughts were mainly excited by favourite aphorisms and proverbs, such as those of Bacon. These furnished the foundation for his arguments and the stimulus of his ideas and opinions.

See Walton's description of Andrew Melville as 'master of a great wit; a wit full of knots and clenches'.

'Give me,' says Thomas Fuller, 'such solid reasons whereon I may rest and rely. Solomon saith, *The words of the wise are like nails, fastened by the masters of the assembly.* A nail is firm, and will hold driving in, and will hold driven in. Send me such arguments.'

Thomas Lower also came to visit us, and offered us money, which we refused; accepting his love nevertheless. He asked us many questions concerning our denying the Scriptures to be the Word of God; and concerning the sacraments, and such like; to all which he received satisfaction. I spoke particularly to him, and he afterwards said my words were as a flash of lightning, they ran so through him. He said he never met with such men in his life, for they knew the thoughts of his heart, and were as wise as the master-builders of the assemblies, that fastened their words like nails. He came to be convinced of the truth and remains a Friend to this day.—George Fox's *Journal*, 1656.

A collection of anecdotes and maxims is of the highest value to the man of the world, if he knows how to introduce the one clearly into his conversation at the proper moment, and to recall the other when occasion arises.—Goethe.

THE WORDS OF THE WISE

'The words of the wise are as goads, and as nails fastened by the masters of assemblies, which are given from One Shepherd.'—Ecclesiastes xii. 11.

The lesson we learn from our text is that God's words are meant to stimulate men and spur them on. In all circumstances of an outward kind men need to be excited into spiritual alacrity. In prosperity a man is apt to say, 'My mountain is strong; I shall not be moved,' as the flocks and herds would linger amid tufts of grass. In adversity, too, men need spiritual stimulus. Adversity is a powerful instrument in God's hands for the spiritual good of man; but in itself it only depresses and unnerves. God in His Providence often steps in and helps men in an outward way, bringing them down from prosperity on the one hand, raising them out of adversity on the other. But His chosen way is rather to spur them on in the midst of untoward circumstances than to remove these. God's favourite work is done in man's soul, and not on his outward path. His words are as goads.

I. Even in regard to intellectual activity, God's words act as goads. The very form of the Bible stirs men out of mental slumber. It speaks in history,

prophecy, parable, paradox. It often needs great labour to understand it, to square it with known facts, to harmonize its own utterances. Men rail at this; but, meanwhile, the work intended is done. They are forced to think; and, as is admitted on all hands, the knowledge of the Bible and mental activity are at the present day co-terminous. And in anything like a true revival of religion, one which sends men to their Bibles, intense mental activity ensues.

II. God's words act on men's hopes and fears. They will not let men rest in the present. 'This is not your rest.' Earth is only a wilderness, with the Promised Land at the farther side, a race-course with the goal at the end, a warfare with victory or defeat as the issue. Will ye not be goaded on? This is the short spring in which we must sow. What a man soweth he shall reap. What will be in the end thereof?

III. God's words stir up men by witnessing to their corruptions. We are morally diseased. As the chambers in Ezekiel's vision showed greater and yet greater abominations, so do God's searching words lead us to ever-new and humiliating discoveries in our own heart.

IV. God's words goad on by providing a remedy for our corruptions. It needs the voice of the Deliverer to rouse a people from the base contentment to which despair has brought them. Christ's call is, 'Flee to the stronghold, ye prisoners of hope'. Rise, He calleth thee, He Whose voice the very grave obeys. 'Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.'

V. God's words give rest to the soul. 'I will give you rest'—rest from fear; rest in Christ's finished work; rest in God's promises; rest here and for ever.

'Of making many books there is no end; and much reading is a weariness of the flesh.'—Ecclesiastes xii. 12.

Of making many books there is no end, complained the preacher; and did not perceive how highly he was praising letters as an occupation. There is no end, indeed, to making books or experiments, or to travel, or to gathering wealth. Problem gives rise to problem. We may study for ever, and we are never as learned as we would. . . . In the infinite universe there is room for our swiftest diligence, and to spare. It is not like the works of Carlyle, which can be read to an end. Even in a corner of it, in a private park, or in the neighbourhood of a single hamlet, the weather and the seasons keep so deftly changing that although we walk there for a lifetime there will be always something new to startle and delight us.—R. L. Stevenson, *El Dorado*.

Solomon informs us that much reading is a weariness to the flesh; but neither he, nor other inspired author, tells us that such and such reading is unlawful; yet certainly had God thought good to limit us therein, it had been much more expedient to have told us what was unlawful than what was wearisome. —From Milton's *Areopagitica*.

Much reading deprives the mind of all elasticity; it is like keeping a spring perpetually under pressure.—Schopenhauer.

Compare *Religio Medici*, I. sec. xxiv.

I have never cared much for books, except in so far as they might help to quicken our sense of the reality of life, and enable us to enter into its right and wrong.—F. J. A. Hort.

More than thirty years ago I remember meeting on the Surrey downs a remarkable-looking man: one who has been thought to be, as perhaps he was, a great teacher of this and a former generation. Shall I tell you his name? It was Thomas Carlyle. He said to me, 'I am wearied out with the burden of writing, and I am just come to spend a day or two in walking about among the hills'.—Jowett (in 1885).

It is an uneasy lot, at best, to be what we call highly taught and yet not to enjoy; to be present at this great spectacle of life and never to be liberated from a small, hungry, shivering self—never to be fully possessed by the glory we behold, never to have our consciousness rapturously transformed into the vividness of a thought, the ardour of a passion, the energy of an action, but always to be scholarly and uninspired, ambitious and timid, scrupulous and dimsighted.—George Eliot.

See Emerson's *The American Scholar*, II.

'Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter.'—Ecclesiastes xii. 13.

See Butler's *Sermons*, No. xv., at the close, and the last paragraph of Sterne's sermon on Psalm iv. 6, with his sermon (No. xxxix.) on this very text.

'Fear God.'—Ecclesiastes xii. 13.

I have too strong a sense of the value of religion myself not to wish that my children should have so much of it (I speak of feeling, not of creed) as is compatible with reason. I have no ambition for them, and can only further say in the dying words of Julie, *n'en faites point de savans—faites-en des hommes bienfaisants et justes*.—W. Rathbone Greg.

'*Gil Blas*,' says Kingsley in his *Lectures on the Ancien Régime*, 'is a collection of diseased specimens. No man or woman in the book, lay or clerical, gentle or simple, as far as I can remember, do their duty in any wise, even if they recollect that they have any duty to do. Greed, chicane, hypocrisy, uselessness, are the ruling laws of human society. A new book of Ecclesiastes, crying, "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity," the "conclusion of the whole matter" being left out, and the new Ecclesiast rendered thereby diabolic, instead of like that old one, Divine. For, instead of "Fear God, and keep His commandments, for this is the whole duty of man," Le Sage sends forth the new conclusion, "Take care of thyself and feed on thy neighbours, for that is the whole duty of man". And very faithfully was his advice—easy enough to obey at all times—obeyed for nearly a century after *Gil Blas* appeared.'

THE RELIGIOUS LIFE

'Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep His commandments: for this is the whole duty of man.'—Ecclesiastes xii. 13.

I. The Attributes of the Religious Life.

(*a*) *Holy fear.*—'God,' says the Psalmist, 'is greatly to be feared.' This is not a slavish fear, such, for example, as Felix had (Acts xxiv. 25), but a holy affection or gracious habit wrought in the soul by the Spirit of God on its conversion to God. Faith and love strengthen it, and it soon becomes the cardinal passion of the soul. There is no air of misery about it; it so reverences God that it would not displease Him, and hence He looks upon it with approval and delight.

(*b*) *Constant obedience.*—Though the soul be free from all condemnation, the moment faith is exercised in Christ, yet from that very moment the believer is bound by the strongest obligations to constant obedience. In fact, he has been freed from the bondage of sin that he might keep God's commandments. And when faith works by love, the duty of obedience is refined into a grace, and the Divine behests are exalted into privileges. Hence they are willingly obeyed; and this is according to God's mind.

II. The Importance of the Religious Life.

(*a*) *Honour and happiness are secured by it.*—A good man is 'the highest style of man'; he is one of 'the excellent of the earth,' one of 'a chosen generation,' one of 'a royal priesthood,' one of 'a holy nation,' one of 'a peculiar people'; nay, he is 'an heir of God, a joint-heir with Jesus Christ'. There is no honour equal to this in any world! And the good man is the happiest style of man also. True, he has days of cloud and sadness; but oft-times, when living in holy obedience, spring-tides of joy—'unspeakable and full of glory'—sweep over his soul, and he shares in the bliss of the skies.

(*b*) *This life demands the entire being.*—It is indeed 'the whole of man,' all his business on earth; and therefore he gives his full attention to it, consecrating body, soul, and spirit to its interests. It matters little or nothing to him whether he is rich or poor, high or low; but it is a point of transcendent moment with him to 'fear God, and keep His commandments'. This is his Alpha and Omega—his life and his all.

References.—XII. 13.—H. J. Wilmot-Buxton, *The Master's Message*, p. 125. G. Salmon, *Sermons in Trinity College, Dublin*, p. 148. J. Parker, *City Temple Pulpit*, vol. i. p. 10. J. Thain Davidson, *Talks with Young Men*, p. 275.

'For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good or whether it be evil.'—Ecclesiastes xii. 14.

'This is the day,' writes Sir Thomas Browne, 'that must make good that great attribute of God, His justice; that must reconcile those unanswerable doubts that torment the wisest understandings; and reduce those seeming inequalities and respective distributions in this world to an equality and recompensive justice in the next. . . . This is the day whose memory hath, only, power to make us honest in the dark, and to be virtuous without a witness.'

Reference.—XII. 14.—J. E. Vaux, *Sermon Notes* (1st Series), p. 4.

SONG OF SOLOMON

SONG OF SOLOMON

THE UNUTTERABLE

'The Song of songs.'—Song of Solomon i. 1.

'The Song of songs'—the Song that holds all other songs and makes them poor; the Song that has in it all the notes and all the gamut and all the instruments and all the vocal miracles, with something added. It is that *plus* quantity that puzzles the algebra of the Church.

I. Take an instance which goes well with 'Song of songs,' 'Holy of holies,' of which we read in Exodus xxvi. 33. In the Authorized Version it is 'the most holy,' in other places it is 'the Holy of holies' as 'the Song of songs,' the upper holiness, the holiest holiness, the holiness that has got rid of the flesh, dropped the accursed body into its proper place, the grave, and got away where every shining star is a chorister, and all the silent heavens are only silent because they have no medium worthy of the purpose of their music. Who can adequately express the holiness of holiness? Who can say beyond what is already known—a still whiter whiteness? There language dies, there the instrument is broken, for it cannot tell the music.

In the Bible language is often sorely put to it. There are many unfinished sentences as well as unfinished thoughts in the Bible. I have never known language, so as to say, so cruelly put to it as in the Bible. All the most musical language is in the Scriptures, yet here and there and again, yea, and oftentimes, language seems to beg the speaker not to drive at such a pace.

II. There are other cases which match 'the Song of songs' and 'the Holy of holies'; notably one in 1 Kings viii. 27—a word that has often lifted me up out of the dust—'The heaven and heaven of heavens'. They are not mere Hebraisms. When a man built his little pillar, we think he only put a number of stones together, but the Hebrew says he 'pillared a pillar'. It was a pillar before he began; there was a pillar in the soul before there was a pillar on the ground. And 'heaven and heaven of heavens' simply represents language at its weakest.

III. Then all is gathered up in the Christ—always. Did Solomon say 'The Song of songs'? I hear another voice greater than Solomon, saying, 'King of kings, Lord of lords'. And they mingle well, these great surges of song—Song of songs, Holy of holies, Heaven of heavens, King of kings, Lord of lords. And what voice was that I heard between? It was a voice that spake of 'joy unspeakable'.—Joseph Parker, *City Temple Pulpit*, vol iv. p. 165.

References.—I.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xlii. No. 2469; see also vol. xliii. No. 2516. B. J. Snell, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xliii. p. 218.

THE KISS OF THE PRINCE OF PEACE

'Let Him kiss me with the kisses of His mouth: for Thy love is better than wine.'—Song of Solomon i. 2.

So it is that the Bride begins her conversation with that dear Lord: so it is that she utters the first words of that book, in which so many holy souls, now in the joy of their King, have found such singular sweetness and blessing.

And the Song of the Prince of Peace begins fitly: for it commences with the perfect sign of peace and love—namely, a kiss.

I. Notice that word 'Him'. How should we understand it? To whom should we apply it? There is nothing that goes before—nothing that can explain it—nothing, that is, save love. That has a knowledge of its own. That very word 'Him' implies a whole life of affection. It tells where all her thoughts were—it tells to whom it was natural that she should turn. There may come times when outward acts, when especial hours of prayer, are almost impossible. Then, as He would say Himself, 'Let not your heart be troubled; neither let it be afraid'. Only strive so to be His that, almost unconsciously, you are thinking of Him—that every act, whether formally or not, is dedicated to Him—and what matters all the rest? The Bride here makes no long opening—uses no formal words—encumbers herself with no laboured commencement. She is in the heart of her desires at once. 'Let Him kiss me with the kisses of His mouth.'

II. And how boldly she asks for the greatest of all blessings!

As holy men have delighted to remind us, the very mention of a kiss teaches us a great mystery. It implies, not one single motion, but the movement of both lips. And so here. It is because, having one Nature—that of the Godhead—from all eternity, He assumed the other in the womb of the Virgin, that He is able to raise us to the perfection of all blessedness. Able, both in what He did while He walked upon earth, and able in what He does now that He has sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on High. He took our nature, first of all, that He might be able to suffer. He wears it still, that He may be able to sympathize. He assumed it, first of all, because Divinity could not have been nailed to the Cross. He retains it still, that humanity may see itself exalted to the Throne.

III. It is because the Bride knows His love, that she comes before Him with such a petition as this.

What is that kiss for which she thus asks? If we take it as applying to this militant state, to what does it refer so well as to the Sacrament in which He gives you Himself?

But what, when He shall talk with us face to face, as a man talketh to his friend? What, when that Beatific Vision shall be accomplished, of which Satan once told a saint that, only to retain it for as long a time as a hand might open and shut in, he would willingly endure, to all eternity, the pains of all lost souls as well as his own?—J. M. NEALE, *Sermons on the Song of Songs*, p. 5.

REFERENCE.—I. 2.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xlii. No. 2459.

DRAW ME

(*Rogation Sunday*)

'Draw me, we will run after Thee. The King hath brought me into His chambers.'—SONG OF SOLOMON I. 4.

HERE is a Rogation text for Rogation Sunday. For now we are about to lose Him Whose presence with us after His Resurrection has been the cause of our Paschal joy. The Forty Days of His triumphal life on earth—of the Lent, if I may so speak, of our gladness—are drawing to an end; and the Church, for the first time, breaks in upon our Easter happiness by those three solemn days in which she listens to His voice—'Ask what I shall do for thee before I be taken away from thee'.

And the bride answers at once: 'Draw me, we will run after Thee'.

I. Notice that she makes no reservation of the manner in which she is to be drawn. 'Lord, if it be Thou, bid me come to Thee upon the water.' When your Lord seems to call you nearer to Himself by a way that is difficult and painful to flesh and blood, ought you not to rejoice in that very difficulty—to be glad of that very pain—because it gives you the opportunity of proving to yourselves and man festing to Him that whatever it may cost, follow Him you will: that you care not how loud the storm is if He be but walking upon the water; you care not how hard the race is if He be but beckoning to you from the goal?

'Draw *me*, we will run after Thee.' And there see how beautiful is her humility. As though she were the most wavering of all His followers—the feeblest of all His lambs; as if about her only there was doubt; as if her greater infirmity needed a double portion of help.

II. And why does it continue, 'The King has brought me into His chambers?' Surely for this reason. It is as though she would say that, knowing in some faint degree the happiness of His presence, she longs for its perfection; and, remembering that He has already vouchsafed her an earnest of it, she trusts that He will one day give her its fullness.

III. And then notice that expression 'His chambers': as if here His graces were divided into different kinds, and bestowed in different ways: as if here there were the chamber of audience, when you kneel before Him in your own prayers; the chamber of pardon, when you draw near to Him in Confession; the chamber of His own more immediate Presence, when He gives Himself to you under the form of Bread and Wine. But there are no such divisions *there*, where He is All in All; where He, at one and the same time, gives Himself wholly; where He no longer in types and figures, under shadows and veils, bestows Himself fully. The chambers built round about the earthly temple were many and various: the temple itself, thus girt in with them, was one.—J. M. NEALE, *Sermons on the Song of Songs*, p. 19.

REFERENCES.—I. 4.—H. E. Manning, *Sermons*, p. 388. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxxix. No. 2294; vol. xlii. 2461; vol. xlviii. No. 2794. Thomas Spurgeon, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xlii. 1892, p. 193. Sir G. R. Fetherston, *A Garden Eastward*, p. 42. I. 5.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons on the Song of Songs*, p. 30. I. 6.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xvii. No. 990; vol. xxxii. No. 1936. S. Martin, *Westminster Chapel Sermons*, p. 121.

TELL ME WHERE THOU FEEDEST

'Tell me, O Thou Whom my soul loveth, where Thou feedest, where Thou makest Thy flock to rest at noon: for why should I be as one that turneth aside by the flocks of Thy companions?'—SONG OF SOLOMON I. 7.

I. THE title in the prayer shows us how we ought to pray. 'Tell me, *O Thou Whom my soul loveth.*' If we cannot call the Lord by that name, we cannot go on with the request.

II. What is the request? It is twofold. In the first place, Tell me where Thou feedest: in the second, Where Thou causest Thy flock to rest at noon?

1. *Where Thou feedest.*—That is, where, in the evening—that glorious evening, when, as the Prophet speaks, there shall be light—Thou feedest Thy sheep by the river of the water of life; where Thou foldest them in Thine eternal fold, the fold in which there can be no more danger and no more suffering. That is a request which will not be granted in this world. Therefore the Bride goes on to ask another question:—

2. *Where Thou causest Thy flock to rest at noon?*—This world—it is a hot, burning noon indeed; and we have to bear the burden and heat of the day in it. But yet here we learn that there is rest in it, if we only knew where to go for it. Rest only for one class—'Thy flock'; rest only in one way—'Thou causest'. For rest is one of those contraries which make up a Christian's life. Join these two texts, 'Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to resist the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers:' and 'Peace I leave you, My peace I give unto you'. 'Tell me, O Thou Whom my soul loveth, where Thou feedest, where Thou causest Thy flock to rest at noon?' Thy flock—the flock that rests beneath the shadow of that great rock in a weary land. Call to mind how we, wearied, languid, discouraged with ourselves and this world, have such a shelter from the heat in Him Who, as at noonday, hung on the Cross for us. The shadow of that Cross is the place where His flock now rests—where you must rest, too, in the day of this world, if

you would have your eternal rest in the glorious evening that remains.

III. It follows—'Why should I be as one that turneth aside by the flocks of Thy companions?' We must not misunderstand the question. It is not, Why should I turn to the flocks of Thy companions, and leave Thine? No: wherever His companions are, there is He in the midst of them. If we join ourselves to them, we join ourselves to Him. But the question is, Why should I be the only one that turns aside, when such innumerable multitudes are following Thee?

'Tell me, O Thou Whom my soul loveth, where Thou feedest.' We shall not always have to ask that question. If we have asked it in real earnest here, the time will come when we shall see that more beautiful flock which now lies down in quiet valleys, which now is in the immediate presence of its Shepherd.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons on the Song of Songs*, p. 40.

References.—I. 7.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. vi. No. 338; vol. xi. No. 636. I. 7, 8.—*Ibid.* vol. xix. No. 1115. I. 8.—R. E. Hutton, *The Crown of Christ*, vol. ii. p. 565.

THE SPIKENARD OF THE BRIDE

'While the King sitteth at His table, my spikenard sendeth forth the smell thereof.'—Song of Solomon i. 12.

I. First we think of that happy penitent who literally was thus privileged to honour the great King—who received Him into her house—who found her blessed station at His feet—who afterwards anointed those feet with the alabaster box of very precious ointment.

But the King still *sitteth at His table*, and that in more senses than one. That Eternal Marriage Feast has already, in its measure, begun: many happy guests have already entered in thereto, secure now of their own felicity, doubtful only and anxious about ours.

And what in the meanwhile for you? The Bride answers, 'My spikenard sendeth forth the smell thereof'. She was not with Him in His immediate presence then; but she could do thus much for Him—thus much she could honour Him: the sweet perfume of her spikenard could rise where she herself could not enter.

II. And what is that spikenard but prayer? But prayer, and of what kind? The coal must be alive and glowing if the fragrance of the incense is to arise: love must be glowing and fervent also if the sacrifice of prayer is to come up before the Heavenly Altar with acceptance. The King was not always at His table. He did not sit down, any more than you can, till He had overcome; and, while He was still carrying on His labour, He left us an example how our spikenard should send forth its sweet savour. He Who, towards the beginning of His ministry, taught us how to pray as to words, and at the end of it taught us how to pray as to manner and thoughts—He Who was then so soon about to be pierced with Five Wounds for us men and for our salvation, in the same night in which He was betrayed, inflicted a fivefold wound on the great enemy by the fivefold virtue of His prayer in the garden.

1. *That He was alone.* That He shut out even those who were most dear to Him, when He was about thus to send up His prayers to the Father. 'Tarry ye here while I go and pray yonder.'

2. *His humility—He fell on His face.*

3. *His perseverance.* He went away again the second and the third time.

4. *His earnestness.* 'Being in an agony, He prayed more earnestly; and His sweat was as it were great drops of blood, falling down to the ground.'

5. *His resignation.*

And thus it was in the coldness and stillness of that night, amidst those olive trees in Gethsemane, while even then Judas and his band were issuing from the eastern gate of the city, and crossing the valley of Jehoshaphat, that the King, then about to enter into His last and greatest struggle, prayed for us. That same King, now seated in His glory at the Heavenly Table, would thus have you pray to Him. J. M. Neale, *Sermons on the Song of Songs*, p. 49.

References.—I. 13.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons on the Song of Songs*, p. 58; see also *Sermons Preached in Sackville College Chapel*, vol. iv. p. 130. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. x. No. 558.

RELIGIOUS SOLIDITY

'The beams of our house are cedar.'—Song of Solomon i. 17.

'The beams of our house are cedar' means that their house is solid and permanent, for, of all woods, cedar was esteemed most solid and durable. Christ says to the Church, 'The beams of our house are cedar'. This is the Church's ideal. Solidity is the great desideratum of life. Solidity is the necessity of religion.

I. Religious Solidity must be the Ideal of the Church.—The Church should be a noble illustration of solidity. We want a cedar-beamed house for our souls. This is now and always *the* problem of the Church. A house we need, and beams we must have; but they must be solid, for only the solid endures. *Quality* is the question. Sin, Atonement, Holiness, Eternity: are these the staple teaching of many Church teachers? If they are not, then 'The beams of our house are *not* cedar'.

II. Religious Solidity must be the Ideal of the Individual.—There is no true solidity in life if it be not religious, and there is no permanent security save in religious solidity.

1. Many life-houses are devoid of cedar beams. Can *the atheist* say exultantly in all weathers, 'The beams of our house are cedar'? Atheism is negation. You cannot uphold life upon negations. We need positive props for our house. There is no *intellectual* solidity about atheism. The *moral* solidity of atheism is equally dubious. Its whole character is unsolid.

2. Can *the drunkard* congratulate himself and his associates that the beams of their house are cedar?

Everything gives way under the drunkard. Has *the voluptuary* cedar-beams to his house? Pleasures give no solidity to life. Has *the mere moralist* a right to say, 'The beams of our house are cedar'? Morality without God is a horticulture of fruits without roots. Only as we trust in the living God revealed in Christ have we moral solidity and permanence.

3. It is cedar-beams which give solidity to the life-house. It is the supports on which life depends which make it solid or otherwise. *Money* is the only 'beams' of some houses. Money is not a cedar-beam for our life-house. *Business* similarly is insufficient.

What, then, are the great upholdings of a life? They are spiritual. Faith—which is not simply perception of God, but reliance upon God. Prayer, Bible study, reflection; these, and such as these, are life's abiding supports.

4. Life's experiences test the beams of our house. Let that consideration stir you to make religious solidity your ideal.

5. Religious solidity gives truest joy. The lover of my text rejoices with singing because the beams of his house are cedar. And it is a parable. Earthly qualifications do not give the clue to enduring joy. They joy greatly who can say, 'The beams of our house are cedar'.

6. As a final encouragement to making religious solidity our ideal, let me say that there is abundance of the best material to be had for the beams of our life-house. There is 'cedar' in plenty if we be willing to seek it.—DINSDALE T. YOUNG, *Unfamiliar Texts*, p. 117.

REFERENCES.—II.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xlii. No. 2485. II. 1.—*Ibid.* vol. xiii. No. 784; vol. xlii. No. 2472. II. 2.—*Ibid.* vol. xxvi. No. 1525. R. E. Hutton, *The Crown of Christ*, vol. ii. p. 585. II. 3.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons on the Song of Songs*, pp. 70, 76. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xix. No. 1120. II. 4.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons on the Song of Songs*, p. 85. C. Silvester Horne, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lviii. 1900, p. 369. II. 7.—*Ibid.* vol. lviii. 1900, p. 369. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxv. No. 1463.

THE WINTER IS PAST

(Tuesday after Low Sunday)

'My Beloved spake, and said unto me, Rise up, My love, My fair one, and come away. For, lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone; the flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land; the fig-tree putteth forth her green figs, and the vines with the tender grape give a good smell. Arise, My love, My fair one, and come away.'—SONG OF SOLOMON II. 10-13.

I. 'MY Beloved spake.' You must lay hold of that little word *my:* in it lies the chief virtue of love to God: it will be useless that He should be Chief among ten thousand, and altogether lovely, unless it may be—*my* Lord and *my* God. But it is more than this here. 'My Beloved spake:' so He does in a thousand different ways, and with a thousand different voices. But that is not enough. 'My Beloved spake, *and said unto me.*' That is the joy of all joys, if He will but do so! If He will but speak to each of you, it need be but one word, it need be but by your own name. As of old time, 'Jesus said unto her, *Mary!* She saith unto Him, Rabboni, which is to say, Master.'

II. And what are His first words? 'Rise up.' Is it possible that you should not? Rise up from all lower love, from all lower desires, to Him Who only is worthy of perfect love—to Him Who alone, when we awaken up after His likeness, can make us satisfied with it.

'My love!' And in what words are we to speak of that condescension of our dear Lord, which thus applies to you the nearest and dearest term of earthly affection? The term which speaks of perfect nearness, perfect confidence, satisfied love, common hopes, a common home, a union which God has made, and which man cannot unmake.

But still He speaks. 'Rise up, My love, My fair one.' So much done that ought not to have been done, if you are to shadow out His Image, and still, 'My fair one!' So much left undone that ought to have been done, if you would show forth the likeness of the King, and still, 'My fair one!' So much infirmity and irresolution of purpose, so much despondency, so much self-indulgence, so much temper that is not His temper, and still, 'My fair one!' But He has said it. And why? Because, beyond and above all things else, He looks to *love.* It is that which is fair in His eyes.

'And come away.' From what? Still further and further from everything that is opposed to Him—that is not stamped with His Image—that is of His enemies—that belongs to the world. Daily come apart from every little thing that keeps you in the least away from Him. What they fable of the fish called the *remora* is, at all events, true enough in the Christian life—how being very small, it attaches itself to the keel of great ships, and so impedes their progress that in vain are the sails spread—in vain is the breeze favourable: they are sore let and hindered by this one little obstacle.

'For lo, the winter is past.' Nature itself tells us that now: the Church tells the same thing. we know that we have passed from death unto life: from the death of snow and frost to the life of green leaves and budding flowers. From the death of Lent and Passion-tide to the new and everlasting life of Easter. 'The rain is over and gone:' not now have we to remember the strong crying and tears which He offered up to Him that was able to save Him from death, and was heard in that He feared: the tears of His dear Mother when the sword passed through her own heart also: the tears of the faithful ones who stood by the Cross, and watched Him as He yielded up His most blessed Spirit into His Father's Hands. 'The flowers appear on the earth'. All those are glorious consequences of His Resurrection. It is well said, 'On the earth': when it was by His sleeping in death that He so hallowed the whole face of this world, that He asserted in a new and higher sense

that which was written long before, 'The earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof'; when He gave promise that some day or other, in a time known to Him, 'the little hills,' namely, the graves, 'should rejoice on every side'. 'The time of the singing of birds is come.' What else but every answer, every response, every antiphon, every hymn, which speaks of our Paschal joy? But they only can sing who, like the birds, rise above this earth: who, like the birds, rise above this earth by means and in virtue of the sign of the Cross: and that, not without labour, not without opposition and buffeting by the winds of temptations; but still rise, and, like Noah's dove, find no rest for the soles of their feet in the crowd and the turmoil of this world. 'And the voice of the turtle is heard in our land.' Till the Conqueror of Satan rose in triumph, the Giver of all good gifts could not come down in glory. Till the winter of our Lord's sufferings was over, the voice of this Heavenly Dove could not be heard elsewhere than in His Own Land.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons on the Song of Songs*, p. 92.

References.—II. 10.—H. J. Wilmot-Buxton, *Sunday Sermonettes for a Year*, p. 217. J. R. Popham, *Sermons*, p. 242. II. 10, 11.—R. E. Hutton, *The Crown of Christ*, vol. ii. p. 573. II. 10-13.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. viii. No. 436.

THE SOUL'S SUMMER

'The winter is past, the rain is over and gone; the flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come.'—Song of Solomon ii. 11, 12.

Every period of the year has its charms. The spring has: fresh, flowery, green, sweet; summer has; autumn has; so has winter. We do not recognize the charms of winter as perhaps we might. The cause of the winter, the properties of the winter, the effects of the winter, all combine to give the winter a bad name. And yet the winter is not only necessary and God's ordering, but it has its uses, and even its blessings. It kills weeds; it freezes out disease; it builds up vegetable life in its hidden parts. And not only has winter its uses but it brings real blessings.

I. God's winter gifts. Think of one or two of God's winter gifts which are distinctly inconvenient and unpleasant, but really bring blessing. Here is one. I quote the actual Word of God, 'He giveth snow like wool,' bleak as it is it warms the soil and nourishes the earth and incubates the seed which is underneath it. Or again, from the same Psalm, 'He scattereth the hoar-frost like ashes,' to cleanse the ground, to purify the soil, to rid the fields and gardens of the hundred pests that swarm and creep and devour vegetable life.

II. When God sends a winter into our heart, or, perhaps withdraws a sense of His presence, there is always a purpose, intention, blessing—'snow like wool,' 'hoar-frost like ashes'. And there are limitations to His severity—'He casteth forth his ice, but only like morsels,' perhaps that we may grow at the roots, perhaps to purify, to cleanse, to eat up that which would otherwise destroy our spiritual union with the Lord. But it happens sometimes that we make our own winter—God does not always get away from us; we sometimes get away from Him. The simple reason why we are chilled in winter is because we are where we cannot receive the full rays of the sun; and as an American writer says, often the reason why we are cold and prayerless and faithless is that we have 'swung away from God'.

III. The opportunities of summer. What shall we do in life and work if our spiritual winter is past? But is it past? Is the summer come to our soul? The summer comes when the Christian enjoys Communion with Christ wherever he is; when he increasingly loves his Bible, and is spoken to in it; when he is blessed with the outward privileges of the Gospel, and is satisfied with inward peace. And if it is thus with you and me, what shall we do?

1. Improve your summer opportunities, outdoor opportunities of doing good ought to be seized on. I believe in outdoor preaching. Jesus Christ did.

2. And in our experience and life are work. Look for the summer fruit. The prophet Amos speaks of a basket of summer fruit. Look for the flowers; look for the figs even if they are only green; for the grapes even if they are only tender. Look for some spiritual habits, feelings, aspirations, which flesh and blood cannot produce, but God's grace can.

References.—II. 11, 12.—Stopford A. Brooke, *The Fight of Faith*, pp. 324, 337. T. A. Gurney, *The Living Lord and the Opened Grave*, p. 176. II. 11, 12, 13.—S. Thornton, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxix. 1906, p. 347.

THE SINGING TIME

(For Easter)

'The time of the singing is come.'—Song of Solomon ii. 12.

Spring is a season enjoyed by all. It speaks to us of life, of hope, of plenty; of bright skies instead of leaden ones, of greenness instead of grey bareness, of days growing warmer and longer, and sweeter with the perfumes of flowers, and gladder with the songs of birds.

I. Singing Suggests the Resurrection of Hope.—'Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away.' So Christ says to His Church, and the Church responds and 'returns with singing and everlasting joy upon her head'. There was much singing in connexion with our Lord's Advent. (Canticles, Benedictus, Magnificat, Nunc Dimittis, the Songs of the Angels.) We do not read of angels or men singing at His Resurrection. It is in another sphere. The book of the Revelation tells us of the great multitude whom no man can number singing, 'Amen, blessing and glory and honour and power,' and the harpers singing the song of Moses and of the Lamb. And here on earth the Church sings. We celebrate the Resurrection of our Lord with songs of holy gladness, and though at times our songs go into the minor, yet even when we commit our loved ones to the tomb we do so in sure and certain hope of the resurrection of the just. Yes, for the Church 'the time of the singing is come'. Our Lord hath broken the bars of the prison of death, and 'them also that sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him.' So

also, there are songs of hope as regards our own resurrection and future life. Singing is the expression of joy, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

II. Singing Expresses the Joy of Life.—It is hard to sing in sorrow. In captivity Judah hung her harp on the willows. But when the door of hope should be opened in the Valley of Achor the prophet tells her she will sing there. The two disciples journeying to Emmaus were sad. Yet their sorrow was turned into joy. Why? 'Then were the disciples *glad* when they saw the Lord.' Not these two only, but all the disciples. The indisputable and certain fact of our Lord's Resurrection turned their sorrow into joy. So the true joy of life to the Christian is the radiancy which flows from our Lord's risen body, and as when the sun shines after rain the air becomes vocal with the songs of birds, welcoming its genial rays, so when the Sun of Righteousness arises the heart of the believer sings with joy. The night is past; Gethsemane, with its dark shadows, Calvary with its blackness, are things of the past. The Easter of glorious Resurrection is with us. Rejoice therefore. Christ is Risen.

III. Singing Means Victory—the victory of faith. Satan's power is great, for he hath the power of death. But Christ, the risen Christ, 'destroys him that hath the power of death, that is the devil'; and further, 'delivers those who through its fear are subject to bondage'. Hear the testimony of some dying saints. *Dr. Goodwin:* 'Ah! is this dying? How have I dreaded as an enemy this smiling friend!' *Another:* 'I have so learned Christ that I am not afraid to die'. *Another:* 'Let my people know that their pastor died undaunted, and not afraid of death'. *Fletcher:* 'God is love! love! love! Oh that a gust of praise might sound throughout the earth.' Such could rejoice even in death. It was the time of singing to them. Christ gave them songs in the night, even the night of death. But the song of faith is not for the dying alone. It is for the living. It is like singing the battle-song of victory as the troops enter the field of battle, the song of anticipated triumph. Let us have stronger faith and we shall have sweeter songs.

IV. Singing Suggests the Tunefulness of a Consecrated Life.—There is the melody of one pure life of single aim; there is the unison of souls in Christian brotherhood, and there is the harmony of the Divine and human wills, when the latter is fully surrendered to God. The Resurrection of our Lord strikes the keynote of all soul-singing. The life that is holy is holy because it is attuned by Him, the love of the brethren is love that finds its one centre and meeting-place in the heavenlies, whither He has gone before. Self and pride must be humbled to bring us into tune with God. The proud heart cannot sing.

References.—II. 12.—A. Macrae, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxi. 1902, p. 364. T. Sadler, *Sermons for Children*, p. 164. H. J. Wilmot-Buxton, *Sunday Sermonettes for a Year*, p. 146. II. 13.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xlii. No. 2480. II. 14.—C. G. Clark-Hunt, *The Refuge of the Sacred Wounds*, p. 1

CHRIST WAITING AT THE GATE

Song of Solomon ii. 15.

Did you ever hear, not of a Maud, but a Madeleine, who went down to her garden in the dawn, and found One waiting at the gate, whom she supposed to be the gardener? Have you not sought Him often; sought Him in vain, all through the night; sought Him in vain at the gate of that old garden where the fiery sword is set? He is never there; but at the gate of *this* garden He is waiting always—waiting to take your hand—ready to go down to see the fruits of the valley, to see whether the vine has flourished, and the pomegranate budded. There you shall see with Him the little tendrils of the vines that His hand is guiding—there you shall see the pomegranate springing where His hand cast the sanguine seed;—more: you shall see the troops of the angel keepers that, with their wings, wave away the hungry birds from the pathsides where He has sown, and call to each other between the vineyard rows, 'Take us the foxes, the little foxes, that spoil the vines, for our vines have tender grapes'. Oh—you queens—you queens; among the hills and happy greenwood of this land of yours, shall the foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests; and in your cities shall the stones cry out against you, that they are the only pillows where the Son of Man can lay his head?—Ruskin, *Sesame and Lilies*, §§ 94, 95.

References.—II. 15. J. M. Neale, *Sermons on the Song of Songs*, p. 106. T. Teignmouth Shore, *The Life of the World to Come*, p. 213. S. Martin, *Rain Upon the Mown Grass*, p. 36. E. Browne, *Some Moral Proofs of the Resurrection*, p. 77.

MY BELOVED IS MINE

'My beloved is mine, and I am His: He feedeth among the lilies. Until the day break, and the shadows flee away.'—Song of Solomon ii. 16, 17.

If there be one happy, peaceful verse in the Bible, thoroughly happy, thoroughly peaceful, this is it.

I. *Beloved*, indeed, He ought to be, Who wrote such a large letter of love to us with His own Hand: Who for us, but without us, bore the burden and heat of the day: Who for us endured the Mocking and the Crown of Thorns, and the Scourging and the great Nails and the Cross.

But the word *Beloved* is not enough. It is *my* Beloved. If we were not so familiarized with it by custom, it would be a wonder beyond all wonders, that expression, *my* God. It was Jacob who first said, 'Then shall the Lord be *my* God'. And in the New Testament he that was the first so to speak was none other than Thomas, making up the failure of his faith by the boldness of his confession: 'Thomas answered and said unto him, *My* Lord and *my* God'.

It goes on—'And I am His'. In a certain sense, this is true of every one: 'we are His people, and the sheep of His pasture'.

II. It follows—'He feedeth among the lilies'. It is written of Behemoth, the type of Satan in the book of Job, that 'he lieth under the shadow of the tall trees'. But this spotless Lamb chooses no such lofty

places. And what are these lilies among whom He feeds? Surely the pure in heart. The straight stalk standing up erect from the earth, its flowers as high from the ground as possible—do not they tell us of heavenly mindedness? Do they not seem to say, 'Set your affections on things above, not on things of the earth?' And, if the spotless snow of the leaves teaches us of the grace, then the gold of the anthers tells us of that crown which shall be the reward of the grace. He feedeth among the lilies, then, here: but, in a more full and glorious sense, He rests among them in that land where these lilies thrive best.

III. 'He feedeth among the lilies.' Till when? 'Until the day break, and the shadows flee away.' The eternal day to which we are all looking forward: the day of which the promises of God are like the grey clouds that gather over the place where the sun is about to arise speaking, but still very faintly, of His coming glory. It follows, then, that through the night in which we now are, we have our Lord with us. It is as if He said to us, 'That darkness in which you now are, O my true servants, I also was in: according to that saying of My Prophet, I walked in darkness, and had no light: but I will not leave you so: I will be with you till the day break'.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons on the Song of Songs*, p. 118.

References.—II. 16.—H. E. Manning, *Sermons*, p. 411. C. Bickersteth, *The Shunammite*, p. 71. J. Duncan, *In the Pulpit and at the Communion Table*, p. 159. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. vii. No. 374; vol. xx. No. 1190; vol. xxvii. No. 1634; vol. xli. No. 2442.

DONEC ASPIRET DIES. ADVENT

'Until the day dawn, and the shadows flee away.'—Song of Solomon II. 17.

Hope is the flower of the root Penitence: and so the season of the expectation of Christ is a *penitential* season.

I. The whole meaning of Advent is the expectation of Christ.

But this hope of Christ's coming is no vague, natural poetry in us, like our blind longing for the first signs of spring coming after winter. It is an energy of conscience, reason, and will, set upon things above, seeking the highest and the loveliest; yes, an energy of our highest faculties, and of *all* of them, even of our earthly body, because we know that we are not created only to *think* of what is highest, but to suffer and strive for it, attain, and possess it.

And the expectation of God proves to be the only expectation in which man can never hope too much, and can not be disappointed; because man is made for God, and in God is all perfection.

II. This expectation of God gives the specially *Christian* character to a man, and to all that he does. Each act of his has a true purpose and principle in it; it is not done for the moment; it has secret relations with eternity. It may be a mere act of ordinary *duty*, but that means for him an act of fellowship with God. Or if it is some heavy loss, or great pain which he has to bear, it is the same; it is not merely external evil, crushing a man to earth; here is the man's love welcoming God's will in the pain—making the pain his own treasure, and lifting it up to God in sacrifice, that is, something offered as a means of union with God.

But this expectation of God which characterizes all Christian life implies penitence, self-mastery, humility of mind, patience, self-renunciation. There must be a breaking of bondage to the unreal, temporal good if there is to be a sincere reaching forth in desire to win the eternal.

St. Peter the Penitent is the Apostle of Hope. When he is converted he strengthens his brethren, he teaches them to 'hope to the end'.

III. And then if out of our penitence expectation of Christ grows, and makes everything we do and suffer a seed of hope for ourselves and others, this new energy has a natural development and expression in prayer. A life that becomes full of hope is a life in which prayer overflows the stated hours of prayer, a life which becomes prayerful. And that is the essence of the dedicated life. In Advent we are not waiting drowsily for Christ as a nurse waits through the night for the inevitable crisis in the sick-room. Our waiting for Christ is the silent cry of hearts that are awake and seeking Him.—G. Congreve, *The Spiritual Order*, p. 59.

References.—II. 17.—T. T. Munger, *The Freedom of Faith*, p. 379. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xlii. No. 2477.

SEEKING THE BELOVED

'By night on my bed I sought Him Whom my soul loveth: I sought Him, but I found Him not.'—Song of Solomon III. 1.

We so often ask and do not receive: we so often seek and do not find. And yet our Lord, the Eternal Truth and the Eternal Wisdom says, 'Every one that asketh, receiveth, and he that seeketh, findeth'. How can these things be?

I. The very words of the Bride here will help us. When did she seek? 'By night:' that is, in the time of affliction. 'By night:' that is, not before the night. When everything then went well and smoothly, she did not seek: when fearfulness and trembling came upon her, and a horrible dread overwhelmed her, then, as the Psalmist says, 'In her trouble she called unto the Lord, and complained unto her God' Well: and it is much to do that; but it is not the highest kind of seeking. No; it was not seeking her Lord early; and, therefore, no wonder that He did not answer early.

II. But we go on. 'By night *on my bed* I sought.' There we get the true answer. This idle, half-hearted seeking—this seeking which is without trouble—this seeking which is not seeking: this will never find! And yet how apt we all are—you know it in your own consciences—to fall into this! To take a little trouble when only the greatest will do: like King Joash, to smite three times and then to stop.

III. How does it go on? 'I will rise.' The very exact thing that has to be done. 'Awake thou that

sleepest, and arise from the dead, and CHRIST shall give thee light.' You must set about your work in real earnest; pray, if not oftener, at least more heartily; search and try your ways more carefully; and, mind—I will rise by and by will not do. I will rise *now*, the Bride says. This is the excellent determination; and now, I dare say, we shall find it crowned with success.

Let us see: 'I will rise now, and seek Him Whom my soul loveth. I sought Him;' but this is strange, too; for the verse ends: 'I sought Him, but I found Him not'. This is more perplexing than the other. Let us try and make out how it is.

First—I sought Him—where? 'I will go about the city, in the streets, and in the broad ways, I will seek Him Whom my soul loveth.' Ah, that is not where He is to be found! The cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches and the lusts of other things—we know what they do: they choke the word. You know how one of the greatest saints has told us that we are to seek for our Lord:—

> I seek for Jesus in repose
> When round my heart its chambers close.

See how Hezekiah, in the time of his distress, found God. When Isaiah came unto Him and said—Thus saith the Lord, set thine house in order, for thou shalt die and shalt not live. What did he do? Two things. In the first place, he turned himself to the wall; he shut out all cares, thoughts, business, but that of prayer; and, then, he wept sore. Retirement and repentance—that was how he gained what he sought—that is how we must gain what we seek.—J. M. NEALE, *Sermons on the Song of Songs*, p. 127.

REFERENCES.—III. 1-5.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xliii. No. 2516. III. 4.—*Ibid.* vol. xlii. No. 2485. III. 4, 5.—*Ibid.* vol. xviii. No. 1035. III. 6-11.—*Ibid.* vol. viii. No. 482. III. 7, 8.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons on the Song of Songs*, p. 137. III. 9, 10.—*Ibid.* pp. 151, 364. III. 10.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xix. No. 1134. III. 11.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons Preached in Sackville College Chapel*, vol. iii. p. 311. Talbot Greaves, *The Joy of Jesus*, Sermons, 1655-1384. IV. 6.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons on the Song of Songs*, pp. 159, 172. A. G. Mortimer, *Life and its Problems*, p. 13. IV. 7.—R. E. Hutton, *The Crown of Christ*, vol. i. p. 561. IV. 10, 11.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. v. No. 282. IV. 12.—*Ibid.* vol. xxxiii. No. 1957. IV. 12 and 15.—*Ibid.* vol. viii. No. 431. J. M. Neale, *Sermons on the Song of Songs*, p. 184. IV. 14.—J. Pulsford, *Infoldings and Unfoldings of the Divine Genius, in Nature and Man*, p. 1.

SOLOMON'S GARDEN

'A garden enclosed is my sister, my spouse; a spring shut up, a fountain sealed. Thy plants are an orchard of pomegranates, with pleasant fruits; camphire, with spikenard, spikenard and saffron; calamus and cinnamon, with all trees of frankincense; myrrh and aloes, with all the chief spices.'—SONG OF SOLOMON IV. 12-14.

THERE is one advantage in speaking about a garden—the preacher at once enlists the interest of his hearers. The love of plants and flowers is almost universal. Our greatest English essayists have written upon gardens. The father of inductive philosophy had an intense love for the beauties of nature. He says: 'God Almighty first planted a garden; and indeed it is the purest of pleasures'. Abraham Cowley, when dedicating his poem, 'The Garden,' to John Evelyn, the well-known author of *Sylva*, writes: 'I never had any other desire so strong and so like to covetousness, as that one which I have had always, that I might be master at last of a small house and a large garden, and then dedicate the remainder of my life only to the culture of them and the study of nature'. Only to give one other instance, Sir William Temple says: 'A garden has been the inclination of kings and the choice of philosophers; the common favourite of public and of private men; the pleasure of the greatest, and the care of the meanest; an employment for which no man is too high or too low. If we believe the Scriptures, we must allow that God Almighty esteemed the life of man in a garden the happiest He could give him; or else He would not have placed Adam in that of Eden.'

We cannot read the Bible without seeing that the Jews were a people who delighted in flowers and green fields, in groves and plantations, in orchards, and gardens. The fact that 250 botanical terms occur in the Bible, in a work not professedly treating on horticulture, proves this. Gardens were the sacred retreats of Hebrew life; in them they prayed, held their family festivals, and at last buried their dead. Prophets, as well as poets, enriched their imagery from the same fertile theme. Isaiah compares the kingdom of Messiah to 'a well-watered garden,' whilst he likens Zion in her national decadence to 'an oak whose leaf fadeth,' and to 'a garden that hath no water'.

Solomon, the wise king of Israel, sought retirement from the exactions of his court and from the business of empire in his wonderful gardens at Etham. He was a botanist, and knew the habits of every plant, from the lowly hyssop to the mighty cedar. In the book of Canticles, as Delitzsch observes, we have the names of no fewer than eighteen different plants.

The book from which I have selected the verses at the head of the chapter is an exquisite allegory. Beneath its types and symbols we see the foreshadowings of Incarnate love, the marriage of Christ and His Church, the glories of the Bridegroom, and the graces and privileges of the Bride. The Song of songs has been called 'the enigma of the Old Testament, as the Apocalypse is of the New'. It is a book which has ever been dear to devout souls. It was as precious to Leighton and Taylor, to Bunyan and Gill, as to Bernard and Catherine of Siena, to Bossuet and Dr. Neale. This book is not the strain of a 'Hebrew Swinburne,' as M. Renan would have it; but it is the breathing of the Holy Spirit, setting forth the mystical union which is betwixt Christ and His Church. The historian Niebuhr once said: 'For my part, I should think there was something wanting in the Bible if we could not find in it any expression for the deepest and strongest sentiment of humanity'. In the words of my text, Christ, the Bridegroom, com-

pares the Church, the Bride, to a garden. This image is quite in harmony with other portions of Scripture, where the children of God are compared to palms and cedars, to olives and fruit-trees, to plants and flowers. The Church is the Lord's Paradise or garden, because a garden speaks of care and culture, of digging and dunging, of planting and pruning, of fragrance and fruitfulness.

I. Observe, first, that *the garden is 'enclosed'*.

The garden of the Church is enclosed (1) *by God's electing love;* (2) *By God's sanctifying grace;* (3) *By God's providential care.* In all ages God's all-watchful eye and all-powerful arm have encompassed the Church.

II. We have here a *remarkable prophecy of the kingdom of the Messiah, which was to include the Gentile as well as the Jew,* 'that they might be called trees of the Lord's planting'.

The great Husbandman delights in every fresh accession; and a greater than Solomon knows every plant of His garden, from the lowly hyssop to the majestic cedar. He knows their habits, and cares for each. He especially delights in the young—'those who are planted in the house of the Lord,' and who 'flourish in the courts of our God'.

III. We see in this symbolic garden an illustration of the *variety of character to be found in the Church of Christ.*

IV. We see in this garden the *variety of graces to be found in the heart of each believer.*

Dr. Littledale, in his *Commentary on the Song of Songs,* quotes an old Dutch hymn which is quaint and beautiful. The writer, when naming some of the flowers as emblems of the graces of a believing soul, says:—

The Lily white that bloometh there is Purity,
The fragrant Violet is surnamed Humility.

The lovely damask Rose is there called Patience,
The rich and cheerful Marigold Obedience.

One plant is there with crown bedight, the rest above,
With crown imperial, and this plant is Holy Love;

But still of all the flowers the fairest and the best
Is Jesus Christ, the Lord Himself, His Name be blest.

O Jesu, my chief good and sole felicity,
Thy little garden make my ready heart to be!

It was said of a great horticulturist that he could hardly sleep, whenever he heard of some fresh plant introduced into this country, until he had secured a specimen. As we study the character of Christ, and see the perfections of His varied graces and the exquisite harmony of His life, we ought not to rest until His graces become ours. Are we conscious that we lack humility? We ought to pray, and pray continually, to learn of Him who was 'meek and lowly in heart,' and so find rest to our souls. In a day of so much profession, let us earnestly strive to become fruit-bearing Christians, recollecting all the time that the fruit is His. 'Let my Beloved come into His garden and eat His pleasant fruits.' May the prayer of St. Paul be fulfilled in the experience of each one of us: 'That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing; being fruitful in every good work . . . strengthened with all might, unto all patience and long-suffering with joyfulness.'—J. W. Bardsley, *Many Mansions,* p. 181.

LIFE TRANSFIGURED. ITS NECESSITY—FOR THE CHURCH

'Awake, O north wind; and come, thou south; blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out.'—Song of Solomon iv. 16.

The Lord Christ loves, has ever loved a garden. He ofttimes resorted to the Garden of Gethsemane, before His Passion, with His disciples, and He was once Himself mistaken for a gardener. No such serious mistake after all, for He is the Gardener, the Protector, and the constant gracious Supervisor of the Church, which is His garden.

The Church of Christ is fitly compared to a garden:—

I. In its Design.—A garden is intended to give pleasure to its owner. When we are weary, or need a quiet time for meditation, how pleasant, if we have a garden, to retire into it and be refreshed. And Christ desires to find His rest and His pleasure in His people.

II. Its Derivation.—A garden is frequently reclaimed from a desert waste. Wonderful transformations have been effected by human skill, but they all fade into insignificance when compared with the transformation of the garden of the Church.

Fabulous prices have been paid before to-day for gardens such as, e.g. the gardens of Magdalene College, Oxford, where Addison used to walk. The Hanging Gardens of Babylon. But no price paid for earthly gardens can be compared with the cost at which this garden has been reclaimed. The precious drops of Emmanuel, God with us, must be shed before this garden could be secured by its Owner. What must that love have been which shrank not from such a cost as that. When the Owner takes full possession the result is always the same, He makes the 'wilderness rejoice and blossom as the rose'.

III. Its Dangers.—A garden is exposed to dangers from without and dangers from within.

A garden needs watching and tending, as well as sowing and planting and pruning, for the soil that grows good seed will grow bad also, and, as it was of old—'While men slept the enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat and went his way'—so it is still. Pride, jealousy, resentment, the roots of bitterness—what ill weeds are these, and how rapidly they grow! We might well be in despair were it not that the Heavenly Husbandman Himself undertakes our cause. He can make short work with the weeds if we will let Him.

IV. Its Diversity.—Diversity and unity characterize all the works of the great Creator. And as it is in nature so it is in grace. Do not criticize your brother because he works in a way of his own. Give him room to develop after his own pattern. There is a regularity which is fatal to growth.

V. Its Dependence.—If a garden is to flourish it must be well watered. How dependent is the garden upon the dews of heaven and upon the breezes of heaven that play over it. If the Church is to be a fruitful garden it must have the fountain always in the midst. Many a Christian has not yet received in its fullness the wondrous truth that there is to be a fountain open for sin and uncleanness *in the midst of the garden*, yea, in the midst of the individual soul.

And upon the breezes of heaven, too, the garden must depend. The north wind is wanted as well as the south. Convicting power is needed as well as comforting grace, adversity as well as prosperity, the chilling, biting blast as well as the gentle, melting summer breeze. If the Lord seems to blight your prospects and write death upon your hopes, still believe that He does all things well. In a weather vane on a church in Kent are cut the words, 'God is Love,' —that is, whether the wind blow east or west, north or south, we have to learn that 'God is Love'. —E. W. Moore, *Life Transfigured*, p. 45.

Illustration.—I have read somewhere an Eastern fable: Two men were equally desirous for the growth and nurture of the palm. One, so the story runs, obtained permission from God to have for his palm-tree whatsoever wind or weather he desired. So, when he wished for sunshine he prayed and it was granted; when he thought the rain was needed he prayed and the rain descended. Thus he took the direction into his own hands. Days and weeks passed by, but the tree to which he devoted so much attention drooped and drooped, until at last it died. In his distress he went to his friend at a distance, and found his tree blooming and vigorous. 'How is this,' said he, 'my tree is dead?' 'What didst thou do to it?' asked his friend. 'I asked for sunshine, and I had it; for rain, I had it; I managed it myself, but in spite of all my care it perished.' 'Ah, was the reply, you should have let God manage it. I left mine in the hands of God, and the result is that it flourishes to-day.'—E. W. Moore, *Life Transfigured*, p. 62.

References.—IV. 16.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons on the Song of Songs*, p. 195. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxxiii. No. 1941; vol. xlii. No. 2475. V. 1.—*Ibid.* vol. xvi. No. 919; vol. xxxiii. No. 1943. J. M. Neale, *Sermons on the Song of Songs*, p. 205. H. W. Webb-Peploe, *Calls to Holiness*, p. 197. V. 2.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxvi. No. 1561; vol. lii. No. 3013. V. 2-8.—*Ibid.* vol. xiv. No. 793. V. 3.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons on the Song of Songs*, p. 371. V. 4.—*Ibid.* p. 217. V. 5, 6.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons on the Song of Songs*, p. 230. V. 8.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. ix. No. 539.

THE INCOMPARABLENESS OF CHRIST

'What is thy Beloved more than another beloved, O thou fairest among women? What is thy Beloved more than another beloved, that thou dost so charge us?'—Song of Solomon v. 9.

'What is thy Beloved more than another beloved?' Wherein is Christ incomparable?

I. Christ is Incomparable in the Inquiries He Excites.—There must be something in our Beloved that is more than another beloved when such interrogatories are urged upon us. Commonplaceness does not arrest attention. Mediocrity does not challenge comparison. Ordinary personalities do not normally create extraordinary excitement. But our Beloved is much inquired about. Christ's people are always being inquired of concerning their Beloved. The world is intensely interested in the Saviour. He has been lifted up, and through the reluctant centuries He is drawing all men unto Him.

The repeated inquiry in this text arises from the testimony the lover has borne to the Beloved. The Beloved has so captivated the Bride that she has made no secret of her love.

II. Christ is Incomparable in the Love He Evokes.—Note the epithet, 'thy Beloved'. Note that it is twice repeated. Note also that it is often used in this book. There is no designation by which Christ can be more suitably spoken of. Christ draws out love as none other can. He dominates love as He dominates everything. Others evoke love; there are many beloveds; but this Beloved is 'more than another beloved,' for none lay up such wealth of love as He. This is His supremacy. As Napoleon said, 'Jesus alone founded His empire upon love'. And so His empire outlasts all other empires and outlasts the universe.

III. Christ is Incomparable in the Beauty of those who Follow Him.—The loveliness of the Bride appeals to those who inquire of her and they exclaim, 'O thou fairest among women'. It was largely by reason of her loveliness that bystanders and friends challenged her concerning her Beloved. They felt that He must be glorious after whom so beautiful a being followed. And it is generally the beauty of Christ's followers which leads men and women to inquire after Him. These beautiful followers of Jesus are supremely fair in all eyes but their own. Perfect loveliness is ever unconscious of itself.

IV. Christ is Incomparable in the Earnestness which He Inspires.—Christ's follower is represented by those around her as charging them. The Revised Version reads, 'that thou dost so adjure us'. Adjuration is an intense and solemn charge. This is typical of Christ's followers—they adjure the world and they adjure one another.—Dinsdale T. Young, *The Crimson Book*, p. 124.

References.—V. 9.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xlii. No. 2469. J. Richardson, *Penny Pulpit*, vol. xiv. No. 817, p. 217. V. 9, 10.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons on the Song of Songs*, p. 239. V. 10.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xlii. No. 2478. V. 13.—*Ibid.* vol. xlii. No. 2479. V. 16.—*Ibid.* vol. xvii. No. 1001; vol. xxiv. No. 1446. A. G. Brown, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 801, vol. xiv. p. 97. VI. 2.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons on the Song of Songs*, p. 252. VI. 4.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xvii. No. 984. VI. 5.—*Ibid.* vol. xlii. No. 2486. VI. 10.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons on the Song of Songs*, p. 261. VI. 11.—*Ibid.* p. 275. W. Robertson Nicoll, *The Garden of Nuts*, p. 81. R. Collyse, *Where the Light Dwelleth*, p. 19.

SPIRITUAL TRANSPORTS

'Or ever I was aware, my soul made me like the chariots of Ammi-nadib.'—Song of Solomon vi. 12.

What is the meaning of 'the chariots of Amminadib'? It may perhaps be best regarded as a pro-

verbial expression by which swift and splendid chariots are described. The rendering of the Revised Version doubtless gives us the substantial idea of the comparison: 'Or ever I was aware, my soul set me among the chariots of my princely people'. Whatever the immediate reference may be, it is a remarkable description of the mystical experiences of a soul.

I. The Christian Believer has Transports.—The religion of the Bible is a religion of transports. All deep and spiritual religion is emotional. Beware of a piety so severely 'practical' that it has no experience of the transport comparable to 'the chariots of Ammi-nadib'. A Christianity that does not transport the soul is certainly not ancient Christianity. A faith which never flashes into ecstasy is surely not the faith of the Scriptures.

II. The Christian's Transports are Spiritual.—'My *soul* made me like the chariots of Ammi-nadib.' It is the soul that was thrilled. The natural man cannot understand the spiritual; it is still 'foolishness' to him. But 'he that is spiritual judgeth all things,' and he knows how truly spiritual his rapturous experiences are. He can differentiate between the emotionalism of the flesh and of the soul. And these transports make the soul for the time being *dominant*.

III. Spiritual Transports are often Sudden.—'Or ever I was aware.' Before I had realized, I was borne as on Ammi-nadib's chariots. This is, indeed, a parable of what often happens in the life mystical. How sudden our transports are wont to be! God delights to surprise His children.

IV. Spiritual Transports are very Glorious.—They are likened to 'the chariots of my princely people'—splendid, exhilarating, every way delightsome. Unutterableness and transcendency are ever notes of Christian experiences.

V. Spiritual Transports Assume Many Forms.—How many chariots were there? No one knows. The chariots, doubtless, were very varied. Verily there is no monotony in the soul's transports.

Sometimes we have had a transport in *Bible reading*. Often a transport of *prayer* delights the believing suppliant. There are transports of *meditation*. And are there not transports of *reading*? So it is at times in *public worship*.

VI. Spiritual Transports Demand a Preparative State.—'I went down into the garden' and *there* 'or ever I was aware, my soul set me among the chariots of my princely people'. 'The garden' is often the sphere of and the preparation for the transport. It is the quietude, the meditative, the seclusive, that is the essential preparative for transportive spiritual experiences.

VII. Spiritual Transports should be Testified to.—The singer in this drama recounts to all generations this great experience. It is true modesty, if you have had great transports of soul, to glorify God by recording those experiences. Your testimony will have evidential worth. It may be an apologetic.

Conversion may be a sudden transport. What men call *death* is a transport to the Christian.—DINSDALE T. YOUNG, *Unfamiliar Texts*, p. 54.

REFERENCES.—VI. 12.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. x. No. 1155. S. Baring-Gould, *Sermon Sketches*, p. 51. VI. 13.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. x. No. 593; vol. xxx. No. 1794. S. Baring-Gould, *Village Preaching for a Year*, vol. ii. p. 256.

I SAID, I WILL GO UP TO THE PALM-TREE

(Palm Sunday)

'I said, I will go up to the palm-tree, I will take hold of the boughs thereof.'—SONG OF SOLOMON VII. 8.

IT is worth while noticing how often expressions of faith, and hope, resolution, and penitence, begin with that—'I said'. We begin by saying—the doing is a very different matter. Our Lord's was doing first, and saying afterwards: 'the former treatise have I made of all that Jesus began both to do and to teach'.

I. 'I said, I will go up to the palm-tree.' None ever doubted that by this palm-tree is meant the Cross. It is as though the faithful soul had, at the first commencement of her true service of her Lord, looked on the Cross as the sign of all victory, the form of all glory, the crown of such innumerable triumphs. But she forgot that it was something else besides all this—that the struggle preceded the victory, that the wilderness came before the Promised Land, that the Cross came first and then the palm.

This true and living palm, this Cross, with its precious fruits, is set before us, and we must go to it; go *up* to it, mind: for up-hill work it is, as we all know, as, the more we have tried to draw near to it, the better we know. Like that palm, it flourishes best in barren and dry lands where no water is: the heavier weights it has to bear, like the palm, it grows the better.

II. 'I will take hold of the boughs thereof.' And how? Surely, in the first place, by clinging to them as the only firm hold in the evil day. We have all read of shipwrecked men, when washed by some enormous wave on the shore, how they have grasped at some rock or stump, and held on to it as for very life during the recoil of the wave. So it is that, in the shipwreck of this world, we must cling on to the Cross: no one ever perished there yet: the thief was saved that grasped it in the very last hour: Judas would there have been saved if he had cast Himself at the foot, and had cried to Him that hung thereon, 'I will not let Thee go, except Thou bless me'.

III. But why are we to apply this verse to ourselves, and think of our own poor sayings, when the very time would rather have us refer them to our Elder Brother, the voice of Whose Blood will so soon cry from the ground: 'I said, I will go up to the palm-tree, I will take hold of the boughs thereof'. And so He did twice. Once, when He took them up in His arms to carry them to the top of Calvary; lastly, when with a still firmer and more painful grasp, a grasp which nothing but death could loose, He took hold on them there. Had He let them go, He had let us go along with them; but seeing it is written, 'My FATHER which gave them Me is greater

than all, and no man is able to pluck them out of My FATHER's hand'; therefore, He still held them fast, not willing, even in the act of death, to be separated from them.—J. M. NEALE, *Sermons on the Song of Songs*, p. 291.

REFERENCES.—VII. 8.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons on the Song of Songs*, p. 286; see also p. 301, and *Sermons Preached in Sackville College Chapel*, vol. i. p. 224. VII. 11-13.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. x. No. 605; vol. xviii. No. 1066. VII. 12, 13.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons on the Song of Songs*, p. 307.

THE FIRST AND GREATEST COMMANDMENT

'His left hand should be under my head, and His right hand should embrace me.'—SONG OF SOLOMON VIII. 3.

I. SEE how every power of the mind is embraced by, and concerned in, this love: how the head and the heart, knowledge and feeling, the understanding and the will, are all swallowed up by it. And yet, the very text tells us which is of more value in the Lord's sight. Just as the Seraphim, that are on fire with love, hold a more exalted estate than the Cherubim, that are perfect in knowledge—so here 'His left hand should be under my head, and His right hand should embrace me'. Every power of yours, of knowledge as well as of love, must be His; but oh, how infinitely of more value in His eyes the love than the knowledge!

II. Notice this. He thus shields the head, He thus protects the whole form of His Bride. How was His head shielded: how was His most blessed form embraced? It was no gentle hand which supported His head in those the last hours of His earthly life: the long sharp thorns were driven into that; and thus, out of the infinity of His goodness, He returns good for evil. The embrace He received was that of the Cross itself, the bitter and hard bed of His last sufferings: the rough handling of the four soldiers that nailed Him thereto: the piercing of the nails themselves: that was the embrace given. What is that which He gives? Think of that right hand—first, how it was prefigured in the ancient days, in the generations of old. This was the hand that had healed the poor leper with those words of love—'I will: be thou clean'—that had held up Peter from sinking when his faith failed in the great wind and the surging waves—that had written in the sand, before the gracious sentence, 'Neither do I condemn thee; go, and sin no more'—which had anointed the eyes of the blind man so that he received his sight—which had been stretched forth, as it were, towards the penitent thief, giving effect to those words of inestimable joy, 'Verily, I say unto thee, to-day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise'; which will, at the latter day be held out to the righteous with, 'Come, ye blessed of My FATHER, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world'.

III. But then, remember this. That right hand did not become glorious in power—that right hand did not dash the enemy in pieces till it had been nailed to the Cross. That which befell the Captain must befall the soldiers also.—J. M. NEALE, *Sermons on the Song of Songs*, p. 321.

COMING UP FROM THE WILDERNESS

'Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness, leaning upon her Beloved?'—SONG OF SOLOMON VIII. 5.

I. WHO is it that asks the question? The very form of it tells us. 'Who is this'—not that goeth, but 'that cometh up from the wilderness leaning upon her Beloved?' Then they who put it are delivered from the wilderness themselves. They may well ask with joy as they see another and another and another guided safely through it—'Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness?'

Nevertheless, as the very words show us, it is a struggle to get out of the wilderness. 'Who is she that cometh *up?*' A perpetual ascent: a constant striving upward: if 'the hill of Sion is a fair place and the joy of the whole earth,' it is a lofty place too, and not to be attained without a life-long effort.

II. She is coming up from the wilderness, but she is not alone. He, Who in the days of His Flesh tabernacled in the same wilderness, knew all its wearisomeness, conquered all its dangers, He will not leave her comfortless in it—He will come unto her, and having come He will walk with her. But more, far more, than that. It is not—Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness *with* her Beloved—but *leaning* on her Beloved. No fear of tiring Him, for He is the Everlasting God—no fear of want of sympathy in Him, for He is True Man. She is now to lean on that arm which for her was stretched out on the Cross; she is now to be drawn near to that heart which for her was pierced with the spear. 'So they two went on together:' in what nearness and dearness of love, in what intimacy of conversation—she receiving all, He giving all: she rejoicing to have nothing that does not come from Him—He unwilling to have anything which He is not ready to bestow on her.

III. See if it is so with you. The wilderness you are passing—so you know and feel: but the question is, whether leaning on Him? This also you know, that on nothing else can you lean: those broken reeds not only give way but pierce the hand that would trust them. But this is the feeling that you may, that you ought to have: that any additional discomfort, any especial trial, only give you the right to throw more of your burden on Him. That arm on which you are leaning has raised so many sinners from spiritual death: has been thrown round so many penitents to hold up their goings in His ways that their footsteps slipped not: has wiped so many tears from so many eyes. And there it is for you to rest on: there it is to shield you, to guard you; finally, to crown you.—J. M. NEALE, *Sermons on the Song of Songs*, p. 334.

REFERENCES.—VIII. 5.—R. A. Suckling, *Sermons Plain and Parochial*, p. 235. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xv. No. 877.

BIBLE SEALS

'Set me as a seal upon thine heart, as a seal upon thine arm.'—SONG OF SOLOMON VIII. 6.

'HE that hath received his testimony hath set to his seal that God is true.' How often does that word seal occur in the whole Bible? What does it mean?

All things have significance. The value is often wholly in the meaning. The thing itself may be small enough, so small as to be almost beneath notice, if the question be one of magnitude and appraisement. We must look at the Biblical seals just as they come and go; we must as commentators have much licence in the matter of accommodation. Some of the meanings are obvious; some are implicit, they have almost to be dug out as if men were searching for silver and for hidden silver.

I. In choosing this as our text we are not making vivid—a process which is often allowable in pulpit exposition—a peculiar or distinctive word; we are engaged upon the unfolding and expansion of a long golden chain. This is a text of links, this is a polysyllable of love, this the endless word, because pointing to the endless life. Would you hear a little of the drip, drip of the music of the sealing? Why, I could begin anywhere, but we might begin in Job: 'He commandeth the sun and sealeth up the stars,' as if they were quite little morsels of jewels, and He gathered them into one slender batch and tied some jewelled seal to them, and said, These are my jewels, to be gathered up on a given day. Or Isaiah: 'Seal the law among my——' and then comes a New Testament word. The New Testament in Isaiah? Why, certainly. The New Testament is in Genesis. What is that completing word in Isaiah? Read the text again, and we will conjecture, now that you have given us the key, that the word is in the New Testament and in the very first part of the New Testament: 'Seal the law among My disciples'. We are familiar with the word; when we first read it we did not know the meaning of it, but we read on through Isaiah and Jeremiah and Ezekiel and Daniel, and right away through into Matthew, and there the word disciples occurred, and then it often occurred, and then we thought we had always known the word—so ungrateful is man.

II. Wonderful wearing of a seal is this in the Song of Solomon VIII. 6—'Set me as a seal upon thine heart, as a seal upon thine arm.' The whole idea of the gospel bondage—sweet, sweet slavery!—is in that symbolism.

1. Where must the seal first be? 'Upon thine heart.' Begin at the heart if you would begin wisely; begin metaphysically, begin a long way from the visible, the concrete, and what is called the practical—poorest, meanest of the little heaps of dust that gather around the feet of our pilgrimage! Begin far away. We must have Christ in the heart, a great secret, a solemn yet joyful silence. Christ and the heart must have tender communion; they have festive times that are not marked on the calendar; they muse together, they ask questions of one another, then come more nearly near; in the soul there is a mystic wedding without which any other wedding is blasphemy, an oath broken at the altar.

2. Then set thy seal upon mine arm or thine arm: there is a time for protest, confession, public profession of the Eternal Name; there is a ministry of symbolism, there is a way of walking that means that the pilgrim has a sanctuary in view; there is a mysterious influence upon the attitude, the figure, the dress, the whole tone and speech of the life. What is it? We often call it the profession of the name of Christ. Some of us would perhaps under certain circumstances turn our clothing so that we could conceal the seal from everybody; and there is a way to be equally detested, and that is an opening and showing the seal as if making an investment and testimonial and credential of it. There is another way, the way of true modesty, gentle but invincible love that is not ashamed of Jesus or ashamed of the Christian seal.—JOSEPH PARKER, *City Temple Pulpit*, vol. III. p. 127.

SET ME AS A SEAL UPON THINE HEART

(Tuesday in Holy Week)

'Set me as a seal upon Thine heart, as a seal upon Thine arm: for love is strong as death; jealousy is cruel as the grave: the coals thereof are coals of fire, which hath a most vehement flame.'—SONG OF SOLOMON VIII. 6.

I. Set Me as a Seal Upon Thine Heart, as a Seal Upon Thine Arm.—If the Bride had followed the order of time, she would have reversed the two petitions; but thinking of those two greatest and most blessed sacraments, prefigured in the Blood and Water that flowed from the Side of her Lord, and which must be the source and origin of every action, she puts the seal on the heart first. A cruel engraving, indeed, though exercised on a lifeless body; and yet, such virtue then went forth from that wound, opened by the spear, that the soldier who inflicted it became himself a good soldier and martyr of Jesus Christ.

A seal bears the resemblance of that to which it belongs, and our resemblance there is, indeed, in these wounds. We know what we were when He came to seek and to save us. We know how, 'from the sole of the foot even unto the head, there was no soundness in it, but wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores'. Himself, therefore, took our infirmities and bare our sickness: Himself impressed our likeness on His hands and on His side, binding us then by the nearest and dearest of ties, graving us as He Himself says, on the palms of His hands.

II. 'For Love is Strong as Death.'—His love, indeed, was stronger than the most fearful death; than a lingering, shameful death; than a forsaken lonely death; than a death from which the Eternal Father hid His face; than a death brought to pass by the treachery of one disciple, and accompanied by the cowardice of all. Such love as His met such a death as His. But apply that same saying to us—can there be a bitterer satire on what we do, and on what we do not do? Our love strong as death! It is well if it be strong enough to triumph over the next temptation that assaults us. Our love strong as death! Why, sometimes it hardly seems to exist at all. We feel too powerless and helpless and listless to care about anything, to wish for anything, to long for anything—and can we love?

III. Jealousy is Cruel as the Grave.—And how? Jealousy not *of*, but *for*, the beloved thing or person. Not that we should not be loved by Him so well as others are, but that He should not be loved by others—lest He should not be loved according to His deserts.

IV. The Coals Thereof are Coals of Fire.—This was the fire wherewith our Paschal Lamb was offered: this it was—not the nails, not the scourge, not the Cross—which sacrificed Him for the sins of the world. This was, indeed, the returning of the good for evil which has heaped coals of fire on our heads.

V. And yet here is our Comfort.—On that heart, on that arm, you are set as seals. You cannot be forgotten—you cannot be overlooked. If He died for you, no fear that He should not remember you. If He suffered for you, no fear that He will not suffer with you. And then I might tell you to remember how a seal is made and of what: the work of a cunning artificer: little by little: bit by bit: here a grain of stone, there a grain of stone: every mite adding to the true figure—every sculpture indelible. Cut out, too, with sharp instruments—with different sharp instruments, but when once cut out in a gem, never to be effaced. You may destroy the jewel, but, keeping that undestroyed, the seal impressed there must remain there.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons on the Song of Songs*, p. 345.

References.—VIII. 6.—W. J. Knox-Little, *Labour and Sorrow*, p. 313. T. T. Carter, *Lent Lectures*, 1860-1866, p. 136. J. Vaughan, *Outlines of Sermons on the Old Testament*, p. 166. J. Parker, *City Temple Pulpit*, vol. iii. p. 127. VIII. 6, 7.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. vii. No. 364. VIII. 7.—*Ibid.* vol. xlii. No. 2466. VIII. 11.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons on the Song of Songs*, p. 356. VIII. 11-14.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xlii. No. 2480. VIII. 12.—*Ibid.* vol. xlviii. No. 2785. VIII. 13.—F. W. Atkin, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxvi. 1904, p. 183. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxix. No. 1716. VIII. 13, 14.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons on the Song of Songs*, p. 378. VIII. 14.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xl. No. 2360.

ISAIAH

ISAIAH

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THE DUTY OF THANKSGIVING

'Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: for the Lord hath spoken, I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against Me. The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib: but Israel doth not know, My people doth not consider.'—Isaiah i. 2, 3.

As a statesman and a patriot, Isaiah ranks among the foremost of the prophets, and to understand as much as we can of the few words of our text it will be well, perhaps, for us to try to see what the state of affairs was at the time of their utterance. For some years things had been improving, and some of the kings of Judah had made reformation of a kind, but at such a time as that of prosperity a nation is frequently called upon to make its choice either for better or worse. What do we find? A very dark future which Isaiah draws of the decline of men and morals. At a period when everything outwardly looked so prosperous, we are told that although people flocked to God's house, penitents were few, the strong oppressed the weak, there was no heart whatever in the nation's religion, drunkenness had increased to the extent of almost a national sin, and matters seemed about as bad as they could be. And what brought about such a state of thing as this? I think the words in our text give us a very fair idea —ingratitude, base ingratitude, ingratitude in its worst form, so that the very brute creation is held up to the people almost as an example. 'I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against Me.' How much these few words mean! Those who have brought up children in the fear and nurture of the Lord have borne with them in all their childish troubles, helped them to say their prayers, formed and fashioned their characters as well as they could, taught them to be God-fearing and honest citizens, will best understand them. What had God's people done for it all? 'They have rebelled against Me.' How many instances we find as we trace through the earlier books of the Bible of the ingratitude of these people! We are almost astounded sometimes as we read of it all! God cared for them all through, but ingratitude seems to have been one of the principal sins of their lives. They rebelled against God. 'Israel doth not know, My people doth not consider.'

I. We, too, have been nourished and brought up by God; we, too, have been ungrateful. It is so easy for us to turn over these pages and say: 'I can see just where the fault was in that nation, that person'. We do not, however, think of ourselves, of the way in which we are ungrateful to God.

Let us look at just a few facts in our everyday life. If my heart were to stop beating but for a few seconds I should drop lifeless. Who am I that this should not happen? I see an ambulance coming round, some poor person being hurried to the nearest hospital. He has met with some horrid accident or other. Who has preserved me? I see people all round me suffering from disease, and so on, infirmities, bad health. Who has given me health? Then, perhaps, some of us have to be thankful to God that we are in a good situation. We can look round and find so many out of employment because circumstances are against them. We most of us have energy and strength for our daily work. How many thousands in this land of ours have to bemoan shattered health! It is not laziness; their hearts would be in their work, if they might do it, but it has pleased God to afflict them. Then, we most of us have happy homes. We can look round and see others whose homes are very far from happiness indeed. We all of us, even the poorest, enjoy some of God's gifts. Who are we that God should not take them away from us and give them to some one else, perhaps more deserving of them? We beg of God the first time we want anything. We are always asking for something or other, but how many of us think of thanking God for all He has done for us? We most of us have a great many blessings indeed. God has again and again answered our prayers.

II. Has our thanksgiving been in proportion to our asking and craving? I think that many times it has not. How many of us think of giving God a little service of praise apart from the public services of the Church? There are many ways, for instance, the *Te Deum* gone through now and again, one of those joyful Psalms we come across, a hymn or two out of our book which is so full of them. I am afraid that what was true of those Israelites is true of us. We do not think, we do not consider. We are not ungrateful to our fellow-creatures. As a rule, when any one does us a good turn and is kind to us, most of us would be willing to go even out of our way to do something in return. None of us likes to be thought ungrateful, but our behaviour towards God, our Father, the God Who loves us, Who has preserved us from harm, danger, accident, illness, or loss, is nothing less. We are so in the habit of taking God's gifts as a matter of course that we fail in our duty of

rendering Him the thanks which are His due. God has showered blessings upon us, even more than we have asked for, and we have not been thankful for them. It is a thing that we can remedy. It only wants a little thought, a little consideration. If we would think, if we would consider, it might all be remedied, and our hearts take their part in the worship of thanksgiving which is God's due.

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THE SUM TOTAL OF LIFE

(*Advent Sunday*)

'Cease to do evil; learn to do well.'—Isaiah i. 16, 17.

I. Our life, so far as its spiritual side is concerned, falls into two great divisions. There must be the negative work of repentance; the giving up of habits of sin, the resisting of temptation, all of which falls under the clause *Cease to do evil.* And this is, of course, of the greatest importance, for without it we can make no progress whatever.

In building a house, the most important thing is a good foundation. If there be a flaw there, the house will never be safe. Some few years ago one of the towers of a great cathedral began to settle and to show signs of falling. On examining the foundation it was discovered that it rested upon a stone coffin which had collapsed and thus caused the settlement of the tower.

The first clause of our text requires, not merely that we should cease to do evil, but that we should repent of the evil which we have done.

There is only one Fountain in which we can wash and be clean, the precious Blood of Jesus Christ.

II. *Learn to do well.* God did not create you and give you all the great talents you possess that you might do no harm, but that you might be of some use in the world. No one ever made any instrument merely that it might do no harm, but that it might accomplish the purpose for which it was made; and if it is useless, it is generally destroyed because it is useless. In all our Lord's parables of judgment there is not one which speaks of a soul being lost by positive sin. The cause of its loss is always the neglect of opportunity to work.

Then, too, we have to form habits of virtue. And habits are only formed gradually, whether they be good or bad habits. Take the habit of prayer. What is prayer? It is the language in which the soul speaks to God. It takes time and labour to learn a new language. If you were to devote an hour a day for two or three years, with real concentration of mind, to your prayers, how wonderful would be the result! You would acquire the habit of prayer. And prayer would transform your whole life; you would 'cease to do evil'; you would 'learn to do well'.—A. G. Mortimer, *The Church's Lessons for the Christian Year*, part i. p. 1.

References.—I. 16-19.—V. S. S. Coles, *Advent Meditations on Isaiah I.-XII.* p. 10. J. Keble, *Sermons for Advent to Christmas Eve*, pp. 424, 435, 446.

PROPHETS OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

'Come now, and let us reason together.'—Isaiah i. 18.

So the greatest of the Hebrew prophets addresses his compatriots at the beginning of his prophecy. The prophet's call is to a reasonable consideration of the message he brings, and he was one of a group, or succession of men, who might fairly be described as perhaps the greatest teachers of political righteousness whom the world has ever seen, teachers who sprang out of the heart of the people, who represent in their turn every section of it. Isaiah himself, if we are to believe tradition, was a man of high social rank, a member of the governing class, and of the royal house. His colleague, or brother prophet, or forerunner might be, like Micah, a man of the people, or, like Amos, a herdsman and a gatherer of sycamore fruit. Thus they represent every class, and they stood before their contemporaries, before kings, or nobles, or common people, before all alike, speaking the words of Divine inspiration and conviction. Their mission was simply to hold aloft, without fear of consequences and without thought of personal interest, the ideal national life of a God-fearing people. They were seldom popular. Yet these national and political idealists were the men who made Israel truly great, and such men are always needed, because if their moral idealism fails in any nation, or at any period, the higher life of that people stagnates or decays.

I. What is it that, humanly speaking, gave the Jews their Unique Place among the Nations and differentiated them so remarkably from any other Oriental people, indeed, which has sent them floating down the tide of history surviving every storm? Was it not the sense, growing and deepening out of every generation, of their being a people called of God to work out His purposes and His righteousness? And the men who kept alive and transmitted this sense of a high calling with its inspiration to personal duty from age to age were these men, of various types and of every rank of life, whom John Stuart Mill described as 'the inestimably precious unorganized institution,

the order, if it might so be termed, the order of the prophets'. Accordingly, as he reminds us, the Jews, instead of becoming stationary like other Asiatics, were, next to the Greeks, the most progressive people of antiquity, and, jointly with them, have been the starting-point and the main propelling agency of modern cultivation. It is therefore, assuredly, a matter of some regret that we have given, most of us, so little serious attention to these prophets, and have done so little to cultivate the true prophetic spirit, either in our reading of our Bibles for personal instruction or guidance, or in our teaching of our young men for their inspiration and citizenship, or in the training of our clergy for their calling, or yet again that we have thought so little about applying the spirit of these national teachers to the conduct of our own national affairs. To this neglect may fairly be attributed, in some degree at any rate, some of the most glaring inconsistencies of our national Christian life.

II. Why was it that Isaiah cried so vehemently, 'Come, let us reason together'? It was not because the people around him were irreligious people. It was because of the contradiction and inconsistencies of their professedly religious life. The mission of the Prophet was to sweep out of the life of these people these contradictions between religious profession and habitual practice. The Hebrew prophet is above all things the preacher of reality in personal religion, of consistency in personal conduct, and of righteousness pervading every department of national life.

III. Looking at the Life of our Time, one of the greatest of our English philosophers of the last generation has said of us that we seem to have two religions —one for Sunday observance and Sunday worship, and the other for the market or the Stock Exchange, for the city or for Parliament, or for international or diplomatic use, in other words, for all our various and varying standards of social or political conduct. On Sundays our talk is all of brotherhood, our allegiance to Jesus, the Revealer of the one Fatherhood, the Prince of Peace, and to the virtues which He preached, virtues of Christian charity and good service. On other days, in all the various fields of man's activity, the accepted Gospel seems rather to be a gospel of pride and power, of perpetual antagonism and rivalry, of destruction, or jealousy between classes and nations alike. Dare we say, as we look around us, that this modern philosopher was mistaken in his estimate? Amongst the strangely inconsistent and contradictory phenomena of our complex Christian society, contradictions and inconsistencies seem, indeed, to meet the most thoughtful observer at almost every turn. In almost every country of Europe men's profession, both individual and national, is the religion of Christ, and that profession, as our Baptismal Service continually reminds us, is to be following the example of His Spirit, and to be made like unto Him. But in many departments of our Christian life—say, for instance, in some of our own political and national, and in almost all international, affairs—we hardly ever hear of an appeal to Christian obligation. At such a time, and amid so many dangerous entanglements, we need, above all things, political leaders in every country endued in some degree with the illuminating and strengthening inspiration of these Hebrew prophets, those prophets of national righteousness, to purify the air of national and international relationships; to bid us remember that in our public as in our private affairs our duty is to take care that our rules of conduct be in accord with the Gospel of Christ.

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REDEMPTION BY JUDGMENT

(Advent)

'Zion shall be redeemed with judgment, and her converts with righteousness.'—Isaiah i. 27.

I. These prophecies of Isaiah are excellent lessons for us when we are passing through the season of Advent. Advent contains the promise of approaching Christmas, in other words, the promise of the coming of the Prince of Peace. But Advent also is the season which speaks to us of Christ the Judge, who is now and always weighing all our doings in the balance and executing vengeance, swift or slow, upon those who are found wanting; and who will one day appear again to judge the whole world.

And here Isaiah comes in to help us. He shows us the kind of preparation which we need for meeting the coming of the Lord, because his prophecies themselves contain the preparation by which God sought to turn the hearts of the Jews in his days.

II. If we take Isaiah's account of his own people and apply it to ourselves, it is no great wonder if we are unwilling to confess any likeness.

Twenty-six hundred years have not availed to make impossible just such miseries as fell on the countrymen of Isaiah. The sword, the famine, and the pestilence have not yet vanished from the earth or lost their power to slay. I do not say these things to frighten you. What ought really to frighten us is the sin which we cherish and indulge in our own selves. Where that is, then we know there must be judgment; if not by the sword or famine or pestilence, then in some other way. This was the message which Isaiah had to bear to his people; and most surely it has not grown stale and out of date since then.

III. When we receive the message, we call it hard and cruel: we complain that God will not let us alone: we ask what has become of His much talked-of love. It is not hard and cruel: God will not let

us alone, just because His name is Love. We by our perverseness have made it impossible to bring us back to our own heavenly home by any dealings less severe: therefore God will not shrink from using them, for all our fretful cries. He knows what we so easily forget, that there is no peace for us but in Him.

And so the darkest day of judgment has always a yet brighter day shining beyond. Through Advent we rise to Christmas. But Christmas will bring no blessing to those who have thought Advent to be only a curse.—F. J. A. Hort, *Village Sermons* (2nd Series), p. 1.

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SPIRITUAL TRANSFORMATION

'They shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks.'—Isaiah ii. 4.

Wherever Jesus reigns, this is one of the fruits of His sovereignty. The sword is converted into a ploughshare, and the spear into a pruning-hook. The sword is not destroyed. It is transformed.

I. This is the method of Jesus. When I enter the Kingdom of God, and become a member of the pledged and aspiring host, I pass under the active and liberal influence of grace. I bring with me all the powers which I have been exercising in the ways of the world. I bring with me this or that faculty, possessed of so much power. How does the work of grace operate upon me? Does the great King denude me of my powers, and do I remain in the world emasculated, with the compass of my being diminished, and the totality of my energies decreased? Jesus Christ our Lord never diminishes our power. Whatever powers I bring to Him I retain, only I retain them converted and glorified. He takes my swords, and He hands them back to me as ploughshares. He takes my spears, and returns them as pruning-hooks.

II. How does the good Lord find us? He finds us with plenty of force in our beings, but it is a force perverted, and, therefore, destructive force. That is how the Lord found Zacchæus. Zacchæus was not a weakling. His force of character was abundant. He was shrewd, cute, enterprising, firm, decisive. He had force enough, but it was the force of a sword, and was being used in self-destruction. When the Lord laid hold of Zacchæus, He did not destroy his shrewdness and despoil him of his foresight and enterprise. The redeemed Zacchæus was just as shrewd as the unredeemed Zacchæus, but the shrewdness had been transformed. It was no longer a poisoned sword; it had become a ploughshare used in the general welfare of the race.

III. Redemption does not mean power maimed or power abolished. Redemption means conversion, transformation. Converted force is force with the destructive element extracted, the sword changed into the ploughshare and the spear into the pruning-hook.—J. H. Jowett, *Meditations for Quiet Moments*, p. 94.

Isaiah ii. 4.

'I believe,' said John Bright at Edinburgh in 1853, 'that we shall see, and at no very distant time, sound economic principles spreading much more widely amongst the people; a sense of justice growing up in a soil which hitherto has been deemed unfruitful; and, which will be better than all—the churches of the United Kingdom—the churches of Britain awaking, as it were, from their slumbers, and girding up their loins to more glorious work, when they shall not only accept and believe in the prophecy, but labour earnestly for its fulfilment, that there shall come a time—a blessed time—which shall last for ever, "when nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more".'

Isaiah ii. 4.

I cannot utter to you what I would in this matter; we all see too dimly, as yet, what our great world duties are, to allow any of us to try to outline their enlarging shadows. . . . Reflect that their peace was not won for you by your own hands; but by theirs who long ago jeoparded their lives for you, their children; and remember that neither this inherited peace, not any other, can be kept, but through the same jeopardy. No peace was ever won from Fate by subterfuge or agreement; no peace is ever in store for any of us, but that which we shall win by victory over shame or sin;—victory over the sin that oppresses, as well as over that which corrupts. For many a year to come, the sword of every righteous nation must be whetted to save or to subdue; nor will it be by patience of other's suffering, but by the offering of your own, that you will ever draw nearer to the time when the great change shall pass upon the iron of the earth;—when men shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks; neither shall they learn war any more.—Ruskin, *The Two Paths*, §§ 195-96.

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THE LIGHT OF THE LORD

'O house of Jacob, come ye, and let us walk in the light of the Lord.'—Isaiah ii. 5.

A vision, great and splendid, had passed before the Prophet's mind. Jerusalem, lying low amidst the hills, and overshadowed by the mountains of Moab, became exalted above them all, and towered in grandeur towards the skies. Thus exalted, she is a sign and centre to the nations, and along the highways and up the slopes are seen marching, not the

tribes of Israel only, but also the peoples of the world, who are hastening to seek instruction from the God of Israel, and to submit themselves to Him as supreme Arbitrator and Ruler. Under His universal sovereignty divisions are healed, and strife ceases, and peace covers the world. The weapons of war are no longer needed, and are applied to peaceful uses. As the glorious scene unfolds itself, God's kingdom, supreme and universal, the nations gathered into it, the Prophet turns to his countrymen to whom God's kingdom had first appeared, and cries, as he points to the coming glory: 'O house of Jacob, come ye, and let us walk in the light of the Lord'. The earthly Jerusalem was the type of a higher power, the sign of a greater kingdom to be set up in the world. The vision is a picture and prediction of the triumph of Christianity.

I. Come 'Ye'.—The true method of extending Christianity is found in our personal submission to its sway. If we would contribute to its spread and share in its triumph we must begin with ourselves. Here lies the simple path of duty for every man who believes in Christianity, and sees in it the hope of his race.

Christianity ruling in the world is a more pleasant subject to men than Christianity ruling in the sphere of one's own nature and life. The Prophet's countrymen were quite willing that the kingdom of God should be supreme over men, and gloried in the prospect, but were most unwilling that it should be supreme over themselves. Christianity, giving peace to the world and bringing in the happy time when 'the lion shall lie down with the lamb,' is exulted in by many who have no idea of its power on themselves, subduing evil tempers, silencing angry words, and making their lives bright with tenderness and compassion.

Practical Christianity is described as 'walking in the light of the Lord'. Christ must become to us the law of our lives. (1) Life must have constant reference to His stupendous sacrifice. (2) Life must be ruled and directed by the example of Christ. (3) Life must be ennobled and sustained by the fellowship of Christ. 'If we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another.'

II. Christianity and Humanity.—The motive to practical Christianity is found in the blessedness for man of universal Christianity. The appeal is inspired by the glory and peace and blessedness the world shall know when it has become the kingdom of God's Son. Therefore, if we are vexed and moved by the woes and evils that oppress humanity, let us ally ourselves with that mighty and beneficent power which shall bring them to an end. If we sigh for the golden age of peace and brotherhood, let us yield ourselves to the sway of Christ's Gospel of love. This is the test of our sincerity. Christianity is all that humanity needs for its true happiness.

III. Christianity as it shall be.—Christianity must be considered in its real and inherent tendencies, and in its ultimate condition, not in its present aspects. We must encourage ourselves, and refute the objections of men, by Christianity in its own nature and purpose, and as it shall be when its triumph is won, and not as it now is, mixed up with the superstitions, the mistakes, the weaknesses, the sins of men. The stately edifice must be judged, if we would know its real character, not while the building is going on, with the scaffolding standing, and heaps of rubbish lying around; with the shouts of the workmen, the noise of the tools; with losses and injuries caused at times by the errors of the builders and by the storms that come; we must look at it and measure it by the design of the great Architect, by its completed proportions, as we have them in the Word of God.

IV. The Importance of Practical Piety.—(1) It is free from any element of doubt and uncertainty. Many objections are taken to Christianity. Men are disputing and wrangling over its doctrines, its modes of worship, its history, and other matters belonging to it. To plunge into controversy cannot but bring unrest to the soul. Concerning practical godliness there can be no dispute. We cannot be wrong in 'doing justly, loving mercy, and walking humbly with our God'. (2) It is the mightiest and surest method of extending Christianity. The glory of the latter days shall shine upon the world, not as the doctrines of Christianity become more accurately formulated, not as its ecclesiastical system becomes perfected, but as its transforming power, purifying the hearts and lives of men, becomes more widely felt and seen. 'O house of Jacob, come ye, and let us walk in the light of the Lord.'

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THE RETURN TO CHRIST'S LOVE

(Good Friday)

'And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem, and men of Judah, judge, I pray you, betwixt Me and My vineyard. What could have been done more to My vineyard, that I have not done in it? Wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes?'—ISAIAH v. 3, 4.

CONSIDER the return made to that love of our Redeemer; the return made by the multitudes—the return made by His enemies—the return made by His special and familiar friends, and, lastly, the return made by the world which He has redeemed.

I. What was the Return Made by the Multitudes?—the multitudes who had seen His mighty works, who had been for the time so struck and impressed by His words. When they saw Him in the hands of His enemies they changed their minds about Him, and were ready to believe those who told them that He was a false Prophet and an impostor. It was they—these foolish, thoughtless, ungrateful multitudes—who were made the instruments of His Crucifixion.

II. What was the Return Made by His Enemies for that sincere and unfeigned love that sought to open their eyes, and hold them back from the wickedness on which they were bent—that love which, if it could not alarm their consciences by the awful vision of the truth which it had disclosed to them, was yet ready to forgive them, ready to die for them? From these there was only one return to be expected. For the truth which He had told them they paid Him back with a double and intenser hatred. For the way in which He had proved His own innocence, and goodness, and wisdom, against their plausible and ensnaring attempts to find it at fault, they resolved all the more that the holier and more unblameable He appeared, the more obstinately would they refuse to acknowledge Him, the more certainly should He perish.

III. But what Return for His Love was Made by those Friends on whom He had lavished the treasures of a love and tenderness without example? Where were they, and what were they doing, when the hour came to try their faithfulness, their constancy, their promises of standing by Him to the last? 'Then all the disciples forsook Him, and fled.' At the first approach of danger all their brave speeches were forgotten. All the great things which they would dare in His company, and for His sake, shrink into selfishness and panic fright. In the Apostles we but see the reflection of our own doings towards our Master.

IV. How has the World Repaid the Love by which it was Redeemed?—It has bowed before Him. It has accepted His Gospel. It has made His Cross the most honourable of its emblems and badges, and placed it, sparkling with jewels, on the crowns of kings. But was this outward earthly honour what Christ sought in return for His love to men? What He suffered for was to make men better. And how has the world learnt the lesson? Is the face of it changed since His coming? Have those multitudes, for whom He died, left off their sins? Think of that dreadful truth, the wickedness of the world: think of the hardness and boldness of the bad, the weakness and imperfection of the good. And, according as we are able to take in the vastness and depth of the fact itself, we shall be able to measure the return which mankind has made to that infinite love of Christ, which stooped from heaven as low as to shame and death, to raise up the souls of His creatures from their self-chosen misery and sin.

V. What Return are we, Personally, Making to our Redeemer's Love?—We know the only return He cares for—a life which helps, so far as it goes, to make this world really His kingdom—a life which follows Him, trying to reproduce in its own course some shadow of His love, His tenderness, His godliness, His humility, His mercy, His hatred of sin, His courage for the truth—a life in which He lives again in the souls of His servants and followers—a life in which the Cross is set up, for our pride, our unkindness, our selfishness, to be nailed to—a life in which we are neither ashamed, nor afraid, to have our portion, to risk our all, with Christ.—R. W. CHURCH, *Village Sermons* (2nd Series), p. 122.

REFERENCE.—V. 3, 4.—R. Waddy Moss, *The Discipline of the Soul*, p. 105.

WILD FLOWERS—THE THYME AND THE DAISY

ISAIAH v. 4.

THE one, scented as with incense—medicinal—and in all gentle and humble ways, useful. The other, scentless—helpless for ministry to the body; infinitely dear as the bringer of light, ruby, white, and gold; the three colours of the Day, with no hue of shade in it. . . . Now in these two families you have typically Use opposed to Beauty in *wildness*; it is their wildness which is their virtue;—that the thyme is sweet where it is unthought of, and the daisies red, where the foot despises them; while, in other orders, wildness is their crime,—'Wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes?' But in all of them you must distinguish between the pure wildness of flowers and their distress. It may not be our duty to tame them; but it must be, to relieve.—RUSKIN, *Proserpina*, ch. vii., §§ 1, 3.

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PERVERSIONS OF CONSCIENCE

'Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness.'—ISAIAH v. 20.

I. WE are all liable to call evil good, and good evil. Not intentionally, of course, but from ignorance. A pure and enlightened conscience is indeed a moral instrument of extraordinary delicacy and precision.

It is an open window which transmits the very light of God Himself. In the very act of obeying that light we are brought nearer to Him whom conscience reveals to us as the All Holy and the All Pure. But all men's consciences are not pure and enlightened. In every one of us the moral sense needs to be educated before it can reflect with any accuracy the holy law of God.

Jesus, the Saviour of the world, 'came to His own, and His own received Him not'. The men among whom He went about doing good, called His good evil, and loved their own darkness better than His God-given light.

II. What, then, is the lesson from it?

The moral of Christ's rejection by the Jews is not that conscience was dead in them. On the contrary, conscience was alive, it was active, energetic, but its judgments were strangely perverted by prejudice and party spirit. Even though we may demur to the commonly received notion that it was our sin that nailed Christ to the cross, it was certainly the sin of human beings like ourselves—a sin of which average human nature is not incapable. The obstinate blindness, the furious animosity of those Jews of old, are among the mainsprings of action which the average man among us recognizes in the world around him, and finds slumbering in the depths of his own heart.

Does not our own experience teach us how hard it is to do even common justice to those who do not adopt our shibboleths, and whose teaching and action we think to be mischievous? So inextricable is the moral confusion that sets in when men once let their passions and their prejudices decide for them, instead of that dry light of conscience which judges men and things according to the eternal standards of heavenly truth. Considerations of this kind should help us to appreciate and to account for the atrocious calumnies that were levelled at our Lord by the Jewish authorities of His day.

III. There is truth of a certain sort in the most malignant caricature. Malice, as a rule, does not invent; it finds it easier to distort and to pervert some recognizable features of the person whom it is desirable to write down. Hence it was that the libels upon Jesus found a certain currency, and they were even adopted by men who ought to have known better, had not the light that was in them been obscured by darkness. For when His enemies taxed Jesus with being a Sabbath-breaker, when they called Him a gluttonous man and a wine-bibber, the friend of publicans and sinners; when they accused Him of deceiving the people; when they taunted Him with being a Samaritan, these were not so much malignant lies as slanders, in the sense in which moral caricatures are always slanders.

As taunts those words died eighteen hundred years ago. But as a deep moral lesson, and as a striking illustration of the blinding, perverting power of hatred and prejudice, they are alive, and they speak to us this very day.—J. W. Shepard, *Light and Life*, p. 38.

References.—V. 20.—J. Addison Alexander, *The Gospel of Jesus Christ*, p. 568. VI.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxxix. No. 2304. A. B. Davidson, *The Called of God*, p. 187.

REDEEMING VISION

'In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw also the Lord.'—Isaiah vi. 1.

In all life's necessary contact and inevitable contest with reality, nothing is more needed than the uplifted eye with its power of vision, which is the power of purity. To see 'also the Lord' is alike the secret of steadfastness and the guarantee of that knowledge in the midst of perplexity, which alone liberates from fretful anxiety and unbelief, and leads to right choice and wise action.

I. In connexion with *duty*, how indispensable is the sight of the ever-present Lord. The supremacy of duty is one of the insistent facts of life. Its calls are clamant and will not be denied, and its claims are often tyrannous. As the sunlight falling upon common objects gilds them with a beauty not their own, so the knowledge of God's purpose transmutes the base metal of an ordinary life into the gold of His glory and transforms duty into delight. For to see Him thus as the Lord of all duty is to see Him also as the Lord of all power. He has appointed you. He is hence committed to the responsibility of equipping you with strength both to endure and to do.

II. Again, with regard to the *discipline* by which alone any one can be made holy, we need to see 'also the Lord'. Otherwise the providences by which He seeks to teach and bless us will be misinterpreted, and we shall lose their value. The cup of bitterness is only acceptable when we know that it is 'the cup which my Father hath given me to drink'. To see Him as the Lord of love and wisdom, and to know that 'He doth not willingly afflict the children of men,' will alone serve to interpret His doings to the stricken heart and give 'songs in the night'.

III. In our *joys*, too, we need to see 'also the Lord,' or we are almost certain to be led astray by means of them into mere selfishness. All that is bright and beautiful in the world is one's to use and to enjoy, and its withdrawal is only made necessary when absorption in the gift disturbs our relationship with the Giver.

IV. The same need of seeing 'also the Lord' is obvious also in the realm of our *desires*. What a gulf there often is between our intentions and our attainments. The desire for holy living may possess us while the power for its realization is lacking, and consequently action is paralysed. He Who works in you 'to will' also works in you 'to do' of His good pleasure, and your desires are hence not weights but wings.—J. Stuart Holden, *Redeeming Vision*, p. 1.

ISAIAH'S VISION

'In the year that King Uzziah died I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and His train filled the temple.'—Isaiah vi. 1.

There was a political crisis in Israel at this time. After years of privacy and suffering King Uzziah

died of leprosy, and a royal funeral had just taken place. Jotham, his son, was elevated at once from the regency to the throne, and swayed his sceptre over the temporal destinies of Israel. It was at this juncture that the magnificent vision described in this morning's lesson was vouchsafed to the Prophet. The design of it was that the Prophet should reveal it to the people.

I. The Vision.—There are three things about the vision which passed before the Prophet that we may well ponder.

1. *It transpired in the temple.* Isaiah knew that, according to His covenant pledge, God would be there to meet him at this critical period. Nor was he disappointed. As he stood by the altar, and poured out his full soul, he heard the Divine voice, and his cares were at once removed. 'It is good to draw nigh unto God at all times,' but especially when the shadow of a great trial clouds the soul; for then God not only scatters the darkness, but causes the sunshine to come in its stead. Yet anxious souls are sometimes exceedingly reluctant to go in their sorrow to the temple, to meet and talk with God concerning it.

2. *It revealed the Lord.* As the Prophet remained by the altar—only a mortal and sinful man—the veil of the Holy of holies was drawn aside, and he beheld a throne of burning splendour, the seat of authority, from which the laws of the universe issued and its interests were administered. It was 'high and lifted up,' indicating its pre-eminency over all other thrones. And on it 'the Lord' was seated in calm, sublime majesty, as a monarch to govern and a judge to condemn or approve. His retinue was great and glorious, consisting of all ranks of celestials—seraphim, and other holy and happy spirits. And 'His train' corresponded with His throne and attendants. Whatever its textures, the robe was of unsullied purity and dazzling effulgence, such as became the perfection and dignity of the wearer. But who was He? Jesus—the Second Person of the adorable Trinity (St. John XII. 41).

3. *It inspired the angels.* As they flew and clustered round the throne, and saw, with the Prophet, the glory of the Lord of the throne, they rendered befitting homage to Him; they covered their faces with their wings in adoring reverence, and seraph responded antiphonally to seraph—'Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory!' Thus rapturously they sang, until the whole temple was one mighty wave of harmonious praise, and its pillars trembled with the sound of their voices. More 'the house was filled with smoke'—the symbol and proof that Jehovah-Jesus was there. Such worship is in the temple above the stars (Rev. IV.); and in this we hope one long and blissful day to take our part (1 Peter I. 3-5; Rev. VII. 9-17).

II. Its Effect on the Prophet.—1. *He was overwhelmed with fear.* No wonder: like as Moses did, he was looking on God. Such fear was natural. It was like that which Moses felt; but we ought never to feel it (Heb. XII. 18-24).

2. *He was conscious of defilement.* The splendour and excellency around the Prophet led him to introspect himself, and as he beheld the awful contrast between his inner self and that outer glory he exclaimed, 'Woe is me! for I am undone, because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts'. The lips of the seraphic choristers were clean, because their hearts were clean; and Isaiah felt that he and Israel needed lips and hearts pure as theirs before he and they could praise God as He was then being praised. So he despaired; and yet his very despair, arising from an overwhelming sense of his own and his people's defilement, showed that he had a God-enlightened mind (1 Cor. II. 9, 10).

3. *He was restored to purity.* For a little while he was 'in heaviness,' until, indeed, one of the seraphim took a live coal with his sacred tongs from off the altar, and laid it on the lips which had confessed their uncleanness, and, as God's representative, said unto him, 'Lo! this hath touched thy lips, and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged'. That moment salvation was his, and heaven too! So now: no sooner is the precious Blood of Jesus brought by the Holy Spirit into touch with the soul of the penitent believer than all its defilement is cleansed, and it becomes whiter than snow.

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THE DISCIPLINE OF AWE

'In the year that King Uzziah died I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and His train filled the temple. Above Him stood the seraphims: each one had six wings; with twain He covered His face, and with twain He covered His feet, and with twain He did fly. And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of His glory. And the foundations of the thresholds were moved at the voice of Him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke. Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts. Then flew one of the seraphim unto me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar: and he touched my mouth with it, and said, Lo this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged,' etc.—ISAIAH VI. 1-8.

WE cannot contemplate the spectacle which Isaiah describes—if we deal truly with ourselves—without feeling our eyes grow dazzled and our hearts tremble. But the description is given to us for this very purpose. We all need the discipline, the inspiration of awe. Wonder—this fear of the Lord—is always the beginning of wisdom. And we specially need the discipline, the inspiration now.

I. There is, I think, great danger lest the realism, the externality, the earthliness which have spread over modern life and thought should dominate our religion. We are tempted to treat Divine things with a strange familiarity, to use human modes of conception and feeling and representation not only as provisional helps towards the formation of spiritual ideas, as we must, but as the measures of them. We draw sharp outlines which can have no existence in the brightness which is about the throne. So it comes to pass that symbols, outward acts, formulas, the Holy Sacraments themselves in many cases, tend to confine and narrow the devotion which they were designed to elevate and enlarge. But we cannot rest with impunity in that which is of this world. So to rest is to lose the highest. To pierce through the outward is to find a new world. Isaiah felt this when the eyes of his heart were opened. The whole aspect of the temple service, august as it was, was changed for him. When the veil was withdrawn, he saw not what he looked for—the Ark and the carved cherubim, and the luminous cloud—but the Lord in His kingly state, and angels standing with outstretched wings ready to serve, and the earth full of His glory as an illimitable background to the marvellous scene. Something like this it is which we must strain the eyes of our heart to see, and having seen to interpret to our people. For the Incarnation, which is our message, has made the prophetic vision permanent.

II. No one of us would question in words our Lord's immutable Deity. No one would question that He came to us in the Father's name, to reveal the Father to us. Yet is it not true that we are tempted to substitute Him for the Father to whose presence He leads us? Is it not true that our faith in consequence is in peril of becoming unmanly, sentimental, fantastic, unbraced by the generous discipline of reverence, unpurified by the spiritual fire of awe? Such questions cannot be answered hastily. But at least they may lead us to try ourselves. Let us cling, cling to the last, to the true humanity of our Saviour and our Advocate, but let us follow Him in reverence where He is, follow Him to the glory which He had before the world began, follow Him to the throne of the Father, His Father and our Father. So will a holy fear—the most elevating of all emotions—mingle with adoration as we bow ourselves before the One only God, seen, as Isaiah saw Him, in His glorious majesty. —B. F. Westcott, *Peterborough Sermons*, p. 267.

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THE VISION OF GOD

'Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of Hosts: the whole earth is full of His glory.'—Isaiah vi. 3.

I. The Vision of God is, the Call of the Prophet.—Nowhere is the thought presented to us in the Bible with more moving force than in the record of Isaiah's mission.

II. Isaiah's Vision, Isaiah's Call, are for Us also, and Await from Us a Like Response.—What Isaiah saw was, St. John (xii. 41) tells us, Christ's glory.

III. The Prophet's Teaching Must be the Translation of His Experience.—He bears witness of that which he has seen. His words are not an echo but a living testimony. The heart alone can speak to the heart. But he who has beheld the least fragment of the Divine glory; he who has spelt out in letters of light on the face of the world one syllable of the Triune Name, will have a confidence and a power which nothing else can bring.

IV. The Vision of God is the Chastening of the Prophet.—B. F. Westcott, *The Contemporary Pulpit*, vol. v. p. 363.

ISAIAH'S VISION

(*For Trinity Sunday*)

'Mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts.'—Isaiah vi. 5.

Isaiah was worshipping in the temple court; and as he knelt he beheld in ecstatic vision the way lying open to the Holy of holies.

The temple on earth became the miniature of the temple in heaven. A wonderful access to God was granted to the Prophet.

Other worshippers saw the outward ritual, the Shekinah, the carved figures of the angels, the vapour of the incense; he saw what their eyes could not see, the King of Glory clothed in His Majesty, the row of adoring seraphim, the future intercession of the Redeemer, and the prayers of the saints in His Name.

I. The effect of the vision on the Prophet. Not what we might have expected—not joy, or satisfaction; but, at first, consternation, a sense of his own sinfulness. (So St. Peter, 'Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord'; and St. Paul at Damascus.) Isaiah sees his own sinfulness and that of others, as he had not seen it before; and the cry of anguish is wrung from his heart: 'Woe is me! for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts'.

And then there came to the humble and contrite spirit the message from the altar of Divine Love, the live coal touching his lips, the assurance of mercy and pardon: 'This hath touched thy lips, thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged'.

He is ready now to go forth in obedience to the will of God. To him there came the call to work: 'Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us?' It is the voice of the King. Isaiah asks no questions about

the mission; he hesitates not; he is ready for instant service. 'Here am I; send me; ready to speak Thy word; to do Thy work.'

II. What does this vision say to us to-day?

It speaks to us of a new view of life, a new view of truth, presenting a new ideal.

(*a*) Our lives are shaped by the ideal which presents itself to us; and there are many ideals.

With some, the ideal is the life of pleasure—self-indulgence is the keynote of their lives.

With others, the ideal of life is ambition. To rise, that is the point: to rise in social position, in influence; to make a good marriage; to belong to a smart set.

With others, the ideal of life is gain. Everything is made subservient to this—to the acquisition of something they can touch, and hoard; it involves one advantage, hard work; but the result is the same—self is the centre.

Others have no ideal at all, but are simply drifting through life; acting only on the impulse of the moment; whose lives begin, continue, and look as though they might end, in nothing.

Others have indeed set before themselves an ideal, a high one, which they have struggled to attain, but fallen far short of their aspirations; their efforts futile, their lives anything but lofty; and they have been tempted to abandon the effort.

(*b*) What shall arouse us from these false, degrading, and selfish ideals? One thing only—a new view of life; a vision of some great truth hitherto hidden, now borne with overwhelming force upon the soul.

This was the turning-point in Isaiah's career; one moving idea possessed and stirred the depth of his spirit: 'Mine eyes have seen the King'. Henceforth all is changed. New aims, objects, desires, rise to beckon him on; he is transformed; the old self dies; he is a new man.

So it will always be with the man who sees the true vision. In his unrenewed state he owns no supreme ruler, he follows natural impulse, he obeys his lower nature. But when once truth, the light of God, dawns upon his heart, his eyes are opened; he learns that earthly hopes die down, earthly pleasures fail to satisfy; that man is small, that God is all in all; that 'life is real and earnest'; that henceforth his life shall be ruled by a Personal Will—a Will that has claims on his soul's best affections.

III. 'Mine eyes have seen the King.' St. John tells us that it was the glory of Jesus Christ: 'These things said Esaias when he saw His glory'—the glory of the enthroned Christ.

What he saw in shadow we have seen in historic presence. God has entered into fellowship with humanity—lived, toiled, and suffered here; now He reigns in Human Form on high. When this truth permeates the heart, heaven is opened and religious truth becomes real. We see that God has a plan laid down for us; that Christ's will should be our law; that He has a personal knowledge of, love for, and claim upon, each of us.

The effect of the 'vision,' of religious conviction, will be—

1. A personal sense of sin—moral failure: 'I am a man of unclean lips'; the lips symbolizing the inward life, which needs purification. The conviction of failure and sin is sure to force itself upon the man who can say 'Mine eyes have seen the King'.

2. Unhappiness about others. We are all members of one another; so we read and think and profess, though we do not always act up to the truth. It is impossible not to become more or less alive and sensitive to the moral tone of others; the personal is bound up with the social sense of sin: 'I dwell among a people of unclean lips'. This lies at the root of all missionary and philanthropic effort. If a man has seen the 'King,' the sense of others' wretchedness cannot but press upon his heart.

IV. The call to service, and the response.

After the vision of enlightenment, and the fire of love, came a voice: 'Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us?' The voice is sounding now; all about us, at home, abroad. Who will go? It appeals to all, but especially to the young and richly endowed, to stand out as witnesses for Christ and the Truth.

This is the great present-day need—a new, higher, nobler, purer view of life, its meaning, destinies, ends. May God open our eyes to see things as they are; may He kindle in us love for Christ, that we may count it all honour to serve Him in serving the brotherhood.

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THE DIVINE CALL

'Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? . . . Here am I; send me.'—Isaiah vi. 8.

I. If there be in faith, in work, in character, a living response to God's love and truth, life becomes a lesson of His teaching, an interpretation of His will, a reflection of His love to the age in which we live, to those for whom we are called to work. The call, the appointed work, will not be the same for all. 'There are . . . many kinds of voices in the world,' each with its own signification, each with its own power to tell out the praises of God; if one be silent, God's self-revealing is less than perfect.

II. Consider some of those through whom God's purpose of the ages has had its fulfilment. We may learn helpful lessons of life from them.

Abraham, accepting his high vocation with a courageous faith that made him 'the friend of God'.

Moses at the Bush, conquering his fear and hesitation, and proving worthy to stand alone as the one prophet 'whom the Lord knew face to face'.

The child Samuel answering the Divine voice, 'Speak, for Thy servant heareth,' and through his innocent-hearted obedience becoming 'established to be a prophet of the Lord'.

Isaiah, gazing upon his glorious vision, hearing a call that was in itself a revelation of highest truth, and answering in all humility, 'Here am I; send me'.

The Blessed Virgin Mary, receiving with all womanly modesty, humility, and self-surrender, the annunciation of the honour and the mystery for which she is for ever called blessed.

St. John, living his loving life under the control and by the inspiration of the eternal truth that 'God is Love'.

St. Paul, blinded by the glory which shone from the presence of the Risen and Ascended Christ, crying, 'Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?' and yielding himself to do and to suffer with a lion-hearted courage and a quenchless faith.

III. Consider the facts and truths which have been in the past the vehicle or the interpretation of God's call to ourselves.

What directed us to our work? How were we called? Had we a strong unmistakable call such as those we have just now considered? Most of you have had no such call.

What we call the accidents and commonplace things of life are generally the vehicle, or the interpretation of a Divine call. Did your work lead to a discovery in yourself of power or capacity before unknown? Did it show you ways of glad usefulness, of wondrous self-realization, of sweet rewards? While it brings out your individuality, does it also make higher calls upon your being? Then God is calling you, through your work, to that ministry in which you may best glorify Him, and develop each your own peculiar baptismal gift.—G. Brett, *Fellowship With God*, p. 3.

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HOW LONG?

'Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I; send me. And He said, Go, and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not. Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed. Then said I, Lord, how long?'—Isaiah vi. 8-11.

I. The Wall of Obstruction.—There is the terrible discipline of God's messenger! To be the bearer of a Divine mission is to find yourself, at once, faced by a blind wall of obstruction. It is so fixed and strong that there is nothing you can do against it. What appeal can you make to hearts that are too gross to be stirred, and have no faculties wherewith to understand?

The late Lord Salisbury came back from Constantinople, in the old days of black disaster in the East, to tell us why he had failed to achieve a single reform. 'The Turkish officials,' he said, 'simply have not the capacities to understand what we mean.' There is no getting over the preliminary difficulty. If the capacities to understand what we mean are not there, we had better go home at once.

And this was to be the bitter result, to Isaiah, of being sent by God. And worse. He was to find that it was his own message which deepened the damage. Man shuts up at the touch of the Divine message just as strange creatures that we find on the seashore withdraw their tentacles and feelers at our touch and disappear into the silence of their shells. Nothing now can get at them, or tempt them forth into the open again. If we had not touched they would be still open and visible. It was the touch that was fatal. So with the prophetic message.

If man is free, then of sheer necessity Divine manifestations cannot be made without giving him, without forcing upon him, a moral judgment. The tenderness of Jesus had to endure the sting of the dread confusion: 'For judgment I am come into this world'. 'If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin; but now they have no cloke for their sin.' We shudder at the moral truth.

II. The Light Beyond the Blackness.—I want you to recognize the effect on the Prophet of recognizing that at which we shudder. Just because it is so hard, so terrifying, so black, therefore he knows that it is not all. The misery of such a disaster as that which has been portrayed would of itself prompt God to further action. The Prophet is utterly sure of this; sure of it by premonitory instinct; and, therefore, the dreadful result that is to follow his mission does but draw from him the expression of an unconquerable hope. Lord, how long, how long? Night bears in itself, as it were, the verdict of its vanishing. Through the darkness of the night we know what it is that we miss; and what we miss God will bring us. That is what the Jew in his prophetic optimism never ceased to assert. The fact that we miss it is a proof that it will come. Therefore, we have hope under the night.

III. So he spoke; and he was right. He had read God's mind. There was a secret behind, a secret hope. True, the immediate interval of judgment, he was told, was to be sharp and sweeping. Cities would be wasted, the land utterly desolate. There would be a great forsaking, but underneath all this fierce wrath the good residue would be saved; would be sifted out; would be disciplined; would be perfected. Underneath and behind the terror the Divine compassion would be at work securing the true seed.

'Lord, how long?' We are to utter these words in the face of all disasters, in the teeth of every storm.—H. Scott Holland, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxxiii. 1908, p. 40.

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Pulpit, vol. xlvi. 1894, p. 218. VII. 9.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxxix. No. 2305. J. E. Roberts, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxxi. 1907, p. 321. VII. 9-14.—V. S. S. Coles, *Advent Meditations on Isaiah I.-XII.* p. 61.

GOD WITH US

(*Sunday after Christmas*)

'And shall call His name Immanuel.'—ISAIAH VII. 14.

I. We may well say first, that all our best Christmas thoughts are summed up in this word. We think of the Holy Child not simply as heaven's gift to the world, but as the coming down of heaven itself into the world. 'Lo, I am with you alway,' is the alpha and omega of the Incarnation. 'Immanuel, God with us!' That is the very meat and drink of our faith. The gift that came to the world that first Christmas morning has never been withdrawn for a moment. It is perennial and inexhaustible, new every morning, fresh every evening.

II. The word comes to us with equal appropriateness as we consider the approaching close of the year. It comes laden with suggestions of gratitude, and musical too with prophetic voices of glad and assuring promise. You have often been conscious of the Divine hand upon you, and a thousand times when you were not conscious you have discovered afterwards that it was most surely there. He who has been as the shadow of a great rock behind, as a covert from the tempest, as a guiding and protecting pillar of fire; He whose angel presence has journeyed with us through many a wilderness, and across many a divided sea, will just repeat Himself in the story which has yet to be written before our lives reach their final rest. Immanuel! there is no word like that. God with us. That is the best of all, it leaves nothing wanting.

III. And that is what we feel not only about ourselves but about the world at large. We might despair if we thought that God came and went, that Christ lived and died and vanished. But no thoughts of fear can ever disturb those who believe that the Incarnation meant a perpetual fact, a gift never recalled, a power that never ceases to work, a promise that is always hastening to its fulfilment. There can be no doubt about the future of him whose faith is planted deep in and girded round by this truth of truths, 'Immanuel, God with us'.—J. G. GREENHOUGH, *Christian Festivals and Anniversaries*, p. 238.

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THE GIFT OF PEACE

'The Prince of Peace.'—ISAIAH IX. 6.

'There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked.'—ISAIAH LVII. 21.

What a contrast these two texts present! The wicked—those living apart from God—have no peace; but to those who know the Incarnate Son of God to be their Saviour, He is their Peace—the Prince of Peace. Let us look at Him, and then at the great inward gift that He comes to convey to us.

I. Peace Inherent in Christ's Nature.—Whatever Christ is, He is by nature, not by circumstance. If He is a King, He is so by nature; if He is the Redeemer, it is because He has willed it with His Father and the Holy Spirit; if He is a Saviour, He is the only Saviour, none other can save us; and so when we speak of Him as 'the Prince of Peace,' we see that that peace is inherent in Himself. When He took our nature, He took it into union with His Godhead. We know that He was tempted in all points; we recognize His physical suffering, and, what is more, and much worse, the agony of mind and heart, the iron entering into the very soul. We cannot understand how that is consistent with His abiding in perfect peace, yet we know that it was so. He is the Prince of Peace because He possessed peace in Himself. Peace rests in the Christian's heart just because it belongs to Jesus Christ. What Christ is in other natures that He conveys, and He conveys it by necessity.

II. The Gift of Peace.—He brings, then, peace!

(*a*) *He has made you at peace with God.* The punishment of our sins has been bought by His satisfaction of the justice of God.

(*b*) *He has given you His peace.* You remember His own words that seem to sum up all He can possibly do. They are the last, and so, as is usual with Him, the best. Listen to them: 'Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you'. And He places His peace, if you will have it, right down in your inmost soul. In these last words He was careful to point out 'Not as the world giveth, give I unto you'. When one of us gives some small pledge or present to a friend, a moment before it belonged to the giver, the next it has passed with affection to the receiver. It has ceased to be the property of the one, and has become the possession of the other. Not so Christ! He does not give in that way; His peace remains His own, not merely because He has parted with none of it, but for a deeper and better reason. The gift which passes between you and me marks our separateness, but the gift that is possessed by you

and by Jesus Christ testifies to our union with Him. It is in Him that it is enjoyed, and in Him alone.

III. The Character of Peace.—There is peace *and* peace! Some persons make a wilderness, burn the towns, sweep the crops, kill the men, and then set up an inscription that they have made peace! There is peace which is a name only. There is a peace which is an end, and there is a peace which is unworthy, and a peace which is crushing. It is not the peace of Jesus Christ. The peace He enjoys, and that He conveys, is the peace of God. It is consistent with the completest and most tremendous activity. No saint ever lived without peace as the rule of his life, but no saint ever found in peace his end. The more that the Prince of Peace dwells in our hearts the greater will be our desire and our capacity to serve Him.

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THE BOASTING AXE

'Shall the axe boast itself against him that heweth therewith? or shall the saw magnify itself against him that shaketh it? as if the rod should shake itself against them that lift it up, or as if the staff should lift up itself, as if it were no wood.'—Isaiah x. 15.

What would be the result if we had amongst us through and through a most hearty and loyal and loving reception of the great doctrine of Divine sovereignty, the great doctrine that all things are settled and decreed and arranged.

I. If we could really believe these elementary truths we should have a great unit in society. Man did not make society, and man cannot destroy it; man did not make mystery, and man cannot solve it, unless by God's enlightenment and special permission.

Out of this acceptance of the Divine sovereignty comes a grand religious brotherhood, as well as a deep satisfaction and noble peace. God did it all.

II. We must have a sceptre, a throne, a king. We as Christian students and believers have accepted the idea that God reigns, and by God we mean the loving, personal, redeeming God, the God incarnate in Christ Jesus, the God of Bethlehem, of Calvary, and of Olivet; the priest God, who loved us, who gave His Son to save us. That is what we believe; and, believing that, out of it comes a whole philosophy of daily life, of social responsibility, and of all manner of well-regulated and harmonic action. Now which is the greater—for we must have great and small; these distinctions are not of our own making—which is the greater, I will ask you, the man who wrote the book—being *Paradise Lost* or Homer's *Iliad*—the man who wrote the book or the man who bound it? I wonder if you could constitute yourselves into a committee and appoint a sub-committee in order to return an answer to that inquiry? Which had the greater mind, judging both men from the evidence that is accessible? The one man wrote the book, the other man bound it; the book has achieved universal and imperishable fame, and the bookbinder has—been paid. Which is the greater? oh, tell me! the picture or the frame-maker? If I could invite you to a grand exhibition of all the paintings of the year, and if I could also ask you to attend a complete exhibition of all the frames that have been made during the year, to which exhibition would you go? But is not one man as good as another? Why not go and see the frames? they are all gilt, and they are all shapely, and they are all made by very expert and efficient workmen; now will you go to see the pictures or the frames? I need not wait more than one moment; you have answered before the question was put. There is a spirit in man, and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth him understanding. You want the pictures, the genius, the flame pentecostal, the mystery of harmony, perspective, colour, the silent oratorio.

Let us beware of second causes in providence, let us beware of second causes in religion, and let us beware of second causes in destiny; and let us accept the old, old doctrine of the sovereignty of God, and when we are in darkness let us seek the altar, the Cross, and pray.

References.—X. 15.—S. Martin, *Sermons*, p. 85. X. 17.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—Isaiah*, p. 55. X. 20-23.—V. S. S. Coles, *Advent Meditations on Isaiah*, p. 84.

THE SHOOT OUT OF THE DRY STOCK

'And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots.'—Isaiah xi. 1.

I. In that story of the shoot out of the dry stock two thoughts, as it were, compete for utterance.

1. There is the thought that God in Christ finds us where we are and not other where, meets us in the weary day which our pilgrimage has actually reached, demands of us no impossible return to the beginning of our lives. He has a new growth for the cut-down stock. There is no uprooting, no fresh seed; but from the old tree springs the leaf of joy.

2. In that recovery which finds us where we are, there is a fresh upburst of that which is entirely original. It is a force from the *root*. The new thing which appears, appears not from the bark, appears not from the hewn surface, it witnesses to the vigour of the root and it repeats the power of its birth.

II. See how this was, first in the great fulfilment which was seen in the birth of our Lord from the Virgin Mary; when the Son of Mary, the Only Begotten Son of God, appeared upon the earth. There was the once majestic stem of Jesse reduced externally to a humble unknown family for which there was no room in the inn. Nothing could more strictly fulfil the picture of the hewn-down tree standing in the ruined forest than Israel the lowest and most wretched of the nations which still remained from that ancient world which the axe of Rome had levelled with the soil. In the old world, so disgraced, so confused, so burdened with heavy weights carried for a long journey, so ignorant of its direction, so wanting in hope—in the ancient world, out of the midst of it and out of its lowliest plant, sprang in the birth of Christmas night that fresh young Life which has in fact remade society, given hope and joy again to mankind, such hope, such joy, as mankind had never known before, brought them back, brought them at last rather, into full communion with the freshness of the eternal.

I think it is good to note in other children—in every child—something of that wonderful power which belongs to One Who brings the promise of the future out of the ancient stock of human life.

III. Think, also, how this hope of Jesus Christ, this freshness out of the dry stock, can give to us courage in our social task.

There must be a seeking after reasons and meanings. What is the Church for? What is the State for? and what am I for in this short pilgrimage which will so soon be gone, and where I may be a worker and supporter and in part a guide, seeing the road which others see, or I may be a mere slave upon the track, a slave who does no work?—P. N. Waggett, *Church Times*, vol. lvii. 4 January, 1907, p. 22.

Illustration.—Do you remember the story that is told about St. Patrick? that represents also the salvation of Jesus Christ springing up in the midst of our ancient race. Patrick, they say, was born when his parents were fleeing from the heathen persecutors of their race, fleeing from them somewhere in Wales or farther north; and they were lost and panic-stricken in a desert place where there is no water, and, behold, the child is born, and how shall he be baptized in a dry land where there is no spring? And the priest who is to baptize him is himself blind and cannot go to seek or give any encouragement and leading to the bewildered train of fugitives. But the blind priest takes the little child's hand and with it blesses the dry soil, and up there springs in this land of fear and terror and loneliness fresh water, in which the child is baptized who is to be the apostle of Ireland.—P. N. Waggett, *Church Times*, 4 January, 1907, p. 22.

References.—XI. 1.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons Preached in Sackville College Chapel*, vol. iv. p. 270. XI. 1-9.—*Church Times*, vol. xxx. 1892, p. 804. X. 1-10.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—Isaiah*, p. 56. XI. 2.—G. W. Herbert, *Notes of Sermons*, p. 132. G. Matheson, *Voices of the Spirit*, p. 59. J. Martineau, *Hours of Thought*, vol. ii. p. 133. V. S. S. Coles, *Advent Meditations on Isaiah*, p. 89. XI. 3-10.—*Ibid.* p. 92. XI. 4.—J. H. Newman, *Sermons Bearing on Subjects of the Day*, p. 267. XI. 5.—V. S. S. Coles, *Advent Meditations on Isaiah, I.-XII.* p. 96.

A LITTLE CHILD SHALL LEAD THEM

(*Christmas*)

'A little child shall lead them.'—Isaiah xi. 6.

You will remember the context of this verse. Isaiah is drawing a picture of *redeemed nature*. Under the rule of the promised Prince of David's line, 'the wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid, and the calf and the young lion and the fatling, and'—as a charming finishing touch to the idyllic scene—'a little child shall lead them'. I do not think that when Isaiah talks of bears and lions and reptiles, he means fierce and cruel and cunning men. When he talks of the beasts he means the beasts.

I. Christmas is the glorification of childhood. It is the fulfilment of Isaiah's vision. It proclaims peace on earth, peace 'among men of God's good will' (for this is the true reading of the angel's song); and the Prince of Peace, who leads the peace-makers, the men after God's own heart, is a little child. That little child grew up to teach us that unless we accept the kingdom of God as little children, we shall not enter therein.

II. 'The spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him; the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord, and shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord.' It is a majestic description of the *intellectual* endowments of humanity. 'The Holy Spirit,' says Gregory of Tours, in words which may sound rather startling, 'is the God of the intellect rather than of the heart.' This splendid enumeration of the intellectual gifts of the Messiah leads on at once to the idyllic picture which we have mentioned—the wild animals tamed and gentle, and led by a little child. It is, I think, a very noble and a very striking contrast. The ideal Ruler of David's line, on whom the Spirit of the Lord shall pour all His choicest intellectual gifts, shall found a kingdom of universal peace, gentleness, and confiding innocence. We are very near the heart of Christianity here.

III. In a very fascinating mediaeval religious book, the *Revelations of Julian of Norwich*, the wise and saintly authoress says, 'To me was shown no higher stature than childhood'. Not, of course, that we should remain children in understanding; not that when we have become men, we should refuse to put away childish things; but that there should remain much of the child-character in us to the end. Christianity was founded (I say it reverently) by a young

man; it is a religion for the young, and for those who remain young in heart, though their hair is grey. Are not faith and hope and love, the Christian virtues, essentially the temper of the child—the boy and girl? There is something very charming and inspiring in the faith, hope, and charity which have survived prolonged contact with the world, and experience of its ways. The religion of the devout recluse is good, but the religion of the good man of the world is better.

In celebrating the birth of Christ at Bethlehem we are doing homage to the child-nature, which the Son of God took upon Him, not because it was a necessary preliminary to His adult ministry, but because it was right and seemly that the Son of God should appear on earth as a little child.—W. R. Inge, *All Saints' Sermons*, 1905-7, p. 11.

References.—XI. 6.—R. H. McKim, *The Gospel in the Christian Year*, p. 43. H. J. Wilmot-Buxton, *Plain Preaching for Poor People* (9th Series), p. 17. E. Medley, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxxviii. 1890, p. 116. G. G. Bradley, *ibid.* vol. li. 1897, p. 28. B. Wilberforce, *ibid.* vol. lvii. 1900, p. 90. R. J. Kyd, *ibid.* vol. xlvi. 1894, p. 53. R. Winterbotham, *Sermons Preached in Holy Trinity Church, Edinburgh*, p. 30. J. T. Stannard, *The Divine Humanity*, p. 155. T. Arnold, *Sermons*, vol. i. p. 47. XI. 9.—J. H. Newman, *Sermons Bearing on Subjects of the Day*, p. 142. W. Landels, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. li. 1897, p. 372. W. H. Lyttelton, *Missionary Sermons at Hagley*, p. 108. XI. 9, 10.—H. D. Rawnsley, *ibid.* vol. lxi. 1902, p. 204. XI. 10.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xliii. No. 2542. J. M. Neale, *Sermons Preached in Sackville College Chapel*, vol. i. p. 295; see also *Readings for the Aged* (4th Series), p. 93. W. H. Hutchings, *Sermon-Sketches* (2nd Series), p. 8. F. R. H. H. Noyes, *Plain Preaching for a Year*, vol. i. p. 330.

THE REMNANT OF GOD'S PEOPLE

'And it shall come to pass in that day, that the Lord shall set His hand again the second time to recover the remnant of His people.'—Isaiah xi. 11.

The text is very cheering and tender in itself, and especially in its connexion. Triumphant scenes have been described. Millennium glory; the world at the feet of Christ in willing and joyful subjection. But amidst all this glory the little 'remnant' is not forgotten. The remnant is forgotten in the world's triumphs and gala days, not in God's.

I. The Remnant.—The 'remnant' is a favourite word with God. Let it not think it is thrown away, or lost sight of. A 'second time' He sets His hand to recover it. Perhaps it was too poor, weak, thoughtless—even wedded to the strange land, at the last gathering. He will not only glean, but go back to fields already reaped and gleaned. You cannot be too poor, despised, sinful, for Christ to seek and save you. He has no 'residuum'. He counts the very dust of His temple of humanity.

II. The Scattered Remnant.—From Assyria, Egypt, etc. You may be scattered in other lands, among strangers; away from all old influences for good, from old habits, associations, interests, etc.; but His eye is as fully on you, and His heart is as wholly devoted to you, as if you were in the very centre of them all. Nay, if possible, yet more on that account. When father and mother forsake the Lord takes up.

III. Recovered from the Grasp of Strong Enemies.—Those powers named were the strongest and most grinding of all the powers known to the ancient world. But His weak remnant should be recovered from their oppression. Worldliness, evil passions, strong drink—all that is most tyrannical in sin—may be your master; you weak as a woman in their grasp; but God is stronger than they. 'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.'

IV. The Whole Remnant.—How the Prophet names those powers one by one, as if he would bring a special message of hope and strength to every ear individually. 'Men and brethren, children of the stock of Abraham, and whosoever among you feareth God, to you is the word of this salvation sent.'

Reference.—XI. 11, 12.—C. Holland, *Gleanings from a Ministry of Fifty Years*, p. 264.

ENVY

'Ephraim shall not envy Judah, and Judah shall not vex Ephraim.'—Isaiah xi. 13.

Ephraim means here the kingdom of Israel, or of the ten tribes; and Judah means the southern kingdom, that of the tribes of Judah and Benjamin. They were rivals; each was jealous of the other, because they were so evenly matched in power and influence. A weak tribe like Simeon was not jealous of either Ephraim or Judah.

I. Human nature is weak and sinful, and therefore the world is everywhere full of envy and jealousy. Sometimes unholy envy still cleaves a Christian nation into two, as it did the Hebrew nation long ago. Neighbouring cities are sometimes rivals. The successful man in the work of life is envied. Jealousy is even worse among professional men than it is among merchants. The same bad spirit is sometimes shown in Church life. Why was it, for example, that the chief priests and elders of the Jews accused Jesus so unjustly before Pilate, the Roman Governor? It is said in the Gospel narrative that Pilate 'knew that for envy they had delivered Him'.

Even in the bosom of families, and at the fireside, where all ought to be love, there is sometimes the same wickedness. It was the envy of Cain that led him to murder his brother Abel.

II. The Prophet Isaiah is speaking in this chapter about the reign of the Messiah, and the blessedness which that reign will bring to its subjects. He says that when the kingdom of God triumphs, envy and jealousy will depart out of the hearts of men. The ancient rivalry of Judah and Ephraim will be at an end, and all will be harmony and love.

III. Here is a double remedy for envy in one's own heart—two prescriptions, which ought both to be taken at once.

1. *Think much about your mercies.* Envious persons compare themselves in an unkindly way with those who are more successful than themselves, for-

getting all the while that there are many who are less successful. If I am a believer in Christ, I am the possessor of 'all things,' and it is therefore unreasonable that I should envy any one.

2. *Seek a renewed heart.* The natural heart is evil, and it leads us to envy and grieve at the good of our neighbour. But the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, if we ask Him, will give us a new heart. The Holy Spirit will help us to entertain lowly thoughts of ourselves, and to learn to admire what is good in others.—C. JERDAN, *Pastures of Tender Grass*, p. 200.

REFERENCES.—XI. 13.—R. F. Horton, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xlix. 1896, p. 17. XII. 1.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xvi. No. 928. XII. 1-6.—V. S. S. Coles, *Advent Meditations on Isaiah I.-XII.* p. 1. XII. 2.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xliii. No. 2541. XII. 3.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—Isaiah*, p. 64. Sir G. R. Fetherston, *A Garden Eastward*, p. 66. J. M. Neale, *Sermons on the Prophets*, vol. i. p. 23. W. P. Balfern, *Lessons from Jesus*, p. 235. XII. 3-6.—V. S. S. Coles, *Advent Meditations on Isaiah I.-XII.* p. 100. XIII. 12.—J. Vickery, *Ideals of Life*, p. 61. J. G. Greenhough, *The Cross and the Dice-Box*, p. 133. XIV.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xlv. No. 2612.

ISAIAH XIV. 8.

RUSKIN says on this text: 'Consider such expressions as that tender and glorious verse in Isaiah, speaking of the cedars on the mountains as rejoicing over the fall of the king of Assyria: "Yea, the fir trees rejoice at thee, and the cedars of Lebanon, saying, Since *thou* art gone down to the grave, no feller is come up against us." See what sympathy there is here, as if with the very hearts of the trees themselves.'

REFERENCES.—XIV. 9.—D. Biggs, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lx. 1901, p. 315. XIV. 32.—F. E. Paget, *Sermons for Special Occasions*, p. 65. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xlv. No. 2612.

THROUGH THE MATERIAL TO THE SPIRITUAL

'But the harvest shall be a heap in the day of grief and of desperate sorrow.'—ISAIAH XVII. 11.

IT will not appear to be so. Appearance, indeed, will be on the other side. But we are to judge by the harvest, by the end, and not by the appearances. Sometimes it would seem as if the devil reigned. He has everything his own way; he imagines evil, and brings his device to pass; and we say, 'Why should we trouble about God, and of what good is it to pray? He does not trouble us, He does not answer, He does not care for us.' But the Lord has never concealed from us the great fact that He judges everything by the end; He ripens evil, as well as good. God can only get at some people through the material; they have wasted the spiritual. He can make no impression upon them along the spiritual line; they have lost all their sensitiveness, they are past feeling, their conscience is seared as with a hot iron, and the withdrawal of His spiritual mercies would have no effect upon them.

I. God must come to us. He will come to us through the way of pain or loss or sorrow; He will take a long time to come, but He will come. It takes years to make some men think; it takes years to bring down the high looks of the haughty and to bring to nothing the devices that are multiplied against the Lord; but they will all come down. Do not judge by a moment of sunshine; the law has been made clear, it cannot alter: 'It shall be well with the righteous, and it shall be ill with the wicked'. The Lord causes the harvest to bud and to bring forth all manner of sweet miracles, and then at the last He looks at it in rebuke and withers it from the face of the earth, withers it whilst we are gathering it; we thrust in our sickle, and hew down sheaves of darkness and of poison.

II. Observe the reasonableness of this. Who is it that is offended? Who is it that is forgotten? The Giver, the Father, the Servant of all. What can happen but death? We cannot be living within a scheme of things which we did not set up, and we cannot adapt that scheme to our ways and our wishes without coming upon the Maker, the Contriver of it all. We are born into a scheme of things; we are not sent into the world to reconstruct it; great laws were here before we were; we found them out, discovered them, burnt our fingers in going too near them, and therefore we cannot ignore these laws without coming upon penalty, suffering, rebuke. Being sent into a scheme of things, our wisdom is in finding out how it begins, proceeds, how it develops, how it grows, and our great business in life is to lie alongside of these forces, and not to oppose them, but to obey them, and thus discover and glorify the will of God.

III. On the ground of mere reason, I hold that the Christian argument is a sound argument. It answers more questions than any other scheme of life; it lulls more anxieties, it brings more consolations, it goes further than any scheme of things can go into the great unseen and grand immeasurable. I ask you, therefore, to ground yourselves upon God's will, and take of life as it comes, with all simplicity of love and completeness of obedience and all-believing faith. If you would have peace, you can have it in that way; you can have it in no other way. The law is equal, it is equal on both sides, it cannot be trifled with; if it is severe on the one side, it is gentle on the other. The same holds good with regard to the law of mercy and peace, that everywhere that great law is operating in favour of those who are in sympathy with it, and who long to carry out all its meaning and enjoy all its rewards.—JOSEPH PARKER, *City Temple Pulpit*, vol. vi. p. 157.

REFERENCES.—XVI. 1.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons on the Prophets*, vol. i. pp. 35, 46. XVII. 10, 11.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture*, p. 76.

THE BURDEN OF EGYPT

'The burden of Egypt.'—ISAIAH XIX. 1.

IN the preface to a volume of travel-letters by Dr. Liddon, his sister says: 'Dr. Liddon's interests were always the same. This was nowhere more evident

than in Egypt, which had for him extraordinary fascinations, because, as he would frequently explain, the life of the ancient Egyptians all pointed one way; their monuments and their literature alike show that they held the real business of this life to be preparation for death. It was neither on their palaces nor on their public buildings that they lavished their art and their wealth, but on their temples and their tombs. "What an example for us," he would often say; "one that can only fill us with humiliation and shame."'

I. That the true business of life is to prepare for death has ever been the belief of all serious, of all catholic, Christians, from Dr. Liddon to Thomas Carlyle's peasant father 'impressively pronouncing the words, "Prepare us for these solemn events, death, judgment, and eternity"'. It may have receded in the thin and washy versions of Christianity current in our day, but it must return. For life is a judgment as well as a discipline, and unless the moral nerve has been cauterized to death, the soul must seek the way by which alone the offended justice of God can be met in peace. And desire as well as fear, the desire of the soul created for God and restless till it finds Him, can be contented only with the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. The faith that joins us to Christ and restores us to God must be maintained by steady preparation—the preparation of prayer, labour, and self-scrutiny—for the supreme hour when, in presence of the Lord of Truth, the spirit makes its answer.

But we are told 'other worldliness' has gone out of fashion, that our business is with the rectification of life on earth. Yes; but that can only be accomplished by souls detached from time, though detained within it. Nothing, said St. Paul, could separate him from the love of Christ; neither life nor death, things present nor things to come. *Neque instantia.* And neither did Christ's love separate him from things present. Rather it made him and it makes all in the same case the true servants and rulers of the present.

To depreciate or stand aloof from the great tasks of social reform is a real denial of Christ. These questions will never be settled by war. They cannot be settled so long as personal passion and pique—envy, jealousy, and malice—are in the ascendant. They will yield only to those who are content to live and die humble servants of God, yet brave and free citizens.

II. This readiness will give us the transfigured courage of love. We shall not flinch at the slings and arrows of our foes; these cannot touch the immortal part. We shall not pander to the vain hopes of those we serve, but tell them plainly that stern limits are set to the efficacy of earthly good; and that all possessions will but leave them poorer if they miss salvation. We shall not be dismayed when foes and friends alike turn upon us. The best cause may come to such a pass that all men will seem to forsake it and flee; the rain will descend, the floods come, the winds blow and beat upon the house. But what is built on the rock will stand. The disciple is not greater than his Lord, and it may be, as Heine says, that wherever a lofty soul utters its thoughts there is Golgotha. Even so in the bold and free acceptance of death there is given perfect courage and perfect self-command. Jesus died among legions of peace-breathing angels, and His peace passes to the prepared soul in death. When the cruellest blow falls, when the few human faces that made our inner world are fading, the hope rooted in Christ remains, for we know they depart to shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of the Father. The affections are no more nerves to suffer with when in Christ, bereavement and death are met with the fullness of willing love.—W. Robertson Nicoll, *Ten Minute Sermons*, p. 153.

References.—XIX. 23, 24.—J. Wordsworth, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lvi. 1899, p. 346. XIX. 23-25.—W. L. Watkinson, *ibid.* vol. lii. 1897, p. 236; see also *The Blind Spot*, p. 21. XIX. 24.—J. H. Shakespeare, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lii. 1897, p. 228. XIX. 24, 25.—Hugh Price Hughes, *Essential Christianity*, p. 249. J. Scott Lidgett, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxxi. 1907, p. 156.

TWILIGHT AND TREMBLING

'The twilight that I desired hath been turned into trembling unto me.'—Isaiah xxi. 4 (R.V.).

You all know that the twilight is a great wizard. I do not know whether you have ever thought to analyse its subtle power. If you have, I think you will have found that the spell of the twilight lies quite as much in what it hides from us as in what it reveals. It casts a filmy veil of indistinctness over all things we see—softening their hardness, dealing gently with their defects, making such beauty as they possess more suggestive and idealistic.

The twilight hour is the one merciful hour in the day—the hour when there is just enough light to see by, but when criticism has to be suspended. This hour, one feels, is in the beautiful fitness of things. There is a sense in which the whole span of our human life is but the twilight hour that ushers in the bright eternal day. God has set a merciful limit to our seeing.

I. There is a twilight that God giveth, that God willeth—a merciful limitation of light. But this is not the twilight of which the Prophet speaks. There is a twilight not of God's willing but of man's desiring, that brings the spirit of trembling into men's lives. 'The twilight that I desired.' Here is the picture of a man who is afraid to look life in the face; who does not want to see things as they are. He wants to limit his own vision—to see things less plainly. He is seized with a desire to shirk the responsibilities and pains of life's larger knowledge. He is desirous for the moment of laying aside his powers of insight and discrimination and delicate judgment and keen appreciation of life's ever-changing situation. He is willing to forgo the power of introspection.

The awful drama of pain and misery is being played

out before our very eyes. We live in a suffering world. The outlook at times is unutterably pathetic, tragic, and saddening; and I am afraid that so long as these things do not cut their way into our own lives we try to ignore them, to live as if they were not.

II. The secret of quiet confidence in a world that furnishes us with the sight of so many sad things does not lie in shutting our eyes. That is the expedient of the cowardly and the faithless. It lies in looking at things as they are, and letting the sad vision force us back upon the mercy and power of God. If only we have the courage and faith to look into these things that pain the heart and try the spirit and lay rough hands on life's sensitiveness, we shall learn more of the patience and tenderness of God than ever gladness alone could have taught us; and we shall find awaiting us among these things a ministry of help in the offering of which God shall perfect our hearts in the knowledge of Himself and the love of the brethren.

III. 'The twilight that I desired hath been turned into trembling unto me.' The man who shuns the light forfeits his own final peace of heart. He who refuses to face his worst forfeits the possibility of finding his best. He does not solve the question of his sinfulness; he shelves it. It is there, gathering darker meaning and more bitter consequence. Every day twilight and trembling go together. You cannot build the house of peace on the foundation of self-deceit. Darkness hides wrong, but it does not alter it. There is no salvation among the shadows of moral delusion. There is no quietness in uncertainty. There are some who deliberately refuse to look at their own spiritual position—their relation to God the Saviour and the kingdom of peace and the promise of life—lest they should find it unsatisfactory. They live their lives in the vague hope that things will be well with them by and by. They do not desire anything more illuminating than the twilight of a hopeful speculation. That is, at the best, but an indefinite postponement of the day of trembling.—P. Ainsworth, *The Pilgrim Church*, p. 138.

References.—XXI. 11.—R. H. McKim, *The Gospel in the Christian Year*, p. 72. W. Landels, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xlvii. 1895, p. 133. E. M. Geldart, *Echoes of Truth*, p. 222. XXI. 11, 12.—F. W. Farrar, *ibid.* vol. xlvii. 1895, p. 17. G. Campbell Morgan, *ibid.* vol. lxvi. 1904, p. 40. R. E. Hutton, *The Crown of Christ*, vol. i. p. 19. D. Rowlands, *The Cross and the Dice-Box*, p. 217. W. C. Magee, *Growth in Grace*, p. 26. W. Laing, *The Dundee Pulpit*, 1872, p. 57. S. Cox, *Expositions*, p. 336. J. A. Craigie, *The Country Pulpit*, p. 31. XXI. 12.—J. Milne, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxiv. 1903, p. 409.

THE KEY OF THE HOUSE OF DAVID

'And the key of the house of David will I lay upon his shoulder; so he shall open, and none shall shut: and he shall shut, and none shall open.'—Isaiah xxii. 22.

Not often, even in Isaiah, are there words more full of mystery than these.

I. See how, of David also, according to his degree, it might be said that 'He was a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief'. Persecuted by his own brethren in the army of the Israelites; hunted after by his own lord, King Saul; ridiculed by his own wife, Michal; betrayed by his own familiar friend, Ahithophel; conspired against by his own favourite son, Absalom; all but delivered to death by his own subjects at Keilah; to say nothing of his many battles, painful wanderings, little rest; and that whole lifelong struggle on account of which God said, 'Thou hast been a man of war, and hast shed much blood upon the earth'. See also how poor and needy he was; asking bread from Ahimelech the priest; requesting milk and cheese from Nabal the Carmelite; taking a cruse of water from King Saul; thankful for fruit from Abigail. So that when Gabriel said, in that cottage of Nazareth, 'The Lord God shall give Him the seat of His father David'; and when Isaiah prophesied here, 'The key of the house of David will I lay on His shoulder,' what is the key but the bitter Cross? what is the seat but extreme poverty?

II. Notice—for every word tells—that word: 'The key of the house of David will I lay on His *shoulder*'—not shoulders—and why? Because the Son of God did not endure the Death of the Cross on the right shoulder of His Godhead, but on the left shoulder of His humanity alone; so that, suffering as a Man, He should ransom like a God.

III. 'The key of the house of David will I lay upon His shoulder.' Beyond all other, David was a man of war. Now look what the natural heart says on the one hand, and what the Lord God of all power declares on the other: 'The people be strong that dwell in the land; and the cities are walled and very great; and moreover we saw the children of Anak there'. All very true; but here is the answer: 'The key of the house of David will I lay upon His shoulder'. So take courage. There is some one fenced city of a besetting sin of which you ought to take possession, some one Jericho in your hearts that defies the rule of the Lord God of Hosts. But that key will open it for you. Does not the way in which it was at first taken up, and then wearily borne along the Via Dolorosa, speak of its omnipotence? Only trust to it, and it will open the strongest wards of the most crafty lock wherewith Satan ever barred your passage yet, or ever shall bar it. And well for you that it is laid on His shoulder, not on yours. That key which opened the gates of Death and Hell, how shall it not throw back any other portals for your entrance?—J. M. Neale, *Occasional Sermons*, p. 34.

Illustration.—Saint Teresa says very beautifully: 'O my soul, O my heart, if thou wilt, if thou desire to, enter into bliss, why dost thou not serve and go after good Jesus, Who hath the key of it? The key of this world, the men of this world have: the key of hell, Satan hath; the key of life, none but Christ. O good Jesus! O True Love of my soul! seeing that Thou art the Gate which is to be opened, and

the House which we are to enter into, and the glory which we are to enjoy, why dost Thou not open to this my sinful soul, which is weary of calling for Thee? O Redeemer of my spirit, O sweetness of my life, seeing Thou hast said, that Thou didst not come into this world but to save sinners, and goest about to seek for none but sinners: why dost Thou not open to me, who am the greatest sinner of all sinners?'—J. M. Neale, *Occasional Sermons*, p. 37.

References.—XXIII. 4.—R. Primrose, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxx. 1906, p. 103. XXIII. 18.—S. Chadwick, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxvii. 1905, p. 91.

THE CONSECRATION OF SUFFERING

'Wherefore glorify ye the Lord in the fires.'—Isaiah xxiv. 15.

Religion consists in taking things out of their common places, and in removing them from a lower to a higher level. To hold everything *in* God, to use it *for* God, to dedicate it *to* God—this is consecration.

I. The Great Danger of Suffering—whether it be physical or mental suffering—is threefold:—

(*a*) *Pride*, because we become exceptional, and are made much of.

(*b*) *Indolence*, because the nerves become unstrung.

(*c*) *Selfishness*, because at such times it seems excusable, if not even a duty, to think very much about ourselves.

These things are just the most antagonistic to consecration, which is essentially a humbling process; an energetic process; a self-forgetting process. We have to consider what it is to consecrate suffering; or, as Isaiah expresses it, to 'Glorify God in the fires'.

II. To Consecrate your Suffering you must Dedicate it.—This must be done in a very positive, serious manner. As soon as the suffering comes, feel and say, say it distinctly: 'I will dedicate this trial. It shall not be an ordinary, profane thing. It shall be set apart for God. It shall be taken away from the world. It shall be God's. I dedicate it.' From that moment, your sickness, or your pain, or your trial, or your loss, or your bereavement, is hedged round. It remains sacred ground. This special committal of yourself and your suffering at the outset, by a religious act of devotion, is a very necessary part of the consecration; but it must be repeated very often. From that time you may call your pain, or your sorrow, not so much a suffering as an offering; as much as if you laid it upon an actually material altar, it is an offering.

III. Real Consecration is a very Practical Thing.—Our offering to God will seldom be real unless it is in some way an offering made to God through His creatures. Consecrate the uses of suffering, whatever those uses may be. Do not let them be natural, ordinary results, but let them be dedicated to a holy purpose. All our sorrows and sufferings are available for others, and are intended as means for usefulness.

(*a*) *A trial is an experience*, and an experience is a talent. Consecrate the talent. You are laying in a great power of sympathy. Consecrate that sympathy. Put yourself under a sacred obligation that that pain, that trouble, shall make you more tender, more wise, more religious in your dealings, ever after, from that moment, with other sufferers.

(*b*) *A season of affliction is a vantage ground.* Consecrate the vantage ground. Take opportunity to speak, to say something, which you could never say so well or so effectively; say it there; say it very lovingly, but say it very plainly. And let your words be consecrated words, as said before God; prayed over well, and then say them. Patience, simple, kind, unselfish patience, is always eloquent. A sufferer's smile is a sweet sermon!

(*c*) *If all this be true of physical and mental suffering, it is truer still of spiritual trial.* Take care. No trials are more in danger of being selfish and useless than spiritual ones. Your depression, your inward temptations, your repentance, your conflicts, all Lenten feelings, they are not ends, they are not for themselves only; use them; turn them to good account; consecrate them.

IV. Of all this Consecration of Suffering, the great Exemplar is the Lord Jesus Christ.—If you wish to know the way to consecrate, study Him.

AN ACT OF FAITH

'O Lord, Thou art my God; I will exalt Thee, I will praise Thy Name; for Thou hast done wonderful things; Thy counsels of old are faithfulness and truth.'—Isaiah xxv. 1.

I. 'O Lord, Thou art *my* God.' This is not a prayer, but something higher—'an act of faith'.

What do we mean by an *act* of faith? We mean an expression of faith in which the *will* has its part.

An act of faith should be the utterance of the whole nature, the will giving effect both to the conclusions of the reason and to the desires of the affections. An act of faith seems so simple; it is tremendous, for it involves the operation of the whole soul.

II. There is (1) the act of faith, 'O Lord, Thou art my God'. (2) Then its result, 'I will exalt Thee, I will praise Thy Name'. (3) Then the reason for this, 'For Thou hast done wonderful things; Thy counsels of old are faithfulness and truth'.

1. The act of faith proceeds from personal religion; for having taken God as the Supreme Ruler of our life, the intellect loves to seek into the mysteries of His Being, revealed in Holy Scripture, and in the experiences of Divine Providence; the will strives to be obedient to His commandments and precepts, and the affections find their joy in reaching out to Him as the object of their love.

2. The result of this is expressed in the next two clauses, 'I will exalt Thee, I will praise Thy Name'. And by 'Name' we mean when we speak of God His character—what He is. Some may ask, 'How can we exalt God?' We cannot exalt God in the sense of raising Him any higher than He is, but we can proclaim to others, by our words and in our lives, that we recognize Him to be the Most High. This is what is meant by exalting God.

3. The reason for this—'For Thou hast done wonderful things; Thy counsels of old are faithfulness and truth'.

(*a*) Thou hast wrought wonders in our lives, in the lives of the saints, in the Church of God.

(*b*) 'Thou hast wrought wonders; counsels of old.' There was that counsel by which, before the world was made, God willed to become Incarnate in human nature, and to raise His creature, man, to a nature Divine.

(*c*) 'In faithfulness and truth.' All God's wonders, all God's counsels, have been in faithfulness and truth. The covenant He made with man He has kept, and therefore Isaiah was able to make his act of faith in God, his act of trust; for faith has both its objective and subjective side. It enables us first to believe that God is, then to learn from revelation what God is, and when we have learned this, to trust God with our whole soul.—A. G. Mortimer, *The Church's Lessons for the Christian Year*, part i. p. 29.

References.—XXV. 1.—H. J. Wilmot-Buxton, *Sunday Lessons for Daily Life*, p. 25. J. Aspinall, *Parish Sermons* (2nd Series), p. 106. XXV. 3, 4.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons on the Prophets*, p. 54. XXV. 4.—S. Martin, *Westminster Chapel Sermons*, p. 221. XXV. 6.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xiv. No. 846. A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—Isaiah*, p. 90. XXV. 6-8.—*Ibid.* p. 80. J. M. Neale, *Sermons on the Prophets*, vol. i. p. 66. J. C. Miller, *Penny Pulpit*, vol. xii. No. 720, p. 429. XXV. 7.—T. T. Carter, *Lent Lectures*, 1860-66, p. 297. A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—Isaiah*, p. 92.

'He will swallow up death in victory.'—Isaiah xxv. 8.

Ruskin says, speaking of the death of Christ: 'It was not the mere bodily death that He conquered—that death had no sting. It was this spiritual death which He conquered, so that at last it should be swallowed up—mark the word—not in life; but in victory. As the dead body shall be raised to life, so also the defeated soul to victory, if only it has been fighting on its Master's side, has made no covenant with death; nor itself bowed its forehead for his seal. Blind from the prison-house, maimed from the battle, or mad from the tombs, their souls shall surely yet sit, astonished, at His feet Who giveth peace.'

WAITING FOR GOD

(*Third Sunday in Advent*)

'And it shall be said in that day, Lo, this is our God; we have waited for Him, and He will save us: this is the Lord; we have waited for Him, we will be glad and rejoice in His salvation.'—Isaiah xxv. 9.

I. What does Waiting Imply?—Advent is especially a time of waiting, and this waiting involves four things.

1. *Faith.* St. Paul speaks of Christians as those who are 'waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ'. They therefore believe in the promise of His coming.

2. Further, the posture of the Christian is one of *desire.* Israel of old longed for the manifestation of the Deliverer. 'Thou that sittest between the cherubims, come and save us!' (Ps. lxxx. 1, 2). St. Paul speaks of *loving* Christ's appearing; St. John cries, 'Come, Lord Jesus!' The word which the Apostle uses describes the attitude as of one stretching out and longing for 'the revelation' (Rom. xiii. 19).

3. Then *patience* is an ingredient in the waiting. 'Be patient,' says St. James, 'therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord;' and he compares the patience to that of the husbandman, who has to wait for the slow processes of nature to see the end of his labours.

4. *Preparation* is involved in this waiting; nay, is one chief purpose of it.

II. Why Wait So Long?

1. The question was discussed in the Middle Ages. Why was the Incarnation so long delayed?

2. One reason for this delay of the Incarnation is drawn from the condition of man. He had to be humiliated by a sense of his sinfulness, in order that he might feel his need of a Deliverer. We see the same providence in individual sinners as in a microcosm. God allows the prodigal to pursue his downward course until he comes to his senses, and misery brings him to the turning-point.

3. All delays in the approaches of God are for the sake of man, that he might prepare to receive Him.

The ministry of the Baptist is a visible setting forth of this need of preparation.

III. What Wait We For?—'Lo, this is our God; we have waited for Him.'

1. That there is a primary reference in the passage to wonderful interventions of God on behalf of His people, whether in contemporary or subsequent deliverances, is, of course, admitted. Commentators have, however, been puzzled as to what particular catastrophe or oppressing power the Prophet refers to in this chapter. Whatever may be the historic application, it cannot be more than a type of the full accomplishment of the prophecy in the Person of Christ. He alone swallows up 'death in victory,' and wipes away 'tears from off all faces'.

2. The text is fulfilled by the Incarnation. 'This is our God.' It points to the mystery that our Lord is a Divine Person, and that therefore He can 'save us'. This stirs the hymn of joy: 'We will be glad and rejoice in His salvation'.—W. H. Hutchings, *Sermon-Sketches*, p. 12.

EXPECTATION

(*A Christmas Sermon*)

'This is our God; we have waited for Him, and He will save us.'—Isaiah xxv. 9.

I. The Hope of the Incarnation.—Christmas is a season of expectation. And then also it is a season of confidence. 'He will save us.' Not—He will save the heathen, the outcast, the hopeless; but He will save us. It is a personal confession. For it implies that we are dissatisfied with our lives as they are; that we are willing that they should be lifted out of the bondage of convention. The slavery of selfishness

and greed, the deception thoughtlessly practised, the slander carelessly spoken. No one can mix much with his fellow-men without realizing that a new doubt is everywhere awaking in men's minds. Is not Christianity an exhausted force. Is not its power over the world coming to an end? Here are vast social evils crying to heaven, and no salvation comes. Men live and work and die with no apparent consciousness of spiritual realities, and all our efforts break against the passive force of apathy. Can we, in face of all this, still hold to our belief that He who was born on that first Christmas morning is the Saviour of the world? If He is a Saviour, where is His salvation? We must face questions like these and they will lead us back to the cradle of Bethlehem. Like the wise men we grow bewildered in the streets of the city and we lose our star, but as we go towards Bethlehem, behold it goes before us again. We have found the lost cue, we are strong again, we can face the world's challenge. We believe that in the Incarnation lies still the hope of the world. Yes, and our hope too. For when the simple truths of religion have become complicated by human glosses, and have lost touch with reality, or have grown harder and intolerant, we need to bring them again to Bethlehem and lay them at the cradle of a little Child. For He is the Saviour of Christianity as well as the Saviour of the World. Of our religious ideas, as well as of our personal character, it is true that except we be converted and become as little children we cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven.

II. The Realization of God.—Christmas is a season of realization. 'This is our God.' The realization of God; God not far away in some heaven of music and rapture, but here by the cradle of little children, in the paths where footsore men tramp wearily, in houses of gladness or sorrow.

III. 'The Prince of Peace.'—We are asked to speak to the people of this country on the subject of international peace. But what can we say?

There can be no peace till the spirit of distrust and greed and selfish ambition ceases to dominate the policy of nations. The only real guarantee for peace is in the resolute and watchful action of all Christian men. In this too 'He will save us' if we wait for Him. He will teach us that there are better battles to fight than the battles full of 'confused noise and garments rolled in blood'. His battle is against ignorance and vice, against the selfish heart and the grasping hand, against discord and hatred, and all the foul things that haunt the darkness.

References.—XXV. 9.—A. Murray, *Waiting on God*, p. 89. T. F. Lockyer, *The Inspirations of the Christian Life*, p. 196. W. H. Hutchings, *Sermon-Sketches*, p. 12. H. P. Liddon, *Advent in St. Paul's*, pp. 77, 306. E. Fowle, *Plain Preaching to Poor People* (1st Series). XXVI.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xli. No. 2430; vol. xlvii. No. 2713. XXVI. 1.—W. C. E. Newbolt, *Counsels of Faith and Practice*, p. 305. XXVI. 1, 2.—J. Monro Gibson, *A Strong City*, p. 3; see also *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. liii. p. 151. A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—Isaiah*, p. 102; see also *Paul's Prayers*, p 234. XXVI. 1-10.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—Isaiah*, p. 95. XXVI. 1-14.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xlvi. No. 2669.

THE MARK FOR RECOGNIZING GOD'S PEACE

'Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on Thee.'—Isaiah xxvi. 3.

I. It is not said, 'Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is *stayed*'. There is nothing in mere movelessness which is suggestive of peace. A mind may be motionless without being rested; nay, it may be motionless by reason of its unrest. What, for example, is the numbness of despair, but just a mind which has been deprived of movement by its own unrest. Grief by its excess has stopped the pulses of feeling; fear has paralysed energy; inward struggle has ended in inward exhaustion.

II. In the peace of a human soul everything depends on the thing which fastens it. There are various kinds of fastenings by which a spirit may be bound. It may be bound by sleep; it may be bound by apathy; it may be bound by old age. The peace of which the Psalmist speaks is that of a soul bound by God; its perfection lies in the fact that it is stayed on something which is itself constantly moving.

III. What would be the difference between a soul bound to a rock and a soul bound to a star? The soul fastened to the rock would be stationary; the soul fastened to the star would be ever on the wing. That is the difference between the peace of God and the world's peace. The world's peace is a standing still; God's is a moving on. The world's peace is silence; God's is a living voice. The world's peace is languor after toil; God's is inspiration of strength to *begin* toil. To be stayed by God is to be stayed not by death but by life, not by exhaustion but by energy, not by folding the hands but by spreading the sails to reach a wider sphere. The peace of God descends on every man as it descended on Jesus—in the midst of the waters.—G. Matheson, *Messages of Hope*, p. 173.

References.—XXVI. 3.—J. H. Thom, *Laws of Life* (2nd Series), p. 136. W. J. Knox-Little, *The Journey of Life*, p. 159. A. G. Mortimer, *Studies in Holy Scripture*, p. 58. B. Wilberforce, *Sanctification by the Truth*, p. 97; see also *The Hope That is in Me*, p. 165. W. P. Balfern, *Lessons from Jesus*, p. 275. F. W. Farrar, *Outlines of Sermons on the Old Testament*, p. 187. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxxi. No. 1818.

KEPT PEACEFUL IN THE MIDST OF STRIFE

'Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on Thee, because he trusteth in Thee.'—Isaiah xxvi. 3, 4.

Looked at from any view-point life appears to be a struggle. The man of science, for example, pursues his investigations not as a mere search for facts but as a conflict against ignorance. Every discovery he makes is a fort captured from the enemy, and ensures the liberation of some who have hitherto been bound. And the ordinary individual, too, the one who is distinguished by no special rank in the array of contestants, but who has set his heart upon living a high and pure life, is entered for a struggle. His very

ambition, itself an echo of Christ's command, involves him in a lifelong campaign against the powers of evil.

I. Hence the audacity of Christ's Gospel of peace, whose promises run counter to the entire natural order Indeed, it is part of the proof of Christ's Divinity that He should offer to men peace at the heart of an endless and inevitable agitation, a gift about which the Apostle uses no mere hyperbole when he speaks of it as 'peace which passeth understanding'. For the human heart cannot conceive, apart from all that Christ Himself is, that in a world of this sort peace should perfectly possess any one. But this, the very mystery of the Evangel, is a large part of its fascination. Christ is ever willing to submit Himself to personal subjective tests, and is for ever calling men to come and try for themselves the reality of His claim and covenant. Faith may and often does begin as an experiment, but it always leads on to an experience of heart-rest which these words alone describe. 'How do you explain the possibility of peace in a world where even Nature is red in tooth and claw, and where all the activities of men are bent upon ceaseless strife?' is asked by the unbelieving cynic. And the only answer which we can give is that, while we cannot explain the possibility, we have experienced and continually enjoy the reality. And in its last analysis Christ's Gospel is found to be true as it responds not to speculative but to subjective tests.

II. It is significant that these words do not identify the experience of peace with the absence of loss and sorrow, but rather with the presence of God. It is not that we are to be withdrawn from the reach of the influence of these things, but that we are to be drawn into close union with Himself.

III. It is significant also that this prophetic declaration with its Gospel fulfilment should reveal God as the One upon whom the responsibility of the covenant really rests. '*Thou* wilt keep him' is at once an encouragement to the one who knows his own grasp to be weak, his emotions fitful, his own power of fidelity inadequate—and robs him of all his fearful apprehensions. Just as He alone bestows, so He alone can maintain unbroken this experience of strengthening and recreative peace. It is His work to hold us, not ours to hold Him. And this truth, if once apprehended, will rid our lives of much of the worry and meaningless anxiety which often beclouds and weakens them. If we surrender to Him His own possession, it is but little to expect that the King will carefully guard His own crown-jewels. It is indeed as a sentinel on duty keeps the trustful garrison in peace that the watchful Lord guards the yielded heart to the exclusion of false love, keeps the mind to the exclusion of wrong thoughts, and controls the will to the exclusion of unholy purposes.—J. Stuart Holden, *The Pre-Eminent Lord*, p. 71.

References.—XXVI. 3, 4.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—Isaiah*, p. 111; see also *Paul's Prayers*, p. 245.

TRUST IN GOD

'Trust ye in the Lord for ever.'—Isaiah xxvi. 4.

Ignorance and unbelief are man's foes, and unrest is man's misery. The purpose of revelation is to impart knowledge and to awaken faith, and thus to fill the mind with that peace which is spiritual strength.

I. The Object of Trust.

(*a*) '*The Lord Jehovah*,' the self-existing, the eternal, the Almighty. A contrast to all created beings. Put not your trust in man—in the sons of men—in princes.

(*b*) '*The Rock of Ages*' (*marg.*). The everlasting hills are an emblem of strength, unchangeableness, solidity, eternity. God is often, by Moses and by the Psalmist, described as 'the Rock,' 'the Stronghold,' 'the Fortress'. He whose feet are on the mountain peak feels his station solid and secure; he who builds upon the rock has a strong and safe foundation. A faint, poor emblem of the everlasting strength which is in God, the sure foundation upon which His people rest.

II. The Trust Required.

(*a*) *A sincere trust*, such as arises from a consciousness of need and weakness, and such as goes out towards a Being who is able to strengthen, to comfort, and to save.

(*b*) *A steadfast trust*, such as is described by the expression, 'Whose mind is stayed upon Thee'. This is leaning and resting upon God. It is the trust of the scholar in the teacher, the patient in the physician, the traveller in the guide, the child in the parent.

(*c*) *A perpetual trust*: 'For ever,' in all circumstances, for all time, and unto eternity.

III. The Result of Trust 'Perfect Peace'.—Whilst self-confidence, trust in man, distrust of God, bring restlessness, faith brings peace. Peace of conscience, peace of heart, peace of life, are all included; and these may be enjoyed even in circumstances likely to disquiet and distress. We are not, indeed, able to keep ourselves in such peace; but what we cannot do God can do, and will, if He be sought and honoured.

THE POOR AND NEEDY

'The foot shall tread it down, even the feet of the poor, and the steps of the needy.'—Isaiah xxvi. 6.

'The foot shall tread it down.' Shall tread what down? 'The lofty city,' as it says in the verse before: 'the city of the terrible nations,' as it is in another place. Those blessed feet shall indeed, by their journeys over the Holy Land, and then by their rest upon the Holy Cross—painful journeys, a more painful repose—overthrow that empire of Satan.

I. 'The feet of the poor, and the steps of the needy.' And what a world of love there is in those two clauses! not to be slurred into one, as if both meant one and the same thing. A man may be poor enough, and not needy: for his poverty may content him, and he may need nothing further. A man may be needy enough, and not poor; is it not so every day? for all his riches may not satisfy him, and there

is the insatiable craving for more wealth, more power, more honour. But it pleased our dear Lord to be both poor and needy for our sakes. So poor, that He was indebted to love only for the grave-cloths in which He laid Him down to sleep, and took His rest in the garden of Joseph of Arimathea. He would be helped as well as help; He would accept the offerings of love as well as pour them forth; He would fulfil the future law of His own Apostles, 'Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ'. And where did the steps of the needy first lead Him?

'The day following Jesus would go forth into Galilee, and findeth Philip, and saith unto him, Follow Me.'

Would go forth into Galilee? and why? Because He would seek for assistance there.

'Now as He walked by the sea of Galilee, He saw Simon and Andrew his brother casting a net into the sea: for they were fishers. And Jesus said unto them, Come ye after Me.'

And there you have the words, as well as the steps, of the needy. Now, take an example from this very thing. Remember: the next most blessed thing to affording help as you should, is accepting it as you should. It is *more* blessed—He Himself said it—to give than to receive. Therefore it inevitably follows, it *is* also blessed to receive. Of His fullness have all we received: but He vouchsafes to receive of our emptiness.

II. 'The feet of the poor, and the steps of the needy.' The feet of the poor are true to their title still. The King is exalted above all blessing, and worship, and glory, above every name that is named, of things present, or things to come; but He is the poor King still. Therefore He comes to you—not as that arch-hypocrite came to St. Martin in his cell, in gold and pearls, and costly array, commanding to be worshipped as the Christ, but in poverty still and humbleness, under the form of Bread and Wine. And does He come solely to give, and not to receive? Does He bestow Himself, and ask for nothing in return? Not so. If they are the feet of the poor, they are the steps of the needy also. He needs yourselves. This needy One seeks your full love: will you deny it? your most earnest help; will you withhold it? your very selves: and already they ought to be His.

III. 'The *foot* shall tread it down, even the *feet* of the poor, and the *steps* of the needy.' Why the singular in the first clause and the plural in the second? Why is the 'foot' of the beginning multiplied into the 'feet' and 'steps' of the end? And here we see, as in so many other passages, how the same prophecy tells of the Head, and tells of the members: of both, as engaged in one work: of both, as combining in one battle: of both, as to share in one victory. The Captain of our salvation goes forth first into the field: 'the *foot* shall tread it down': His servants follow Him to the war: 'even the *feet* of the poor, and the *steps* of the needy'.—J. M. Neale, *Occasional Sermons*, p. 86.

References.—XXVI. 8, 9.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xli. No. 2430. A. Murray, *Waiting on God*, p. 93. XXVI. 9.—W. H. Hutchings, *Sermon-Sketches* (2nd Series), p. 15. J. B. Mozley, *Sermons Parochial and Occasional*, p. 106. R. D. B. Rawnsley, *Village Sermons* (1st Series), p. 75. R. E. Hutton, *The Crown of Christ*, vol. i. p. 71. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. i. No. 31. XXVI. 12.—Henry Alford, *Quebec Chapel Sermons*, vol. iii. p. 275.

PEOPLE WHO THINK THEY HAVE DONE NO GOOD IN LIFE

'We have not wrought any deliverance in the earth.'—Isaiah xxvi. 18.

Israel was mourning before God. They deemed they had accomplished nothing. They thought nobody was any better in all the land for anything they had attempted.

How often God's people thus judge and condemn themselves! They conclude they have only cumbered the ground. Life appears to them a failure. What Israel wailed of old is their lamentation still: 'We have not wrought any deliverance in the earth'.

It was pathetic that Mrs. Oliphant inscribed these doleful words upon the title-page of her latest volume of stories. She appeared to think all her labour had resulted in little or nothing. And yet we cannot doubt that in many senses that gifted and heroic authoress did work deliverance in the earth.

This is frequently the retrospect which God's best and most useful people take of their life. Even C. H. Spurgeon at the last charged himself with 'uselessness'. He did this in a letter to his friend Bishop Thorold. Think of Spurgeon, of all men, self-accused of uselessness. It is one of Satan's most depressing devices that he causes God's people to cry, 'We have not wrought any deliverance in the earth'.

Let me speak to people who think they have done no good in life. May I but check this sore complaint which they utter to the Lord! Oh to give them, through grace, a more sanguine review!

I. Varied forms of deliverance are to be wrought. In many ways the earth is embondaged. 'The whole creation groaneth and travaileth.' Whichever region we contemplate there is abundant need of 'deliverance'. Captive souls are all around us; fettered intellects; bodies bound of Satan these long weary years. Who is entirely free? Verily there is abundant scope for 'deliverance' to be 'wrought'.

II. To work deliverance is a supreme end in life.

III. We are all apt to declare that we have wrought no deliverance.

IV. This is a dangerous lamentation.

V. Only the people of God can work true deliverance in the earth.

VI. We shall not know in this life what deliverance we have wrought.—Dinsdale T. Young, *The Gospel of the Left Hand*, p. 151.

References.—XXVI. 19.—F. B. Meyer, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxxiv. 1908, p. 312. J. Parker, *City Temple Pulpit*, vol. v. p. 70. J. Vaughan, *Fifty Sermons* (9th Series), p. 306. J. M. Neale, *Occasional Sermons*, p. 13.

THE LORD COMING OUT OF HIS PLACE

'Come, My people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee: hide thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast. For, behold, the Lord cometh out of His place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity.'—ISAIAH XXVI. 20, 21.

WHAT is the object of the retirement which is thus recommended to Israel.

I. Israel in retirement will see that God is the author of the great judgment on the nations—on the great monarchies of the Eastern world. One of the faults of this people, which haunted it from age to age, was that it did not see God in history—in its own history, in the history of the world.

Is it not much the same among ourselves? How do the majority of us Englishmen look at passing events, and especially at misfortunes, whether they happen to the world at large, or to our own country, or to our families, or to ourselves? If we think about them steadily at all we trace them to their causes—their 'second causes,' as our popular language religiously puts it—that is, to the forces or the events which appear to us immediately to produce these misfortunes. We ought not to stop at these secondary causes just as if they were living forces—just as if they were, to all intents and purposes, gods—as if there were no power beneath, behind them, to set them in motion, to control, or to check them—no Cause of causes Who is the real agent always and everywhere.

And if we would see God behind the agencies which, when governing us and governing the world, He employs, whether in judgment or in mercy, we must detach ourselves from the imperious, the binding power of sense: we must retire within the chambers of the soul, into an atmosphere of prayer.

II. And Israel in retirement may learn something of God's purposes in judgment. What a judgment means does not by any means always lie upon the surface. It only appears upon consideration, and it is missed if we do not make a serious personal effort to discover it.

Society as a whole has no eye for the drift of the judgments of God. God who rules the world unveils His mind to pure and holy souls, while He hides it from those who believe themselves to be the wise and prudent. To study the Divine mind in God's judgments in time is to learn before they appear—to learn to read—the signs of the Son of Man in heaven. It is to prepare in the most intelligent and effective way for the final doom.

III. And Israel in retirement may have power with God in judgment. The Israel of Isaiah's day could do little or nothing directly. But indirectly Israel might yet do as much as, or rather more than, in those ancient times.

If prayer can thus reach the physical and inanimate world, much more can it reach the moral and the human world; and so now, while the world goes on its way as if it held its own future bound in its hand, its course is really swayed by those of whom it takes the very least account—by poor and uninfluential and simple people who live much alone with God, and who have ready access to His ear and to His heart. Israel, in his chambers, Isaiah would say, might yet do more for the future of the world than if David had been still ruling from the Euphrates to the Mediterranean.—H. P. LIDDON, *Penny Pulpit*, vol. XII. No. 689, p. 182.

Illustration.—An old writer tells us that he was reminded of this passage in Isaiah when he visited those remarkable sepulchres of the early Christian dead, the catacombs beneath the city of Rome. As he looked on those narrow cells cut out in the soft rock, with a brief inscription on a tablet in front of each, and read how first one and then another aged man, or youth, or maiden, had, in one of the last great imperial persecutions, laid down life itself for Christ, he could not but feel that God had called that soul to enter into the chambers of the blessed dead, and had shut the doors about and hidden it as it were for a little moment until the indignation was overpast—until the blessed day of the resurrection when the Lord Jesus should come out of His place for judgment, when it would enter on its new and on its splendid inheritance of life.—H. P. LIDDON.

REFERENCES.—XXVI. 20.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xl. No. 2387. J. M. Neale, *Sermons on the Prophets*, p. 104. H. Hensley Henson, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxii. 1902, p. 393. XXVI. 20, 21.—H. P. Liddon, *Advent in St. Paul's*, vol. i. p. 78. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xlii. No. 2459. XXVI. —H. Hensley Henson, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xliv. 1908, p. 410. XXVII.—1-9. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xlii. No. 2459. XXVII. 3.—*Ibid.* vol. xxv. No. 1464; vol. xl. No. 2391. XXVII. 5.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture —Isaiah*, p. 121.

THE DAY OF THE EAST WIND

'He stayeth His rough wind in the day of the east wind.'—ISAIAH XXVII. 8.

I TAKE our text as a poet's thought. Translated, then, I read these meanings in it: Firstly, Our trials are timed. Secondly, Our sufferings are measured. Thirdly, Our lives are compensated.

I. Our Trials are Timed.—'He stayeth His rough wind in the day of the east wind.' It is something to know the east wind has its day. To everything under heaven, even the blighting scourge out of the east, there is a time.

In its larger aspects we are all agreed on that. There are whole classes of trials that have their season as surely as seed-time and harvest have. God in the life means order, means succession, means changing discipline for changing years. When I once see that trials have their times, I gain a new stability and peace.

Take no anxious thought about to-morrow. Do not go out to meet your troubles half-way. Till the day of the east wind dawns it cannot blow. When its morning comes, a sovereign God will summon it.

II. Our Sufferings are Measured.—The rough, rude, boisterous gale is on a man. He never could stand the blight of the east wind now. God sees: God knows: God willeth not that any man should perish. If the east wind must blow, the rough wind

shall be called home that morning. And that is a poet's image of God's tender mercy.

III. Our Lives are Compensated.—The east wind blows. Is life worth living to-day? Can there be any compensation for that searching gale? Just on account of that east wind, God kept the rough wind in its chains this morning. It is heaven's compensation for the one that the other shall have no liberty to blow to-day.

I want you to believe God's ways are equal. We should fret less, we should worry less, we should have sweeter hearts, and far, far kindlier tongues, if we but realized God's compensating hand. You have been crying out bitterly against the east wind; you have quite forgotten that the rough wind is stayed. You have no iron will, no masterful character; you are impressionable, yielding, almost weak. So is the sea impressionable, yet there are glories unspeakable of light and shadow on it, and a highway for the great navies there.—G. H. Morrison, *Flood-Tide*, p. 220.

References.—XXVII. 12.—J. A. Baird, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxx. 1906, p. 148. XXVII. 13.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. i. No. 2868. XXVIII. 1-13.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—Isaiah*, p. 125. XXVIII. 3-5.—*Ibid.* p 132. XXVIII. 5.—*Ibid.* p. 136. XXVIII. 5, 6.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons on the Prophets*, vol. i. p. 85. T. McCrie, *Sermons*, p. 304. XXVIII. 10, 13.—D. Fraser, *Outlines of Sermons on the Old Testament*, p. 189.

THE VERIFYING FACULTY

'This is the rest wherewith ye may cause the weary to rest; and this is the refreshing.'—Isaiah xxviii. 12.

The Bible is always talking in our mother tongue. The oldest and greatest of the Prophets spoke in language which almost children can understand and appreciate. Take such words as 'weary'; the child knows what it means when it sees its father returning from the fields and stretching himself in token of fatigue. And 'rest,' the little word needs no translation; and 'refreshing,' the very word which an apostle uses in later times when he speaks of 'times of refreshing,' new showers, larger rains, food in the wilderness, water among the rock. 'This is the rest, this is the refreshing:' it is undoubted, it brings its own evidence along with it, it needs no witnesses and no certificates and no chemical tests. It makes its gospel known, and the world says, Well, master, thou hast said the truth; this is right, the heart feels it, the inmost soul is grateful for such proclamations.

We have in the text an exercise of what may be called the verifying faculty. The Bible alone gives you the all-sufficing answers to the all-including enigmas. Why fool away our time by asking adventurers and empirics to give us answers, when the Bible overflows with them, and our verifying faculty takes up the answers one by one and says, This is right, this is the voice of God, this is the outlined kingdom of heaven?

I. Take for example the question of consolation. You are told that you live in a system of law, that you are encaged or enmeshed in a great scheme of fatalism, and that things come and go, and we must accept them either in their going or their coming. Are you satisfied? You say to such visitors from far-away countries, miserable comforters are ye all! Away with you! for my soul loathes this evil meat which you set before it in its hunger. Who told you that these conceptions were wrong? You told yourself; the verifying faculty within you said, All that may in a certain measurable and momentary sense be more or less true, but it does not touch my hunger, my thirst, the sore of my heart, the agony that looks death into me. I believe in inspired experience; there comes a time when life so pulses and suns itself before a man's consciousness and a man's imagination that he himself has within his very soul the pleading and illuminating and solacing Spirit of God.

II. Now take it in the matter of repentance. The Prophet was offering this people in the context a very great offer. They were all drunk, they were all babbling mockers.

Yet the Lord made a great offer to them, He offered to teach them knowledge and to understand doctrine; He said to them, I will give you another opportunity: this is the rest wherewith ye may cause the weary to rest—repentance, be sorry in your soul's soul on account of your sin. We know at once that the answer is right. Only repentance can touch sin; it is not something on the surface that can be removed by a mechanical act; sin is in the soul, sin is so to say in the very tissue of the spirit; it is a grief against God and a grief in God's own heart, and God's only answer to sin is creating the possibility of true, profound, poignant, and sufficient repentance.

III. Take it in the matter of obedience. Obedience is God's way to refreshing; obedience opens the fountains, obedience points the way that will conduct you to the living wells of the living water. This is the rest—repentance; this is the refreshing—obedience; go back to God and find what you want. When you have lost your jewel you must find it.

IV. Then we take it, finally, at the very grave itself. We come to that awfullest of all sights, the descent of the coffin, the moment of intolerable agony, the dumb farewell, the speechless withdrawal; and there comes a loving voice which says of those who are interred in the hope of the Christian resurrection, This is the rest whereby He causes the weary to rest: he, she, is going to rest, to the last sleep, the holy slumber, out of which only one voice can awake her: this is the rest, this deep cold hideous thing, the grave, this is the rest. Then the soul catches the fire of God; it says in words that cannot be heard, O grave, where is thy victory, thou cruel monster, thou terrible thing? It has no victory; she has found in thee the pillow on which she can rest her weariness. And this is the refreshing; this tomb is not a grave only, it is a well, a well of living water, and in a mysterious, ideal, but not the less influential and effective sense, those who go down into the grave in the spirit of Christ and in the spirit of His Cross find

below it the rockspring of which, if a soul drink, it shall thirst no more.—Joseph Parker, *City Temple Pulpit*, vol. III. p. 83.

References.—XXVIII. 12.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxvii. No. 1593. XXVIII. 14.—F. D. Maurice, *Christmas Day and Other Sermons*, p. 105.

THE LEISURE OF FAITH

'He that believeth shall not make haste.'—Isaiah xxviii. 16.

I. Of course, it is very necessary for clear thinking to distinguish the haste of our text from strenuous speed. Every one who is at all in earnest about things feels the push and the pull to get his life-work done; but a strenuous and resolute forwardness such as that is very different from the spirit of haste. 'Unhasting but unresting' should be the motto on every Christian's coat of arms.

1. I like to apply our text to hasty judgments. He that believeth shall not make haste to judge. In all disparagement there is a lack of faith. In every hasty summing up of character what is really revealed is our own want of trust.

2. Again, I think our text is full of meaning for those who are in a great hurry to enjoy, and perhaps the haste to be rich and taste life's pleasures was never so markedly felt as it is now. Life has not been given us to enjoy, life has been given us to use.

3. Again, I keep whispering this text within my heart when I observe our common haste to see results. The man who believes in himself and in his message is never in a hurry to see results. What I feel is that if the Church of Christ really believes in her mission and her message, she must not be feverish about results.

II. Now when we turn to the dealings of God with men there is one thing that impresses us very deeply. It is the slowness of all God's procedure in guiding and blessing our humanity. In all God's dealings with the human race, and in all God's dealings with the human soul, there is purpose, urgency, infinite persistence; but I think no man will detect hurry there.

Now take our text and let it illuminate that thought. It is because God believes in man that He refuses to hurry His development. We speak a great deal about our faith in God. Never forget God's glorious faith in us.

And when I pass to the earthly life of Jesus, I am arrested by the same procedure there. He was leisurely, just because He trusted men.—G. H. Morrison, *Sun-Rise*, p. 196.

FAITH AND HASTE

'He that believeth shall not make haste.'—Isaiah xxviii. 16.

'He that believeth shall not make haste.' That does not mean he that believeth shall never be hurried. This matter of haste is not a purely personal matter. We live in a hasting world—a world full of conditions that we did not make and must accept. In the heart of a swaying crowd it is nonsense for a man to say, 'I will not be swayed'. The crowd settles that matter for him. But he can say, 'I will keep calm and collected,' and can make good his word.

Jesus understood life completely. He was more human than we are, because He was Divine, and His Divinity took hold of all that is essential in humanity. And that was the secret of the quietness of the life of Jesus. It was a life lived for the essential things.

I. It is missing these things that turns life into a rush and a whirl and a selfish struggle. The world is in a mighty hurry, not because its life is so full—though that is the way it always accounts for its haste—but because it is so empty; not because it touches reality at so many points, but because it misses it at all points. The more we hurry the less we live. Life is not to be gauged merely quantitatively. There is a qualitative measurement. The length of life is found by measuring its depth. It goes inward to the core of the soul. It takes its meaning there and carries that meaning out into the eternity of God.

It is true that under favourable circumstances selfishness may seem to live without haste. A man may take life quietly because he does not take it seriously. He may be quiet because he is asleep. But that is not the quietness of faith. Let not this selfish sluggard claim a place among the disciples of a quiet life. In the eyes of faith life in all its concerns grows ever greater, and the greater a thing life becomes in a man's eyes the more disposed does he become, and the more able to live it out quietly. Haste is the product of a low and mistaken view of life. It is the outcome of a vast delusion concerning the things that matter and the things that last. Faith discovers the delusions, and lays hold upon the few great simple things that really count in life's long reckonings—the clean heart, the good conscience, justice, mercy, sympathy, and the service of love.

II. And, further, the haste of the world is the result of the short view of life. The world is in such a desperate hurry because it has no plan, no toil, no aspiration which the nightfall will not blot out. Unbelief has no to-morrow. Worldliness has no time to live. We often say, 'I wish I had more time,' meaning, of course, that we wish we could dispose of the hours of the day more in accordance with our personal desires. But our real need in life is not more time but more eternity. Instead of saying, 'Now or never,' Christ teaches us to say, 'Now and for ever'. He that believeth shall find the eternal meaning and the eternal issues of these fleeting hours. He shall know that he has time in which to do his best because the highest faith of his soul, the deepest desire of his heart, the most real significance of his daily toil, goes on for ever into the eternity of God. —P. Ainsworth, *The Pilgrim Church*, p. 168.

References.—XXVIII. 16.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—Isaiah*, p. 138. J. Stalker, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lix. 1901, p. 123. W. H. Hutchings, *Sermon-Sketches*, p. 294. D. Coster, *Christ a Sure Foundation, Sermons*, 1842-79. XXVIII. 17.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxv. No. 1501. C. G. Finney, *Sermons on Gospel Themes*, p. 119.

MAN'S SCHEMES

'For the bed is shorter than that a man can stretch himself on it: and the covering narrower than he can wrap himself in it.'—ISAIAH XXVIII. 20.

Two things we are asked to consider in this text concerning man's plans and schemes: (1) Their insufficiency, and (2) their insecurity.

I. Their Insufficiency.—Man's plans do not reach far enough, they are too short, he cannot stretch himself out upon them, and consequently it were folly for him to repose in them. Now the chief concern of man in this life is, or should be, the formation and maintenance of character. God alone can compass true character. God alone can conceive the plan which, being independent of all external and worldly circumstance, can build up and maintain a true all-round character. And has He not done this in the person and work of Jesus Christ?

II. Their Insecurity.—Man's plans are not only found to be insufficient, but also insecure. 'The covering is narrower than that a man can wrap himself in it.' As Israel found their plans to be insecure, a narrow covering indeed, so shall we find our earth-born plans, whereby we would protect our characters before God and man, fail us. As the house built upon the sand may stand well and look well whilst the sun is shining and there is calm all around, but will be utterly destroyed when the wind begins to beat upon it and the rain to fall, so our characters built upon our own feeble, insufficient plans will in like manner fall when the wrath of God shall descend upon the children of disobedience.—J. GAY, *Common Truths from Queer Texts*, p. 83.

REFERENCES.—XXVIII. 20.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. v. No. 244. Hugh Black, *University Sermons*, p. 164. W. W. Battershall, *Interpretations of Life and Religion*, p. 31. XXVIII. 21.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—Isaiah*, p. 147. W. L. Watkinson, *The Transfigured Sackcloth*, p. 221. XXVIII. 23-29.—*Ibid.* p. 150. XXVIII. 24-29.—P. N. Waggett, *Church Times*, vol. xlix. 1903, p. 459. XXVIII. 25.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxvii. No. 1626. XXVIII. 29.—*Ibid.* vol. xii. No. 711. XXIX. 11, 12.—W. M. Taylor, *Outlines of Sermons on the Old Testament*, p. 191. XXIX. 13.—P. H. Hall, *The Brotherhood of Man*, p. 79.

TRUE IMPERIALISM

'The shadow of Egypt.'—ISAIAH XXX. 2.

MANY of the changes that time brings are on the surface of life. There is a certain stability at the heart of things. The great laws of life change not. The selfsame sunlight that put an end to Jacob's conflict with the angel gilds our joys and guides our toils to-day. So is it with these human hearts of ours. So is it with the great common sentiments and necessities. Motives that swayed men's lives when the world was young can be traced in modern life. Life changes its costume more easily than it changes its character. When we say that history repeats itself, we do not mean that there are occasional coincidences; we mean rather that the best and the worst in human life have a tendency to perpetuate themselves, and that through all the ages the human heart beats to the same tune, cherishes some of the same nobilities and the same follies, and shows itself capable of much that is fine and much that is contemptible.

So we may go back through very many centuries and find in a bit of ancient history that which is repeating itself in the life of to-day. The national question among the Jews of Hezekiah's day was, How can we shake off the Assyrian yoke? And the popular solution of the problem was, Enter into an alliance with Egypt. True, Egypt was a land of many idols, but it was also a land of many horses and chariots, and full coffers. And there have always been those in the world who, when they have wanted chariots, have not been over particular where they borrowed them. There have always been those who would fraternize with an idolater—provided he was a rich idolater. Egypt was powerful with that kind of power that the world and the devil can fully appreciate. There is a might that calls to the world in the clang of iron and the thunder of horsemen and the clink of gold, and many there be that trust in it. There is a might that lifts not up its voice in the clamour of the world, but that pleads its rights and its power in the silences of thought, in the quiet inner place where conscience dwells, in the depths of all true feeling, and on the lonely heights of the ideal—and would to God that you and I had more faith in it.

I. The choice between these two is ever before us. Since the days of Hezekiah, kingdoms have risen to greatness and sunk into oblivion. The great centres of power and industry, of learning and dominion, have shifted steadily westward. Places that once pulsated with industrial activity and political influence have now little more than an archæological significance. But the heart of the West to-day is as the heart of the East in many a dim yesterday, and the thing against which the Jewish Prophet protested is the thing against which some one must protest still—even trust in the shadow of Egypt. Recall for a moment the stately and spiritual interest of a song that Israel sang in the days of a purer and more reverent national life: 'He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord, He is my refuge and my fortress, my God in whom I trust. Surely He shall deliver thee.' Then the shadow of Egypt fell on the people. They transferred their allegiance, not deliberately, but none the less really, from the unseen to the seen. The great changes of life, and especially those for the worse, are often undeliberate.

II. The difference between the nation and the individual is mainly a quantitative one. If the national confidence is in the shadow of Egypt, it is because the individual confidence is there. The shadow of an earthly ideal, an unspiritual interpretation of life, a material estimate of success, has fallen on our separate souls. No wonder that men miss the divinity of history, and leave God out of their widest reckonings and their corporate counsels, when they fail to find them in their toil for bread, and, reversing the word of Scripture, say, 'We walk by sight and not by faith'.

III. The first debt that we owe to our country must be paid to our God. The highest service that any man can render to the Fatherland is the service of faith. To dwell in the secret place of the Most High, and abide under the shadow of the Almighty; to lay up treasure in heaven; to be reverent and prayerful and unselfish; to lean on God amid the simple toils and necessities and pains of one's daily life; to manifest the heroism that passes unrecognized among men because it is heroism, and, therefore, clothed in humility; to be less worldly than you are often tempted to be; to believe in the deathless divinity of conscience, duty, and love—this is the higher patriotism, into whose hands at last the honour and the peace of any people must be placed for safe keeping.—P. AINSWORTH, *The Pilgrim Church*, p. 227.

REFERENCES.—XXX. 7.—E. A. Draper, *The Gift of Strength*, p. 46. W. Baxendale, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxxix. 1891, p. 278. J. Vaughan, *Sermons Preached in Christ Church, Brighton* (7th Series), p. 23. XXX. 10.—J. H. Jellett, *The Elder Son*, p. 164.

THE SECRET OF STRENGTH

'In returning and rest shall ye be saved; in quietness and in confidence shall be your strength: and ye would not.'—ISAIAH XXX. 15.

HEZEKIAH was double-minded; he had faith in God, yet he was not free from confidence in the arm of flesh. The Prophet was inspired to dissuade him from relying upon an earthly helper, and to assure him that in returning and in rest he should be saved. Apply this message to our own day.

I. The Need for this Counsel.—This is manifest when we consider—

(*a*) *The dangers with which Christians are often threatened from without.* Adverse circumstances, sore temptations, fierce assaults of the foe, are likely to disturb and to dismay.

(*b*) *The weakness of which we are conscious within.* Where shall we look for help and deliverance? Who are we that we should withstand such force, and baffle such craft?

II. In Time of Danger and Alarm it is not Easy to Maintain a Quiet Heart.—The advice is especially hard to follow in days of religious excitement or unsettlement, in days of social restlessness and of political change. In fact, this counsel is most difficult to accept just when it is most urgently needed.

III. The Nature and Bearing of this Counsel.—The exhortation is to—

(*a*) *Quietness.* A quiet mind is acknowledged to be a great blessing; it is only to be enjoyed by those who live in, and who breathe a serene atmosphere of devotion and fellowship with God.

(*b*) *Confidence.* This must be placed in Him who deserves and requires it. Faith in an overruling Providence; faith in a gracious and almighty Saviour; this is the posture of the soul which is here commended.

IV. The Blessings which Follow.

(*a*) *Strength.* This is a paradox, but it is a truth. Not the noisy, blustering, restless nature, is strong; but the nature which waits calmly and patiently on God.

(*b*) *Safety.* Whatever be the ill that overhangs the soul, whoever be the foe that assails it, there is one Deliverer, and He is Divine; there is one security, and that is quiet faith in Him.

REFERENCES.—XXX. 15.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. lii. No. 2985. A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—Isaiah*, p. 155. J. T. Bramston, *Sermons to Boys*, p. 8. R. T. Davidson, *In Quietness and Confidence, Sermon*, 1885. H. M. Hilton, *Church Times*, vol. xl. 1898, p. 91.

WAITING

'And therefore will the Lord wait, that He may be gracious unto you. . . . Blessed are all they that wait for Him.'—ISAIAH XXX. 18.

WE have here two companion pictures.

I. The Lord waiting to bless. In the word 'wait' there lies, first, the idea of longing and yearning. All true love is a longing to make the beloved happy. Second, along with this longing to bless there is something that regulates the flow of the Divine love, 'Therefore doth the Lord wait'. A man must be prepared for the gift, and then, and not till then, will God bestow it. Third, there is often a wise and loving delay that a man may feel his dependence upon God. Instances—Martha and Mary, and death of Lazarus: 'Lord, if thou hadst been here'. Peter in prison, and at last moment, when hope is almost dead, deliverance comes. The Syrophenician woman—The Lord waiteth that He might be gracious.

II. The men waiting to be blessed. Our attitude has to have in it the same elements that God's has—First, earnest desire; second, patient dependence.—A. MACLAREN, *Contemporary Pulpit*, vol. II. p. 126.

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Blunt, *Posthumous Sermons*, vol. i. p. 23. C. Bradley, *Practical Sermons*, vol. i. p. 45. J. Keble, *Sermons for the Saints' Days*, p. 286. XXXII. 3.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons on the Prophets*, vol. i. p. 104. XXXII. 8.—W. S. Rainsford, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xl. 1891, p. 60. J. M. Neale, *Sermons on the Prophets*, vol. i. pp. 111, 122. XXXII. 13.—T. Arnold, *Sermons*, vol. ii. p. 222. XXXII. 14, 15.—G. Matheson, *Voices of the Spirit*, p. 64. XXXII. 17.—J. Fraser, *Parochial and Other Sermons*, p. 321. J. H. Jowett, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxi. 1902, p. 380.

'Blessed are ye that sow beside all waters.'—ISAIAH XXXII. 20.

THE text of Coleridge's Lay Sermon (1817), which he describes as 'easy to be remembered from its briefness, likely to be remembered from its beauty'.

REFERENCES.—XXXII. 20.—W. J. Hocking, *ibid.* vol. xxxvii. 1890, p. 396. J. Percival, *Sermons at Rugby*, p. 85. F. E. Paget, *Sermons on Duties of Daily Life*, p. 311; see also *Plain Preaching to Poor People* (6th Series), p. 121.

GOD IS A CONSUMING FIRE

'The sinners in Zion are afraid; fearfulness hath surprised the hypocrites. Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings? He that walketh righteously, and speaketh uprightly; he that despiseth the gain of oppressions, that shaketh his hands from holding of bribes, that stoppeth his ears from hearing of blood, and shutteth his eyes from seeing evil; he shall dwell on high; his place of defence shall be the munitions of rocks: bread shall be given him; his waters shall be sure.'—ISAIAH XXXIII. 14-16.

THIS passage contains a question, and the reply to the question, and an assurance over and above the reply.

I. Consider the answer here given to the inquiry about dwelling with God. The possession of spiritual life—shown to be spiritual life by the external manifestations of walking righteously, and speaking uprightly, and holding aloof from evil—is the one thing which enables a man to stand without being consumed in the consuming fire of the presence of God.

II. We advance to consider our second point—the question asked by the sinners and hypocrites, or rather the statement involved in their question, that the God with whom we have to do is a consuming or devouring fire.

So long as we are in this world there is a sort of screen or veil interposing itself between our souls and God. God deals with us through the intervention of intermediate agencies, and thus there is no special distress, no very pungent misery experienced, if we are out of harmony with the Divine nature. But in the world of the future this state of things is altered. The screen is dropped, and the soul comes into direct, immediate contact with Deity, is hemmed round, and clasped in every direction, by Him Who is a consuming fire. To the purified soul, then, which has consented—willingly, gladly, consented—to be detached from its sin, and which, whilst on earth, has been changed into the image of Christ by the operation of the Holy Spirit, such close proximity to the Godhead is the source of indescribable gladness. But to the soul which has clung to its sin, and has identified itself with its sin, and has refused to be disentangled from its sin—this plunging into an element for which it is not prepared, and with which it has no affinity, this coming into direct contact with the purity and holiness of God—brings intolerable torment.

III. Something is promised us if we be of the number of those who walk righteously, and speak uprightly, and dwell in the presence of God. What is it? We may call it 'inaccessibility'—the being placed high beyond the reach of anything that can really harm us.—GORDON CALTHROP, *Penny Pulpit*, vol. xvi. No. 926, p. 129.

REFERENCES.—XXXIII. 14.—F. Ferguson, *Peace With God*, p. 1. XXXIII. 14, 15.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—Isaiah*, p. 189. XXXIII. 15, 16.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxx. No. 1764. XXXIII. 16.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—Isaiah*, p. 199. XXXIII. 16, 17.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons on the Prophets*, vol. i. p. 132.

THE INVISIBLE PRESENCE OF GOD

(Advent)

ISAIAH XXXIII. 17.

THERE is a peculiar feeling with which we regard the dead. What does this arise from?—that he is absent? No; for we do not feel the same towards one who is merely distant, though he be at the other end of the earth. Is it because in this life we shall never see him again? No, surely not; because we may be perfectly certain we shall never see him when he goes abroad, we may know he is to die abroad, and perhaps he does die abroad; but will anyone say that, when the news of his death comes, our feeling when we think of him is not quite changed? Surely it is the passing into another state which impresses itself upon us, and makes us speak of him as we do—I mean, with a sort of awe. We cannot tell what he is now, what his relations to us, what he knows of us. We do not understand him, we do not see him. He is passed into the land 'that is very far off'; but it is not at all certain that he has not some mysterious hold over us. Thus his not being seen with our bodily eyes, while perchance he is present, makes the thought of him more awful. Apply this to the subject before us, and you will perceive that there is a sense, and a true sense, in which the invisible presence of God is more awful and overpowering than if we saw it. And so again, the presence of Christ, now that it is invisible, brings with it a host of high and mysterious feelings, such as nothing else can inspire. The thought of our Saviour, absent yet present, is like that of a friend taken from us, but, as it were, in dream returned to us, though in this case not in dream, but in reality and truth.—J. H. NEWMAN.

WORSHIP, A PREPARATION FOR CHRIST'S COMING

(Advent)

'Thine eyes shall see the King in His beauty: they shall behold the land that is very far off.'—ISAIAH XXXIII. 17.

YEAR after year, as it passes, brings us the same warnings again and again, and none perhaps more

impressive than those with which it comes to us at this season. The very frost and cold, rain and gloom, which now befall us, forebode the last dreary days of the world, and in religious hearts raise the thought of them. The year is worn out; spring, summer, autumn, each in turn, have brought their gifts and done their utmost; but they are over, and the end is come. All is past and gone, all has failed, all has sated; we are tired of the past; we would not have the seasons longer; and the austere weather which succeeds, though ungrateful to the body, is in tone with our feelings, and acceptable. Such is the frame of mind which befits the end of the year; and such the frame of mind which comes alike on good and bad at the end of life. The days have come in which they have no pleasure; yet they would hardly be young again, could they be so by wishing it. Life is well enough in its way; but it does not satisfy. Thus the soul is cast forward upon the future, and in proportion as its conscience is clear and its perception keen and true, does it rejoice solemnly that 'the night is far spent, the day is at hand,' that there are 'new heavens and a new earth' to come, though the former are failing; nay, rather that, because they are failing, it will 'soon see the King in His beauty,' and 'behold the land which is very far off'. These are feelings for holy men in winter and in age, waiting, in some dejection perhaps, but with comfort on the whole, and calmly though earnestly, for the Advent of Christ.—J. H. Newman.

FAR OFF, YET NIGH

'Thine eyes shall see the King in His beauty; they shall behold the land that is very far off.'—Isaiah xxxiii. 17.

Heaven is shown as a land of glory and peace and joy and rest. There is no darkness, no parting, no pain, and no sorrow. And yet we are given to understand from the words of the text that it is a land from which we are far off. A shadow of disappointment passes over us, a feeling of pain when we remember that the life of the blessed ones is far off, and we have a lone, hard road to travel before we can be safe—safe and sure in the presence of the King. That long road which we have to travel is life, and there is no cutting the distance short. Although this life contains many comforts, luxuries, and pleasures, the beauty of the vision of the King outshines them all. And to us, even with the vision of that far-off land, there comes a feeling of disappointment. We want safety and happiness now. Why does God keep it all for that land which is so far off? It is we that are making a mistake.

I. God Does not Keep it for that Far-off Distant Land.—We are far too ready to think of God as a far-off God; we are teaching our children to believe in Him as such. We teach them that God's angels spread their wings around them as they sleep, that He hears them and He loves them. Yet when the child asks, Where is God? we answer, Up there, above the sky. Are we not teaching the child wrongly? Are we not teaching him just that which we should not teach him, just that which we should not let ourselves think or believe—that God is a distant God? We think of God as One Who will meet us face to face in a distant world. Would it not be better to teach our children that God is always with them; that He is with them in their room; that if they go into another room He is there also; and that if they go out into the street He is with them still.

II. It is only by God's Help that our Soul's Enemies can be Overcome.—God sends us temptations to see what metal we are made of. Scientific men will not trust an untested instrument, and so it is that God would have us perfect. Perhaps never at any time in the history of Christianity has the study of faith in the face of difficulties been more wanted than now. Men are using their intellects and their physical powers more than ever before. Men require and want an answer where perhaps an answer cannot be given. God does not always see fit to tell us everything. Not till we get to the next world shall we see things clearly. The mysteries of life and death are mysteries still, and we are to wait for the far-off land before we can have all things clear.

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THE LORD OUR JUDGE

(*Advent*)

'For the Lord is our judge, the Lord is our lawgiver, the Lord is our King; He will save us.'—Isaiah xxxiii. 22.

These four sentences seem to sum up all the great lessons of Advent.

I. The Lord is our Judge.—That is the beginning, and the condition of all spiritual progress lies in realizing the absolute and everlasting distinction between good and bad—the absolute importance of being on the side of good. Christ tells us of the everlasting distinction between those on the right hand and those on the left. Yes, in spite of the vice and wickedness of the good, in spite of the virtues of the bad, there runs a line, invisible, but as profound as can be conceived, in amongst us as we gather together, that distinguishes between those who at the bottom of their wickedness are serving God, and those who, at the bottom, in spite of all their attractiveness, are serving their own flesh, their own lusts, and their own selfishness.

The answer to the question 'Who among us shall dwell in the everlasting fire'? is, He that walks uprightly; he who has done no wrong; for him this

consuming and awful fire of the Divine presence shall be a vision of beauty and of the land that is very far off. But for those who have done wrong, what punishment must it be to simply find themselves in God's presence unfit! They will find nothing else but the everlasting burning and devouring fire, with no other fate than weeping and gnashing of teeth. Those will be the horrible consequences of making the one irretrievable mistake. 'The Lord is our judge.' That is the beginning—to believe it in our hearts.

II. The Lord is our Lawgiver.—Surely if God loves us, He must have given us some guidance as to how we should walk, be able to know His character, and to come at last into His presence to behold the King in His beauty. We know God legislated for the people of the old covenant. He was their lawgiver. He gave them their ceremonial law to know how to approach Him, their social law that they might regulate their social life agreeably to God and for their own well-being. All that has been deepened and sterilized for us into those great moral laws illustrated in the writings of the Bible from our Lord's own character. We know what is right and what is wrong conduct. More than that, the Lord has given us the laws of the Church, the requirements and ordinances whereby those who need education are taught and trained for God. 'The Lord is our lawgiver.'

III. The Lord is our King.—That means He requires our deliberate service. In all things, and in all parts of life the kingdom of God is to be promoted. All members of society should realize that because they belong to Christ they are to work for Christ, because they belong to society they are to work for society. 'The Lord is our King.'

IV. He will Come to Save Us.—If you search into your consciences you know that you want something which your own nature cannot supply, a cleansing profound, which reaches into the very roots of your being. You must be delivered not from the results, but from the very power of sin. 'He shall save His people from their sins'—the same Lawgiver, the same King, He is our Saviour—'He will come to save us'. He gave not only His love, but Himself.—Bishop Gore, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxiii. 1903, p. 72.

References.—XXXIII. 22.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—Isaiah*, p. 213. C. Gore, *Church Times*, vol. xliv. 1900, p. 743; see also *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lix. 1901, p. 36. J. M. Neale, *Sermons on the Prophets*, vol. i. p. 144; see also *Sermons Preached in Sackville College Chapel*, vol. iv. p. 266.

VICTORIOUS CRIPPLEDNESS

'The lame take the prey.'—Isaiah xxxiii. 23.

This is a proverb amply verified in history and experience, 'The lame take the prey'.

I. This is Seen in the Overcoming of Disadvantages.—'The survival of the fittest' is man's motto, but the Lord often disproves our mottoes; He shows how unaxiomatic our axioms are, for frequently it is the survival of what we deem unfittest which we are called to witness.

No man need make his disadvantages a reason of despondency, nor need any make them an excuse for spiritual ineffectiveness. Disadvantages become advantages at the transfiguring touch of Jesus.

II. This is True of Providential Supply.—Your course in life may be sadly hedged in, but God shall clear it. Your lot may be a barren one, but God shall fertilize it. 'Have faith in God.' Cry, oft as the day dawns, 'Give us this day our daily bread,' and it shall be given.

III. This is Illustrated in Triumph Over Temptation and Sin.—We are all lame spiritually. The tragedy of many lives is their temptations, but the Lord turns the tragedy into glory.

So in respect of our besetting sin. It has ofttimes laid us low. And we never feel our humiliating lameness as we do in its presence. But how many have received superhuman power so that they have taken the prey! Look to the exalted Christ. Think less of your lameness and more, far more, of His power.

IV. In Christian Service we see this Verified.—How lame we all are who minister for Christ! But the ministry of lame men need not be a lame ministry. Power Divine is an overmatch for human crippledness. This has been signally demonstrated in the history of the Church of Christ. 'Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings' God has perfected praise.

V. This is Discernible in the Spiritual Blessings which Abound Amid Trials.—One of Lord Lytton's most celebrated characters said, 'Pain does not conquer me,' but what Eugene Aram vainly said the Christian truly declares. Pain does not conquer Christ's people. They conquer their pain, and they often conquer by their pain. Think of all maiming as an opportunity of winning a great prize.

VI. This is a Parable of the Winning of Eternal Blessedness.—By human merit heaven was never won. Those crowned victors were all lame on a time. They thought that with their cruel limitations they would never gain that glory. But they overcame 'because of the blood of the Lamb'. The lame who trust their Saviour shall all at length shout with the shouting of them that take the prey.

VII. This is a Gospel of Individual Salvation.—Dinsdale T. Young, *The Travels of the Heart*, p. 193.

'The lame take the prey.'—Isaiah xxxiii. 23.

I. The Lame.—It is clear that Israel, in her cleansed and forgiven remnant, is here indicated by this word lame. Impoverished in captivity, she had not regained her strength; but since God has wrought on her behalf there is to be no waiting; but, lame as she is, she may enter into the full enjoyment of that deliverance which, by the strong hand of God, has been accomplished.

Are we not here introduced to one of God's great principles? The deliverances of life have been conspicuously of God. He has gotten unto Himself the victory. 'Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith the Lord.' And the victories of God have so often been won, not merely for the lame, but through the lame, as to constitute a law of God in human affairs.

II. The Lame Take the Prey.—May we not inquire concerning the prey which they take. 'Then is the *prey* of a great spoil divided,' says the Prophet. It was, in the first instance, the prey of their conqueror Sennacherib and the Assyrian power.

(*a*) *It was the prey of conquest.* These people had been for many years in captivity. Now, though so feeble, so weak, so impoverished, they have taken the prey of conquest, even their liberty.

St. Paul speaks about our deliverance from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. Christ said: 'If the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed'. It is given unto us, in Christ Jesus our Lord, to possess the prey of conquest, the freedom of the 'law of liberty'. And in this respect it is the lame who take the prey. It is the man who is lamed by sin and who knows it: beaten by his temptations, and tempest-tossed with his many difficulties, who, relying upon the finished work of Jesus Christ, through love to Him, gets the mastery over the sin which doth so easily beset, and enters into the liberty of God, while many another, seemingly stronger, but often self-righteous, remains still in bondage.

(*b*) *It is the prey of a rich experience.* A bitter one 'tis true, but a rich one nevertheless. We think that there is nothing like the sunshine, nothing like prosperity. But it is often the intervening cloud which makes the shining of the sun more precious, and the period of adversity which makes us value all the more prosperity. 'I have got the sunshine on the sensitive plate,' says the photographer. 'Shut out the light now, close the door, blot out the sun, let me remain in darkness. What light I must have for to see at all must be subdued, broken up.'

See, in the darkness, how the form develops, how the impressions of the sunlight are revealed! God has shone forth, in the face of Jesus Christ, upon the soul of man, and away into the darkness, like St. Paul, that soul is driven that Christ may be formed, developed within. It may be that all along the sorrowful way that soul must pass in the shadows. But in that day, when the clouds and the mists will all have been dissolved, what a prey, a spoil, of rich experiences that soul will have taken.—J. Gay, *Common Truths from Queer Texts*, p. 122.

References.—XXXIII. 23.—F. B. Cowl, *Straight Tracks*, p. 18. XXXIII. 23, 24.—F. B. Meyer, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. liv. 1898, p. 4. XXXIII. 24.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxxii. No. 1905. XXXIV. 5.—W. D. Ross, *The Sword Bathed in Heaven*, p. 5. XXXV. 1.—A. G. Mortimer, *The Church's Lessons for the Christian Year*, part i. p. 69. XXXV. 3.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. v. No. 243. XXXV. 4.—W. M. Taylor, *Outlines of Sermons on the Old Testament*, p. 196. F. Hastings, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxxiii. 1908, p. 38. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xlix. No. 2815. XXXV. 5.—S. A. Barnett, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxxi. 1907, p. 52. XXXV. 5, 6.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—Isaiah*, p. 215. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xlv. No. 2635. J. Keble, *Sermons for Advent to Christmas Eve*, p. 90. XXXV. 6, 7.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—Isaiah*, p. 221. XXXV. 6-10.—C. Voysey, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xlvi. 1894, p. 4

THE MIRAGE AND THE POOL

'The mirage shall become a pool.'—Isaiah xxxv. 7.

'The mirage shall become a pool.' The illusory shall become the substantial. The life of disappointments shall become a life of satisfaction.

I. What some men have experienced in the sandy desert others have suffered in the common life. Humanity is mocked by a mirage more inviting and enticing than the semblance of the desert. There is the illusory in life, the mirage which allures with its promise of satisfying pools, and then mocks us with its leagues of desolating sand.

Disappointments abound: is it possible for us to attain to satisfaction? Is it possible to get away from semblance to realities? Can life become satisfying, and not a cruel procession of bitter chagrins? A disappointing life means an undiscovered God! The world presents the mirage: God offers the pool. 'The mirage shall become a pool.' The life of disappointments shall become the life of satisfaction.

II. It is a heartening thing for the preacher to be able to say to himself and to his hearers that these pools of God have been found. Some of the pools have been named, and their very names are full of soft and cool refreshment. Here is one of the pools of the Lord, around which the pilgrims are gathered. What is its name? The 'wells of salvation'!

But here is another band of pilgrims gathered round about another of the waters of the Lord. What do they call it? 'The river of God's pleasures.' And the real import is even sweeter than the phrase conveys, for its inner meaning bears this suggestion, 'God's delicacies'. The pilgrims appear to lack the multitudinous and riotous revelries of life; but they have its finest distillations of joy. It is not always the man who owns the countryside who owns the landscape. He owns the estate; his almost penniless cottager, with the refined and purified spirit, owns the glory of the landscape. Which of them drinks of the river of 'God's delicacies'?

Here is yet another band of desert pilgrims gathered round about the refreshing waters of the Lord. They call it 'the river of peace'.

III. What is the testimony of the pilgrims who have been to the Lord's pools? Here is a strain from the pilgrim's song: 'My soul is satisfied as with marrow'. Here is another pilgrim witness: 'He satisfieth the

longing soul'.—J. H. Jowett, *Apostolic Optimism*, p. 144.

References.—XXXV. 7, 8.—J. Wordsworth, *The One Religion*, Bampton Lectures, 1881, p. 181.

THE HIGHWAY OF HOLINESS

'And an highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called the way of holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it; but it shall be for those' (or 'He shall be with them,' if you look in your margins): 'the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein. No lion shall be there, nor any ravenous beast shall go up thereon, it shall not be found there; but the redeemed shall walk there: and the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.'—Isaiah xxxv. 8-10.

Consider some of the characteristics of the life of holiness to which the Prophet here calls our attention, and the conditions which are attached to the *right of way*.

I. 'The unclean shall not pass over it.' Until we are washed and cleansed from our 'old sins' we are not in a position to pass over the King's highway of holiness. We must pass through the gate before we can pass along the way, and that gate is the Cross, where the blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanses from all sin.

II. The highway of holiness is the path of 'fellowship with the Divine'. When Christ was here on earth He ever moved along this way, and He is still to be found there by those who pass it. We may put it thus: Fellowship with Christ is the privilege of those who are wholly consecrated to the Lord, whose supreme desire is to be holy as He is holy; and just in so far as this privilege is actually realized, the soul is more and more completely sanctified by contact with the Divine.

III. 'It is the way of right direction.' How often in life it seems as if we scarcely know which way to turn; we want to do the right thing, but we hardly know which is the right thing to do. But here is the promise if we are on the King's highway of holiness, 'Though we are fools we shall not err'. The reason why we make such great mistakes as we sometimes do is surely that we get off the King's highway of holiness. We allow ourselves to aim at some other object, and to be guided by some lower desire.

IV. It is the only way of right direction to those who are 'wayfaring men'. 'The wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein.' Do we not sometimes err because we have so little of the wayfaring man about us? We are called to use the world as not abusing it; surely it is the abuse of the world when we allow it to take the place of heaven.

There is a quaint old Latin proverb which tells us 'The penniless travellers shall sing before the robbers'. No wonder; for what can the robbers take from them? And many a Christian might sing defiance of all enemies—even of the great robber himself—if only we made over our all to its proper Owner, and regarded it as a sacred trust to be used for Him.

V. It is also 'the way of safety'. 'No lion shall be there, nor any ravenous beast shall go up thereon. It shall not be found there.' If you ask for an explanation of this mysterious safety, I point you to the words which follow. It is the way of the redeemed. 'The redeemed shall walk there.' Why has Satan no power to do us harm? Because we have been redeemed out of his power. Jesus Christ gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity. And now that He has redeemed us, we are in a position to claim exemption and immunity, not from Satan's attacks, but from his tyrannous power over us.

VI. It is 'a way of joy'. There is no real happiness out of the highway of holiness. Who are the happy Christians? They who follow the Lord fully. Who are the miserable Christians? Those who aim at compromise, who lead a half-hearted life; for the lion can tear and wound them, if not utterly destroy them, as they stray from time to time from the highway of holiness; nor can they enjoy fellowship, for they do not walk in the light; nor can they be sure of right direction, for 'he that walketh in darkness knoweth not whither he goeth'.

VII. 'It is the way that leads home.' We are on the King's highway, and every step brings us a little nearer to that home where our own Father lives, and where we shall receive such a welcome as only a Father can give.—W. Hay M. H. Aitken, *The Highway of Holiness*, p. 1.

References.—XXXV. 8.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxxii. No. 1912. H. J. Wilmot-Buxton, *Sunday Lessons for Daily Life*, p. 63. J. E. Cumming, *The Blessed Life*, p. 34. XXXV. 9, 10.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—Isaiah*, p. 229. XXXV. 10.—J. Parker, *Studies in Texts*, vol. i. p. 191. XXXVI. 5.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xi. No. 646. XXXVII. 14.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—Isaiah*, p. 242. XXXVII. 14-21; 33-38.—*Ibid.* p. 235. XXXVII. 23.—Newman Smyth, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xliii. 1893, p. 168. XXXVII. 31.—J. H. Newman, *Sermons Bearing on Subjects of the Day*, p. 203. XXXVII. 36.—S. Baring-Gould, *Village Preaching for a Year*, vol. ii. p. 301. XXXVIII. 1.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. liii. No. 3021. H. Grey Graham, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxiv. 1903, p. 136. J. W. Colenso, *Village Sermons*, p. 1. H. E. Manning, *Sermons*, vol. iii. p. 311. J. Hamilton Thom, *Laws of Life* (2nd Series), p. 16. J. Fraser, *The Relations of Religion and Science Considered and the Principles of Voluntaryism and Endowment Compared*, p. 18. XXXVIII. 1, 2.—W. H. Hutchings, *Sermon-Sketches* (2nd Series), p. 30. XXXVIII. 1, 2-4.—W. D. Ross, *The Sword Bathed in Heaven*, p. 57. XXXVIII. 1-5.—E. M. Goulburn, *Occasional Sermons*, p. 403.

ADDED YEARS

'Behold, I will add unto thy days fifteen years.'—Isaiah xxxviii. 5.

I. God adds Years to Many Men's Lives.—For example:—

(*a*) *In recovery from sickness.* The sickness seems unto death. Hope is gone, or wellnigh gone. But a 'favourable turn,' as we say, is taken, and another course of years is added unto the man's days.

(*b*) *In the gradual strengthening of the consti-*

tution. A new and deeper spring seems to be found in the blood, which has 'earnest in it of far springs to be'. The delicate youth becomes a strong man.

(*c*) *In escape from peril.* The ship was foundering, and you were saved. A mere step or tuft of grass saved you from a fatal fall, etc. In one way or another, at one time or another, God has said to us, as to Hezekiah, 'I will add unto thy days fifteen years'.

II. How we should Look Upon those Added Years.

(*a*) *With gratitude, as a special gift from God.* Hezekiah sang a hymn of gratitude on his recovery. Do we remember to thank God for our added years; for 'healing our diseases, and redeeming our lives from destruction'?

(*b*) *With awe and resolution, as peculiarly our charge from God.* What to do with those fifteen years: how shall we make them fruitful for the glory of God and the good of our fellow-men? They are God's, by special and solemn trust; may we discharge that trust as under His eye, and as with the day of account hastening on.

(*c*) *With constant mindfulness that soon they must be given back to God.* They are only a small added portion; the last act in the drama of our life; the last stage in our earthly journey. Let your loins be girt, and your lamps burning, and be as those who are watching for 'the coming of the Bridegroom'.

References.—XXXVIII. 11.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons for Some Feast Days in the Christian Year*, p. 1.

THE BLESSING OF PERSECUTION

'O Lord, by these things men live, and in all these things is the life of my spirit.'—Isaiah xxxviii. 16.

It will be good for us if life is imbued with the feeling that all they who live godly in Christ Jesus must suffer persecution, that suffering is as much our way of bearing testimony and winning victory as labour can ever be, and that by these things, by humiliations, by anxieties, by impoverishment, men live, and in these is the life of their spirits.

I. Let me recall Christ's own anticipation of persecution and suffering, an anticipation fulfilled in Himself, in His Apostles, and in His Church. We hardly realize the wonder of His first prophecy. At the very dawn and outset of His career He knew what the course and the end would be. He had none of an enthusiast's dreams, none of the bright and daring hopes so often quenched in blood. The morning of His life was red, and all the weather of the day was foul, and His sun set as He knew it would, in a tempest of agony and woe. All through the history of His Church there have been the painful following, the hard battle, the heroic death. Until the spiritual earth and heaven are completed we shall have them again.

It was persecution that ended by degrees the earthly life of all the Apostles. One by one they filled up His sacrifice of weariness, crowning life by death. The words of one are enough: 'Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day have I been in the deep—' This is among the first pages of the noble and unfinished catalogue of Christian labours and Christian suffering. So much did the Church suffer at the beginning, that one of the early Christian poets represents the cities of the earth, each offering the Lord when He came to judge the world the relics of the martyrs who reposed in them. Not one city in all the habitable world failed of her gift. So it has been all through. Some have gone home by a short, rough road; others have toiled on with bleeding feet for years ere they reached their last cross. In Japan, Christianity was literally killed out by the killing of every Christian. One form of torture there was to feed the mothers delicately, and to starve the children. The cries of their famished little ones would, it was hoped, shake the constancy of the mothers, and lead them to trample on the Cross. The martyrs have been tortured on the rack till every bone has been dragged from its place, and every nerve of the body has thrilled with agony. They have been flung into the dungeon to recover strength, and then been taken through the street loaded with chains to the place where they were burned to death. More dreadful even than the public martyrdoms have been the cases where the saints have been put to death in secret. In the Low Countries the Baptists used to be drowned alone and in the darkness, in huge vats of water, hearing nothing but the jests of the murderers who had 'given the dipper his last dip'. We must have patience, not for a short time only, not for a long time only, but to the end. The opposition to truth and freedom takes ever new forms. Such a difficulty rises up, such a trial stands in the way, such a temptation opposes, so we shall have it till the voice comes, 'Ye have compassed this desert long enough,' till the eternal day breaks, the one day known to the Lord when at eventime it shall be light.

II. The effect of persecution and of accepted suffering is life. When a great trial befell his Church, it was said of the leader by many who little knew, 'This will kill him'. By these things *men* live. It might kill weaklings, but if we are bound up with Christ, filled with His Spirit, the trial of faith is the minister and stimulant of life. We know how it is in the daily experience. We know how any great initiation into sorrow sobers, deepens, strengthens every nature that has in it the germs of good. There are regions of thought and feeling which may not be profitably discussed by those who have not traversed them. Many and many a time, even natures that seem poor and meagre are strangely enriched and ennobled by a baptism of fire. For the Christian, the trial brings the inner peace and power, and so we have the succession maintained in the world of men and women who out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the army of the aliens. The soul that seemed rootless and fruit-

less has, again and again, disclosed itself under trial as a branch of the True Vine that rejoiceth God and man. Persecution has killed Churches, but hardly ever, I think, save in cases where the members have actually been exterminated. It will destroy a feigned profession, but by these things the true, the brave, the faithful live—as they never live when the sun went on shining, and the winds were soft, and the world wore a fair face.

III. The lessons are very simple, but they go very deep. Trials borne for Christ bring us to the heart of Christ. The nearer we are to Him, the more calmly we shall look on the sunshine and the shadow too. It is His sunshine, and it is His shadow. Joined to Him we shall arm ourselves with the same mind, and pray for those who have wronged us or are wronging us. If they refuse to own us or receive us, let us hope for the time when the clouds will pass, and for the day of Christ, when all the flock will be gathered in the fold upon the everlasting hills.—W. Robertson Nicoll, *The Lamp of Sacrifice*, p. 226.

References.—XXXVIII. 16.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons on the Prophets*, vol. i. p. 151. XXXVIII. 17.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. vi. No. 316; vol. xix. No. 1110; vol. xxiii. No. 1337.

THE VALUE OF LIFE

'The grave cannot praise Thee, death cannot celebrate Thee. The living, the living, he shall praise Thee, as I do this day.'—Isaiah xxxviii. 18, 19.

These words form part of the writing of Hezekiah, King of Judah, when he had been sick and was recovered of his sickness.

I. Notice the lessons there are for us in the conduct of King Hezekiah:—

1. To have recourse to God, in all time of our sickness, 'to turn our face (as Hezekiah did) to the wall, and pray'.

2. 'To give God thanks on our recovery,' to think of Him as our Deliverer, our Healer. The God of our life, in Whom we live and move and have our being, Who has added to our life a longer share of days. To think *why* He has added them: *why* He has prolonged our days on earth, even for this end, that we may serve Him more faithfully, walk before Him with a more perfect, less divided heart.

3. The value of life—the value as giving us the greater opportunity for serving God.

II. Death was to Hezekiah a far darker, far drearier state than it is to us who are Christians, us to whom Jesus Christ hath brought immortality of life. If he had any hope of a life beyond the grave, it does not appear in his words.

But it is this very view of death, as the *end all* and *be all* of man's brief existence, which enhances to Hezekiah the value of life. Because life offered, as he thought, the single field for serving God, he grudged to have it shortened.

We who possess the Gospel need not, and ought not, to think thus gloomily of death. The question put so touchingly, so doubtingly, by the Psalmist, 'Dost Thou show wonders among the dead?' has been answered for us by the Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ.

III. In that darker view of death which Hezekiah held, there is a lesson for our learning. Though death be not now the end of life, it is the end of *this* life, the end of our day of grace, the end of the period which God gives us in which to see if we will serve Him or not.

And remember, every life is wasted, every life is a misspent life which is not led to the glory and praise of God.—R. D. B. Rawnsley, *Village Sermons*, 3rd Series, p. 22.

References.—XXXVIII. 18, 19.—R. Scott, *Oxford University Sermons*, p. 232. XXXIX. 3, 4.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons on the Prophets*, vol. i. p. 160. XL.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xlvii. No. 2733; vol. xlix. No. 2812. XL.-LXVI.—Lyman Abbott, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lv. 1899, p. 124.

COMFORT YE! COMFORT YE!

'Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God.'—Isaiah xl. 1.

How lovable the God who speaks thus! He allures us irresistibly. He commands our hearts. And the quality of the consolation He enjoins is so rich. Comfort, in the Bible, means strengthening. The word has deteriorated of late. It now too often signifies soothing, lulling to rest. But when God says 'Comfort ye, comfort ye my people,' He calls His prophets to strengthen them, to arouse them, to nerve them. It is a great and enduring empowerment which God desires for the people of His choice.

I. Comfort is commanded of God. Sweet is this 'saith your God'. There is a God-given charter of consolation. Is not this very characteristic of God? In this as in all things God is very consistent.

Every congregation, whatever else it wants, wants comfort. God enjoins it because God knows the deep and enduring need of it. 'I was greatly *comforted* at Church,' says John Wesley in his Journals.

II. God's people have special need of comfort.

III. Verbal comfort is to be administered. 'Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem.'

IV. Trouble survived is a comforting consideration.

V. The forgiveness of sins is a source of powerful comfort.

VI. The exaction of retribution is a ground of comfort.

VII. Relationship with God is the most solid comfort.—Dinsdale T. Young, *The Gospel of the Left Hand*, p. 193.

References.—XL. 1.—H. J. Wilmot-Buxton, *Sunday Lessons for Daily Life*, p. 85. John Watson, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lvii. 1900, p. 145. T. Allen, *ibid.* vol. lxx. 1901, p. 72. C. Stanford, *Outlines of Sermons on the Old Testament*, p. 197. W. J. Knox-Little, *The Light of Life*, p. 159. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. iv. No. 221. B. J. Snell, *The All-Enfolding Love*, p. 81. XL. 1, 2.—J. E. Vernon, *Plain Preaching to Poor People* (8th Series), p. 75. J. K. Popham,

Sermons, p. 232. XL. 1-10.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—Isaiah*, p. 244. XL. 2.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons on the Prophets*, vol. i. p. 167.

THE MESSAGE OF PALM SUNDAY

'The voice of one that, crieth Prepare ye in the wilderness the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God.'—ISAIAH XL. 3.

THAT humble pageant from which Palm Sunday derives its name—that procession, so poor yet so royal, so fatal yet so victorious, whereby the Prophet of Nazareth claimed the allegiance of His people and challenged the power of their rulers—finds a picturesque memorial in the rites of the Eastern Church. The morning service is heralded by a procession from the western door of the church to the altar. First marches one who bears a burning torch; next a deacon, holding aloft a copy of the Gospels; then the priests and the bishop, with sacred images; and last, so long as the Eastern Empire endured, followed the Emperor in his most royal robes. All alike bear palm branches in their hands and chant the ancient hymn: 'Come forth ye nations, come forth also ye people; look upon the kingdom of Heaven. The Gospel comes as a figure of the Christ.' Those venerable words have a message for us to-day; for they recall an aspect of Palm Sunday which is too little remembered. Year by year, when the day comes round, we give it a personal colour. Each one remembers a day, perhaps long ago, when the Saviour first made entry into his own heart; when first he consciously welcomed the King of Love. We do well so to remember, so to give thanks, and to renew the fervour of our loyalty. But personal faith is not the whole of religion. A Christian is concerned not only with his own soul, but with all humanity. He is pledged by the words of his daily prayer to extend the kingdom of God. He is bound on such a day to commemorate those eras of grace, landmarks in the history of mankind, when Christ has made entry into new realms, or brought new generations into His kingdom. He is encouraged to watch, as he prays, for the signs of a new visitation. He is impelled, as he looks upon some spiritual wilderness, to prepare the way of the Lord.

I. **Preparing the Way.**—Prepare the way! Does that mean lay out the Christian system before men's eyes? Surely not. For the Gospel is neither a code of laws to be obeyed nor a set of principles to be learned: it is, first of all, the presentation of a Person and a Life, both human and Divine, which wins love and commands adoration. For that reason it can never grow obsolete so long as there are living men; for that reason, too, it needs ever fresh interpretation in speech and action—for only life can be the herald of life. As St. Paul says, 'How shall men call on Him Whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him Whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher?' True! And the preacher must speak their language; he must understand the modes of their thought. Then he can go before as a herald; he can gain their ear by his sympathy, he can draw such a picture of his Lord as will appeal to them; and so they will open their gates to the peaceful Conqueror, so they will strew their palm branches and cry Hosanna in the highest!

II. **A Divine Discontent.**—The Church of Christ is irrevocably committed to a Divine discontent with the social order so long as it involves grave evils. But many of us have been infected with that facile optimism, born of material progress, which taught the middle nineteenth century to regard social evils as mere regrettable incidents in a victorious campaign. To the sufferers at least we have seemed to be apologists for intolerable wrongs. We must purge ourselves of this, one and all. We must reiterate the Church's ancient war-cry—Our wrestling is not against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world-rulers of this darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. Secondly, we must show that our discontent is practical. We must demonstrate that the brotherhood of man, in the eyes of Christians, is no abstract belief, but a living truth which is to be realized in the concrete. We must prove our conviction that the kingdom of God includes the organization of social life. If the Socialist programme, fallacious as it is, inspired by a pathetic ignorance of history and of human nature, appeals to men's hearts because it provides a simple cure for monstrous evils, how much greater and more permanent would be the power of a Christian ideal, towards which all were consciously working? Oh that we had such an ideal clearly before us to-day! How it would shine in our eyes, how it would sound in the very tones of our voices, how it would lend grace to our daily deeds! There would be little need of argument or exposition; the Christian's life would prepare the way of his Lord into men's hearts, for they would recognize that in our age, as in the age of St. Francis and of Luther, He comes to preach good tidings unto the meek, to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound.—CANON GLAZEBROOK, *The Guardian*, 24 March, 1910.

REFERENCES.—XL. 3.—S. Baring-Gould, *Village Preaching for a Year* (2nd Series), vol. i. p. 25. J. Service, *Sermons*, p. 1. W. J. Rutherford, *The Key of Knowledge*, p. 63. H. P. Liddon, *Sermons Preached on Special Occasions*, 1860-89, p. 117. XL. 3, 4.—W. L. Williams, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxxiv. 1904, p. 74.

THE WAY TO HEAVEN

'Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain: and the glory of the Lord shall be revealed.'—ISAIAH XL. 4, 5.

THERE is a great work, a most difficult journey set before us all. We are at one end, and heaven at the other. Now Isaiah tells us that there are five things which we have to do in this matter: and they are set down in the order in which we have to do them.

I. 'Every valley shall be exalted.' What does

that mean? When a man begins in earnest to serve God, he finds so many difficulties, such different kinds of hindrances, so many defeats, that he is tempted to give all up as impossible. What does that man want, then, in the first place? Certainly comfort. And therefore the same Isaiah, beginning his prophecies of the great things that God was about to do for His Church, opens them thus: 'Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God. Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem.' Therefore it was that our LORD, coming to His Disciples after His Resurrection, began by saying, 'Peace' (and peace is the same thing as comfort) 'be unto you!' Half this discouragement arises from our own idleness.

And this—'every valley shall be exalted'—is set first, not only because it must really come first, but because also it is the most difficult. 'Comfort the feeble-minded, support the weak,' can be said in six words, but what a world of difficulty there is in them! And so it is in earthly matters: the filling up the valley is generally speaking a more difficult work than the cutting down of hills.

II. 'And every mountain and hill shall be made low.' For when Satan sees that a man cannot be discouraged from serving God, then he turns round and persuades him that he *is* serving God very well indeed; that he may well be proud to think how often he has resisted temptation, how often he has overcome difficulties, how often he has done great things for the sake of Christ. And so, except for God's grace, that man is puffed up in his own conceit, thinks that he need no longer take any care to himself, and so falls back again into some grievous sin, and it may be that his last state is worse than the first.

III. 'The crooked shall be made straight.' That is, when a man is really serving God, he will go straight on in his duty, turning neither to the right hand nor to the left, not caring what this or that person may think, or what the world may say; but what God will say, how God will approve, how at last God will reward.

IV. 'And the rough places plain.' That part of the promise can hardly be altogether fulfilled in this world. Rough places there always are and must be: sorrow and trouble we shall have up to the very end. But the text tells us that it will not always be so. As surely as we have them here, so surely they can none of them enter in there.

V. 'And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed.' So it shall indeed be to those that are counted worthy to enter into the kingdom of Heaven. But what that glory is—or how it shall be made manifest—who shall tell? St. John could not: 'Beloved,' says he, 'now are we the sons of God; and it doth not yet appear what we shall be.'—J. M. NEALE, *Sermons Preached in Sackville College Chapel*, p. 57.

REFERENCES.—XL. 4.—T. C. Fry, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xlvi. 1894, p. 381; see also *The Gospel of the Kingdom*, p. 21. H. Scott Holland, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xlvi. 1894, p. 385; see also *The Gospel of the Kingdom*, p. 37. C. W. Stubbs, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xlvii. 1895, p. 8; see also *The Gospel of the Kingdom*, p. 59; see also *ibid.* p. 78.

VOX CLAMANTIS

'What shall I cry.'—ISAIAH XL. 6.

I WOULD like to see the Church, all the Churches of Christ, holding their tongues until they had been shut up with the Lord, asking Him, 'What shall we cry?' What did the voice say? It said, 'Cry!' But that would be startling. Certainly. That would be fatal to slumber. No doubt; I never knew the Lord approve much sleeping; He does assign a few hours to rest, but it is a cluster of hours in which perhaps little else could be done. He is covetous of the daylight, He is miserly of the opportunity; He says: 'Buy it up, buy it, seize it, have it, work while it is called day, even if it be so called by a stretch of imagination; make the light go as long and as far as you can'.

I. I wonder if Christ would have said, 'I would take a draught of water from you, but I don't like the vessel; I can only drink out of gold, or silver certainly, not out of that rude thing of yours; I will go back to the city and bring up a proper vessel; I would not mind refreshing My thirst and cooling this hot summer that burns Me'. Did He talk so? What did He want? He wanted the water, not the vessel. When the Church wants the water, the substance, the gift of God, the Lord will not disregard the supplication of His people. 'What shall I cry?' The Lord says, Do not ask that question first; I have told you to cry; now you can ask the question, second, What shall I cry? But we must have the cry, the shout, the prayer that is so terribly alive that it will take the kingdom of heaven by violence. We must have these fever cries, these hot pulses, these shoutings without prompting. We may not have lost the message, and yet we may have lost the right way of delivering it. It would be possible so to read or speak even a great or true doctrine that not a soul would believe a word you said. The first business is in the cry—poignant, piercing, thrilling cry.

II. This inquiry for authority is well known by those who read the Scripture. There was a time when the Lord said unto a shepherd man, 'Go to Egypt'. Why? 'I have heard the cry of My people, the cry of pain, the cry of outraged humanity, the cry of instinctive justice: come, I will send thee, go thou to Egypt.' And Moses said what the Prophet said, 'Who sends me? What shall I say or cry if the people ask for my authority, if they ask my name? Shall I say that I am sent anonymously, or shall I be qualified, quiet, and empowered in every sense and degree by the possession of a name?' And the Lord said, 'Certainly, certainly I will be with thee; if they ask the name, say I AM THAT I AM'—a nameless name, an ocean pool, an Atlantic dewdrop. 'If they say again, "Who sent thee?" say I AM sent thee'—the verb, the one verb, the only verb, the seed verb, irregularly conjugated, but coming out in all its moods and tenses with terrible and expressive emphasis. Still, the point is Moses had his authority.

III. Now what was this man told to cry? It was a curious message, and yet it contained everything. He was to proclaim evanescence and eternity, he was to proclaim a universal message and give a particular application. 'The voice said, Cry. And he said, What shall I cry? All flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field: the grass withereth, the flower fadeth: because the spirit of the Lord bloweth upon it: surely the people is grass. The grass withereth, the flower fadeth'—that is the evanescence. The clock strikes, eternity never strikes; time must chatter, eternity must be silent. He was then told to complete his message respecting evanescence by delivering a message respecting permanence—'but the word of our God shall stand for ever'. The withering grass—the standing word; these two things abide to-day; they represent time, space; the measurable, the immeasurable; the fading and the amaranthine. If all flesh is grass, we had better fall to praying, because the praying time is very limited, the grass does not take a long time to wither. 'The grass withereth'—if it be so let us be up and doing, with a heart for everything, because the time is short, the opportunity lingers but for a moment, and every wise man says, 'I am a stranger, I am a pilgrim, I can tarry but a night; wake me before the sun is waked'.—Joseph Parker, *City Temple Pulpit*, vol. vi. p. 62.

Isaiah xl. 6.

Ruskin says: 'We find the grass and flowers are types, in their passing, of the passing of human life, and, in their excellence, of the excellence of human life; and this in twofold way; first, by their Beneficence, and then, by their Endurance; the grass of the earth, in giving the seed of corn, and in its beauty under tread of foot and stroke of scythe; and the grass of the waters, in giving its freshness to our rest, and in its bending before the wave.'

References.—XL. 6.—A. Mursell, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxxix. 1891, p. 381. XL. 6-8.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xvii. No. 999. J. Thomas, *Myrtle Street Pulpit*, vol. ii. p. 197. XL. 7.—G. Matheson, *Voices of the Spirit*, p. 64. XL. 8.—W. H. Brookfield, *Sermons*, p. 1. H. P. Liddon, *Christmastide in St. Paul's*, p. 224; see also *Penny Pulpit*, vol. xii. No. 706, p. 317. E. H. Bickersteth, *Thoughts in Past Years*, p. 201. XL. 9.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—Isaiah*, p. 251. *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxxii. 1907, p. 182. XL. 10.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons on the Prophets*, vol. i. pp. 175, 186. XL. 11.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. ix. No. 540; vol. xi. No. 652; vol. xiv. No. 794; vol. xxiii. No. 1381. C. Perren, *Revival Sermons in Outline*, p. 340. F. B. Cowl, *Straight Tracks*, p. 94. XL. 12.—G. Tyrrell, *Oil and Wine*, p. 274. XL. 14.—E. A. French, *God's Message Through Modern Doubt*, p. 103.

NOT SUFFICIENT

'Lebanon is not sufficient to burn.'—Isaiah xl. 16.

There are so many things in life upon which we have to write the legend, Not sufficient.

I. We write this upon Time; we have told off its centuries and have said at the close, Not room enough, not breathing space enough, not sufficient. We have received satisfactions and have been pleased with them for the moment and have said, Now we have entered into rest, and lo! our satisfactions have perished in the using, satisfaction has become satiety, nausea, and utterest disappointment. Who will show us the sufficient? who will lead us to the land of Enough?

We have written this same legend upon the parcel or estate which we call by the great and promising name of Life, and we have lived long enough to know that life is only a variety of death, if there be not something beyond it, something explanatory, comforting, and crowning.

II. 'Lebanon is not sufficient to burn' if we are trying to make up to God for our wrongdoing and most unfilial and horrible wickedness alike of sin and of ingratitude and of everything that belongs to ingratitude and sin. Let us cut down the forest on the hill and burn it, and of what avail will be the white ashes? can they touch the mystery of sin? is there any equivalent in matter to the great claim of wounded law, righteousness, and truth? When we talk of Lebanon and sin we talk of terms that have no relation to one another; they belong to different spheres, we are speaking about two different worlds and categories of things. Sin has no material equivalent; it is not an account that has a debtor and creditor side, and that we can settle by giving so much in return; the sinner cannot touch his own sin, it is within him, he has hurt the universe, he has pained God. What will Lebanon do for him? he is no longer master of the situation, he has parted with his strength, with his individuality, with every faculty and power he had that lay in any moral and spiritual direction, and he is left with nothing but the crushing sense of his own responsibility. Truly, in the most spiritual sense, what he has done cannot be undone.

No forest can make up for a broken heart. If you have wounded some spirit, if you owned the bank of your nation you could not pay in gold for that wound. You could mock the wound, you could say, I have come to pay you, there is your gold, now be quiet. Gold can never touch such misery; the trees of the forest, the beasts of the mountains, the cattle on all the hills, do not touch the sore that is in the grieved, the bruised, and the broken heart.

III. 'Lebanon is not sufficient to burn.' This is true not only in reference to sin but in reference to gratitude. We never can pay for spiritual service; between the gold and the service there is no relation. What shall I render? is a bigger question than it seems. You never can repay a spiritual favour. You can repay gold with gold, you can take a receipt, but not for spiritual ministry.

Herein we come upon the innermost truths of the Gospel. We cannot repay Christ, we cannot give God an equivalent of our sin, we cannot give God an equivalent for His mercies; we can ask, What shall we render? what can we do? then we are upon the right ground and we have started the right line of inquiry. But you can only repay love with love; along that line lies a great possibility. God seeks

not mine, but me, the man; He cannot be paid with what I have in my hand, but He is willing to accept as part payment as it were—yet He would discourage the use of that word in its mercantile sense—the love in my heart, the temple I would build Him if I could: and who knows but that many a poor man may be credited with having built the Lord many a temple? Renounce Lebanon if you want to pay God even in the matter of sin or even in the matter of gratitude; rend your hearts, not your garments; bring your hearts, but not your Lebanons.—Joseph Parker, *City Temple Pulpit*, vol. VII. p. 99.

Reference.—XL. 21 and 28.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—Isaiah*, p. 263.

UPWARD AND ONWARD

'Lift up your eyes on high.'—Isaiah xl. 26.

I. The upward look corrects the ever-present tendency to which all of us are more or less prone, to absorption in the things of this life. Only the light of the eternal falling upon the things of time can keep us in constant remembrance of their uncertain value and continuance. To become absorbed by them, being possessed where we should possess and being ruled where we should ourselves rule, is but a misusing of life and a misspending of strength for that which profits not. The upward look assures us that life is ordered both in general scope and in intimate detail by Him Whose love is not merely universal but individual in its concern for men. Whose care is not only for the vine but for 'every branch that beareth fruit'. Life's facts are seen to be His purposes, and this alone explains and interprets those untoward experiences from which all men naturally shrink, and produces a calm trust and gladness amid all that tends to disconcert and dishearten.

II. The upward look ennobles our conception of duty—that stern necessity of which such a large part of life is made up. In its light alone we recognize that all work is worship, and that there is a glory in doing earthly things with heavenly aims which nothing equals. Duty no longer is regarded as irksome compulsion by the one who lives with uplifted eye—it is rather his opportunity for voicing the devotion of his heart.

III. The upward look enlarges our conception of service. For our Lord Himself bids us lift up our eyes and look upon fields that are already 'white unto the harvest'. The uplifted eye sees the world's need as a dark background to the Saviour's brightness, and with expanding consciousness of the gloom of sin comes a quickened impulse to service and sacrifice. The upward look has been in all ages the inspiration to onward effort, and those whose lives are to us as stimulating examples and supplementary inspirations laboured and died to save men just because they had first seen the Lord 'high and lifted up'. This is the secret of the lives of Carey and Martyn, of Chalmers and Keith-Falconer, of Mackay and Hudson Taylor, of Moody and Shaftesbury. They were one and all men whose eyes were lifted up on high, far beyond considerations of self-advantage and gain, so that they saw something of the need which compelled their Lord to the Cross.

IV. The upward look brings also into life a power for the bearing of the strain which Christian service inevitably imposes. The pathway of the disciple is the same as that trodden by the Master, Whose service meant suffering and anguish as well as the bitterness of ingratitude and hostility. And few, if any, of those who seek to follow in His steps escape similar experience. But he whose heart's attention is directed on high 'where Christ sitteth' learns to endure 'as seeing Him who is invisible'. To his gaze there does not only appear an open heaven, but he sees the angels of God also 'ascending and descending upon the Son of Man'—present help in his need.—J. Stuart Holden, *The Pre-eminent Lord*, p. 19.

References.—XL. 26.—R. Harley, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xliv. 1893, p. 197. C. A. Berry, *Vision and Duty*, p. 61. XL. 26, 29.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—Isaiah*, p. 268. XL. 27, 29.—E. L. Hull, *Sermons*, p. 83. XL. 27, 31.—A. B. Davidson, *Waiting Upon God*, p. 3. XL. 28.—C. Silvester Horne, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxvi. 1904, p. 155. XL. 29.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xlix. No. 2812.

THE SECRET OF IMMORTAL YOUTH

'Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall. But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run and not be weary; and they shall walk and not faint.'—Isaiah xl. 30, 31.

I. Look at the first fact here, that of the dreary certainty of weariness and decay.

1. Of course the words of my text point to the plain fact that all created and physical life, by the very law of its being, in the act of living tends to death; and by the very operation of its strength tends to exhaustion. There are three stages in every creature's life—that of growth, that of equilibrium, that of decay.

2. And the text points also to another fact, that, long before your natural life shall have begun to tend towards decay, hard work and occasional sorrows and responsibilities and burdens of all sorts will very often make you wearied and ready to faint.

3. My text points to another fact, as certain as gravitation, that the faintness and weariness and decay of the bodily strength will be accompanied with a parallel change in your feelings. We are drawn onward by hopes, and when we get them fulfilled we find that they are disappointing.

II. Now turn to the blessed opposite possibility of inexhaustible and immortal strength. 'They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles: they shall run, and not be weary; they shall walk, and not faint.'

The life of nature tends inevitably downward, but there may be another life within the life of nature which shall have the opposite motion, and tend as certainly upwards.

The condition of the inflow of this unwearied and immortal life into our poor, fainting, dying humanity

is simply the trust in Jesus Christ, the Redeemer of our souls.

Here is the promise. God will give Himself to you, and in the very heart of your decaying nature will plant the seed of an immortal being which shall, like His own, shake off fatigue from the limbs, and never tend to dissolution or an end. The life of nature dies by living; the life of grace, which may belong to us all, lives by living, and lives evermore thereby.

III. The manner in which this immortal strength is exercised. 'They shall lift up their wings as the eagle,' implying, of course, the steady, upward flight towards the light of heaven.

1. There is strength to soar. Strength to soar means the gracious power of bringing all heaven into our grasp, and setting our affections on things above.

2. Again, you may have strength to run—that is to say, there is power waiting for you for all the great crises of your lives which call for special, though it may be brief, exertion.

3. Strength to walk may be yours—that is to say, patient power for persistent pursuit of weary, monotonous duty. Only one thing will conquer the disgust at the wearisome round of mill-horse tasks which, sooner or later, seizes all godless men, and that is to bring the great principles of the Gospel into them, and to do them in the might and for the sake of the dear Lord.—A. Maclaren, *The Unchanging Christ*, p. 12.

References.—XL. 30, 31.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—Isaiah*, p. 276. J. H. Blunt, *Plain Preaching for a Year*, vol. i. p. 288. H. Varley, *Spiritual Light and Life*, p. 81. J. Thomas, *Myrtle Street Pulpit*, vol. iii. p. 84.

WALKING WITHOUT FAINTING

'They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles: they shall run, and not be weary; they shall walk, and not faint.'—Isaiah xl. 31.

God as the Source and Giver of strength is the Prophet's theme in the text. 'They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength.' Man by himself is weak and helpless and impotent, but succoured by God he is equal to any task. 'With five shillings,' said Teresa the mystic, when her friends laughed at her proposal to build an orphanage—'with five shillings Teresa can do nothing; but with five shillings and God there is nothing Teresa cannot do.' And in that bold and daring claim the saint had Scripture for her warrant. 'Ye shall remove mountains,' said our Lord, 'and nothing shall be impossible to you.' And the Apostle Paul, as if writing a confirmatory comment on that promise of the Master, says, 'I can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth me'.

To the supreme feat of enabling men to walk without fainting the grace of God is equal. 'They that wait upon the Lord . . . shall walk, and not faint.' Life's disillusionments and disappointments cannot make them swerve from their purpose. When life has lost its zest, its glamour, its radiance, and has become dull and hard and grey, they still remain steadfast and unmovable—faithful unto death. God's grace is sufficient even in face of the stern, bitter facts of experience. Some of the ardour and enthusiasm and eagerness may disappear, perhaps, but still it enables men to walk, and not faint.

I. Let me give two or three illustrations of this truth. I will take first the history of the Christian Church. If you will look up the book of the Acts of the Apostles when you go home, and read what is there said, I think you will find that there was about the primitive Church a spontaneity and enthusiasm, a buoyancy that are wanting in the Church to-day.

But the belief and the hope were both doomed to disappointment. Men did not receive the Gospel as they expected they would. Instead of having their message welcomed, Christians found themselves brought to the stake and the block and the arena. Instead of coming back within the lifetime of the early Christians, nineteen centuries have passed, and still the Lord delays His coming. The dreams and hopes of the early Christian Church have been disappointed.

With the loss of the early belief in the speedy and easy triumph of the Gospel the Church has lost her light-heartedness and gaiety. She no longer soars and runs.

And yet she 'walks without fainting' and without any wavering, but with dogged resolution has set herself to the task of bringing the whole world into subjection to the rule of Jesus. And beautiful though the soaring enthusiasm of the early Church was, I will venture to say that the fact that the Church of to-day—awake to the difficulties and dangers of her high enterprise—still walks without fainting towards her goal is a still more wondrous illustration of the sustaining and strengthening power of the grace of God.

II. What is illustrated in the history of the Christian Church on the large scale is illustrated within smaller compass in the experience of *every Christian minister and Christian worker.*

III. The truth is still further illustrated by the contrast between *youth* and *age*—Christian youth, I mean, and Christian age.

There is one thing more beautiful than an enthusiastic young Christian, and that is a faithful *old* Christian. It is a glad sight to see the young pilgrim entering with enthusiasm upon his course, stripping with eager hopefulness for the race. But it is a still more beautiful sight to see an old man, who has borne the burden and heat of the day, still pressing toward the mark, marching boldly and bravely, even though his step be slow—'walking without fainting'. Paul the aged is a finer and more beautiful sight than young Timothy.—J. D. Jones, *Elims of Life*, p. 140.

'They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength.'
Isaiah xl. 31.

This was a favourite text with Père Gratry, but he preferred the Latin rendering: *mutabunt fortitu-*

dinem—they shall *change* their strength or courage. He liked to think that the courage of the soldier on the battle-field is changed into a higher form by those who accept the vocation to the ministry and become the prophets of peace to men.

References.—XL. 31.—A. Murray, *Waiting on God*, p. 101; see also *Eagle Wings*, p. 58. T. Vincent Tymms, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xlix. 1896, p. 276. R. J. Campbell, *ibid.* vol. lvii. 1900, p. 129. E. A. Draper, *The Gift of Strength*, p. 12. J. Laidlaw, *Studies in the Parables*, p. 257. J. Pulsford, *Our Deathless Hope*, p. 126. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xv. No. 876; vol. xxix. No. 1756. XLI. 1.—J. Leckie, *Sermons Preached at Ibrox*, p. 81. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxi. No. 1215. XLI. 6.—W. H. Stephenson, *A Book of Lay Sermons*, p. 191. XLI. 7.—C. Leach, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xlii. 1892, p. 290. XLI. 8.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxx. No. 1962. XLI. 8-20.—*Ibid.* vol. xliv. No. 2583.

THE ANTIDOTE TO FEAR

'Fear thou not; for I am with thee,' etc.—Isaiah xli. 10.

Fear is common to man; increased by, if it does not originate in, a consciousness of sin. The text indicates three reasons why the Christian should not be afraid.

I. God's Presence.—'I am with thee.' Powerful, wise, and loving.

II. God's Relationship.—'I am *thy* God.'

These words imply on our part reverence, obedience, and submission; on His part guardianship and blessing. We naturally take special care of that which is our own.

III. God's Promise.

1. 'I will strengthen thee'—fortify thy heart against trial and suffering.

2. 'I will help thee'—render thee personal assistance; direct, protect, fight with and for thee.

3. 'I will uphold thee.'

'The right hand of My righteousness'—My faithful right hand; i.e. a hand that could be relied upon.

The right hand is generally used for work.

The right hand is offered in friendship.

The right hand is placed on those whom we wish to honour.—F. J. Austin, *Seeds and Saplings*, p. 53.

References.—XLI. 10.—A. Maclaren, *Outlines of Sermons on the Old Testament*, p. 201. "Plain Sermons" by contributors to the *Tracts for the Times*, vol. vii. p. 1. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xiii. No. 760; vol. xvi. No. 930. XLI. 13.—E. L. Hull, *Sermons Preached at King's Lynn* (3rd Series), p. 157. XLI. 14.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. iii. Nos. 156, 157. XLI. 17.—*Ibid.* vol. xlvi. No. 2696. XLI. 18.—*Ibid.* vol. xxxviii. No. 2270. XLI. 22.—W. M. Punshon, *Outlines of Sermons on the Old Testament*, p. 205. XLII. 1.—J. Vaughan, *Fifty Sermons* (9th Series), p. 27. XLII. 1-3.—G. Matheson, *Voices of the Spirit*, p. 66. XLII. 1-4.—A. B. Davidson, *Waiting Upon God*, p. 27. W. M. Punshon, *Outlines of Sermons on the Old Testament*, p. 206. XLII. 1-5.—A. G. Mortimer, *The Church's Lessons for the Christian Year*, part ii. p. 97.

THE SMOKING FLAX

'A bruised reed shall He not break, and the smoking flax shall He not quench.'—Isaiah xlii. 3.

Let us try to gather up the thoughts contained in these two images. They are slightly different, but one thought underlies them both. The one refers chiefly to God, the other to man.

I. The idea of the first is taken from one of the shepherd's pipes—one of those little musical pipes—crushed and trampled under foot.

The other picture is taken from the lamp in the temple, burning feebly and dimly, giving forth black smoke rather than light.

1. *The 'bruised reed'.* A soul just beginning the conscious Christian life, sore beset with difficulties, unable as yet to send out the harmony of praise and thanksgiving, unable to send up one real prayer.

2. *The 'smoking flax'.* Here we see the poor timid soul just beginning to wish to be of use, to let its light shine before men; sorry for a wasted life, longing to be of use, longing to be able to tell of the love of Christ, but timid; not able to speak so that others, seeing its good works and hearing its good words, may glorify the Father in heaven. It is a picture of the timid, unsatisfactory Christian—unsatisfactory to God, unsatisfactory to man. But Christ has a personal, individual care for every such soul.

II. The thought which the Holy Ghost wants to fix upon our minds is this: the tender love of our Lord; the way in which He keeps back His power; leading us on so tenderly; allowing the tares to stay among the wheat, lest one ear of wheat should be plucked up with them; His forbearance with those who are in many respects so unsatisfactory.

If I were to give you illustrations of this love the work would be endless. (1) His dealings with the Apostles, and His patience with their slowness to understand, their unbelief and hardness of heart. (2) The woman of Samaria. (3) Again, that woman in Simon's house. (4) But more striking still is the story of Zacchæus! These are instances of 'bruised reeds' which have been tossed aside by man, those of whom man had said, 'you will never make anything good out of them'. Yet the Lord Jesus Christ brought out the harmony of God from those 'bruised reeds,' and kindled the 'smoking flax' to the full light of the eternal kingdom.—Bishop Howard Wilkinson, *The Invisible Glory*, p. 46.

References.—XLII. 3.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxxi. No. 1831. A. W. Thorold, *The Tenderness of Christ*, p. 157. R. Allen, *The Words of Christ*, p. 136. R. A. Suckling, *Sermons Plain and Parochial*, p. 196. A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—Isaiah*, p. 286. T. G. Selby, *The Imperfect Angel*, p. 9. XLII. 4.—W. Garrett Horder, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xliii. 1893, p. 90. H. Macmillan, *ibid.* vol. lv. 1899, p. 276. C. Joseph, *ibid.* vol. lxvi. 1904, p. 327. W. L. Watkinson, *ibid.* vol. lxviii. 1905, p. 232. Bishop Matthew Simpson's *Sermons*, p. 371. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxxiii. No. 1945. XLII. 7.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xvii. No. 986. XLII. 9.—*Ibid.* vol. xxv. No. 1508.

'Let them . . . declare His praise in the islands.'—Isaiah xlii. 12.

The text chosen by Dr. Eugene Stock for the chapter of his History in which he describes the work of the C.M.S. in New Zealand, Ceylon, West Indies, and Malta.

REFERENCES.—XLII. 16.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xiv. No. 847; vol. xxii. No. 1310. J. Martineau, *Hours of Thought on Sacred Things*, vol. i. p. 177. A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—Isaiah*, p. 295.

SEVEN LOOKS

'Look, ye blind, that ye may see.'—ISAIAH XLII. 18.

I. Look Back.—Remember God's goodness. Your sins.

II. Look Up.—In praise. 'Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me bless His Holy Name.' In prayer. 'In the morning will I direct my prayer unto Thee, and will look up.'

III. Look Down.—In humility. In caution. 'Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall.'

IV. Look Forward.—In confidence. In hope.

V. Look Within.—Daily. Thoroughly.

VI. Look Around.—Be vigilant.

VII. Look unto Jesus.—As your Saviour (John III. 14). As your example (Heb. XII. 2).—J. W. MILLS, *After-Glow*, p. 175.

THE LORD'S SERVANT DEAF AND BLIND

'Who is blind, but My servant? or deaf, as My messenger that I sent? Who is blind as he that is perfect, and blind as the Lord's servant?'—ISAIAH XLII. 19.

FOR our present purpose it is unnecessary to consider the modern critical interpretation of the servant of the Lord in Isaiah. We apply the title to Christ, and read the text as a sidelight on His life. That Christ was in the highest sense the servant of God and man is His own teaching. The Son of man, He said Himself, came not to be served, but to be a servant, and to give His life as a ransom for many. It was the fulfilment of the will of God, the perfect rendering of the service claimed, that was the supreme object of His earthly life. He girded Himself through these mortal years, and without ceasing served God and man. Insomuch that the old saying carries a deep truth, that our Lord looked to hear for Himself from His Father's lips the word He spake in parable, 'Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy Lord'. But how should it be said of the servant and messenger of the Lord that He was blind as none other? How should it be said of Him Whose eyes are as a flame of fire, Whose look struck like a sword? Is it not told that when the Apostle saw Him he fell as dead before the intolerable lustre of His eyes? Did not His gaze pierce to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, to the last recesses of the thoughts and intents of the heart? Are not all things naked and open unto the eyes of Him with Whom we have to do? Yes; but, as the older writers and expositors have pointed out, He was in a sense blind. They dwelt on the fact that His was the blindness that has no sense of difficulties. It is told of an officer attacking an almost impregnable fort that he was in great peril, and was recalled by his chief. To disobey the recall was death, if only he saw it. He was blind in one eye, and when told of the recall he turned the blind eye on the signal, and asked that the battle should continue. This is the blindness of Christ and His faithful. 'Who art thou, O great mountain?' Christ indeed lifted His eyes to the hills, but not to these lower hills that block the way and close us in. He lifted His eyes to the everlasting mountains, towering far above them, on whose summit the final feast of triumph is to be spread. Beyond the obstacles and thwartings that marked His earthly course He had a vision of the patience of God. He was blind, I say, to difficulty, even as His Apostle was. None of these things moved Him. A king about to engage an army five times as large as his own, prayed to God that He would take away from him the sense of numbers. The sense of numbers, in the earthly manner, Christ never possessed. On that side He was blind.

I. But I speak specially of His blindness to much in life that we consider it legitimate to see. He was blind to the allurement of our ordinary ambitions. (1) The desire for money never seemed to touch Him. (2) He was blind also, so far as we can tell, to that region which is the scene of the chief triumphs and apostasies of the heart—the rich and volcanic and often wasted region of passion. I think that Dora Greenwell's remark is true, that the passion of love which forms the staple of imaginative literature is absolutely unknown to the New Testament. (3) Once more, the sphere of art and culture He seems to have left alone. He, the Poet of the universe, was not interested in poetry. He glanced at the Divine glory of the lily, and said that it surpassed even the glory of Solomon. But of the treasures and marvels of human art and imagination He had nothing to say, and apparently nothing to think. On these sides who, we ask, was blind as He that is perfect, and blind as the Lord's servant?

In the same way He was deaf not only to counsels of evil, but to much that seemed legitimate. Here, also, it appears as if many pleasant voices that spoke to Him might have been heeded without sin, and to His happiness. There are voices we think ourselves right in heeding which He might have heeded too. His life might have been richer, easier, more solaced, but He made sharp choices and stern renunciations and swift decisions, and so the fullness of life was not for Him, and its allurement and appeal were vain.

II. Let us not be afraid of anything, whatever it be, that ministers to the energy of our life in Christ. But I suspect that most of us have to restrict ourselves for the kingdom of heaven's sake. Most of us, if we are to enter into life, must enter more or less maimed. Most of us have to be deaf and blind to solicitations which stronger people might obey innocently enough. No one in recent years has preached more powerfully the hallowing of the common life than the late Dr. Dale of Birmingham. He was eager and strenuous for many years as a preacher, as a student, as a social reformer, and as a politician. Yet in the end of his life he came to the conclusion, wrongly perhaps, that he would have done more and been more if he had

kept himself more closely to the work of a Christian minister. Yes, we have to be deaf and blind; but we need not grudge it, for the time is coming when, in the other life, all our energies will find free scope. A character in a recent novel was accustomed to say about some blessing that it must come soon. Her mouth was made up for it. Her friend replied that this world is just for us to make up our mouths in, and the next is for filling them. We can forgo what has to be forgone, if we look up to the heaven that darkles and shines above us, and remember that all things will there come back and be present again except repented and forgiven sin.

III. In the end we are to be blind to all things in comparison with the beauty of Christ, deaf to all voices but His own. It is for this we seek the House of God—to hear the call which the world through the week is trying to drown, in the hush of the Sabbath day.

Remember He was never deaf and never blind when a soul sought Him. Behold, the Lord's ear is not heavy that it cannot hear, neither is His arm shortened that it cannot save. Remember Him on the Cross in a strait where two seas met. Deep called to deep, the sea of misery to the sea of mercy. The Lord's ear was very heavy, but not heavy that it could not hear the thief. His arm was shortened, nailed to the wood, but not shortened that it could not save. That day the Lord and the thief were together in the new country. If thou seek Him He will be found of thee. Before we speak He calls that we may turn round to Him and say, 'When Thou saidst, Seek ye My Face, my heart said unto Thee, Thy Face, Lord, will I seek.'—W. Robertson Nicoll, *The Lamp of Sacrifice*, p. 1.

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THE IMMANENCE OF GOD

'Is there a God beside Me?'—Isaiah xliv. 8.

In the Christian view of God there are two attributes which it is not easy for the human reason to combine. One of them we call the transcendence of God; to the other we give the name of immanence.

I. What do we mean by the Divine transcendence? We mean that apart from and above the universe there lives and reigns a personal Creator.

And what do we mean by the immanence of God? We mean the presence of the Almighty in creation. A God transcendent, like some mighty sculptor, models with His deft hand the human form; but a God who is immanent looks through human eyes, and thinks in the thinking of the human brain.

At different times in the history of man these differing attributes have received special prominence. To-day it is the immanence of God that is claiming the chief thought of Western Christendom. The chief causes of this change are two. The one is the devotion of our age to science, and the other is the modern delight in nature.

II. The immanence of God is a great truth to be grasped firmly by the believing soul; but to say that the immanence of God is everything is to be a traitor to to-morrow.

1. When we deny transcendence, we cease to have a God who is a person. The God of the pantheist may be a flowing stream; He certainly is not a living spirit.

2. The popular pantheism of to-day is also fatal to human personality. Slip the anchor of the living God, and you slip the anchor of accountability.

3. The popular pantheism of to-day is certain to put our moral life in jeopardy, for it destroys, and must inevitably destroy, the sharp distinction between good and evil. The moral power of the cross of Christ has operated in a twofold way. It has not only made goodness very beautiful. It has also made sin exceeding sinful.

4. It is a bad thing to vilify humanity; I believe it is even worse to deify it. If the life of God be the life of the human race, and the activity of God be man's activity, where is your standard to tell that *this* is right, and to say with authority that *that* is wrong?

But some one may perhaps say what about con-

science—is there not always left the voice of conscience? To which we would answer, as Knox did to Mary, 'Conscience, madam, requires to be educated'. We may picture conscience as a simple thing, but conscience is very far from being simple. It is no more simple than the ear is simple—that outward organ for the voice of God. It has been educated through the stress of years; and it still responds for a period of time to the calling of a faith that is disowned. But the day must come when conscience will grow weak, and fail to pronounce its verdict with authority, unless it is fed again with that same nourishment that has kept it strong and tender to this hour. There is nothing in an exclusive immanence that has any power to reinforce the conscience. And not only so, but, as has often been noted, the logical outcome is this, that might is right. If God and the life of His universe be one, then the mightier the life, the more of God. There is no room for the baffled and the weak—no place for the useless, the beaten, and the fallen—in a world whose God is but a stream of being which neither can pity nor can love.

III. From all such thoughts, whatever be their charm, let us come back to the Fatherhood of God. There is transcendence in the thought of fatherhood—the sweet and perfect sovereignty of love. And in fatherhood no less is immanence, for the father's life is in the child, and in ways not less real because they are undefinable, father and child are one.—G. H. Morrison, *The Wings of the Morning*, p. 183.

References.—XLIV. 17.—*Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lvii. 1900, p. 170. W. Boyd Carpenter, *ibid.* vol. lxvi. 1904, p. 113.

'He feedeth on ashes: a deceived heart hath turned him aside, that he cannot deliver his soul, nor say, Is there not a lie in my right hand.'—Isaiah xliv. 20.

Dr. Eugene Stock, in his history of the Church Missionary Society, mentions that this was the text chosen by the Rev. Daniel Corrie when he preached one of the early sermons for the Society in 1816. The text was suggested by his personal experiences of Indian religion. He spoke at a time when suttee, child murder, and other crimes were rife.

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CLOUDS REMOVED

'I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins: return unto Me; for I have redeemed thee.'—Isaiah xliv. 22.

The bestowing of spiritual blessings is a warrant for the expectation of all needful temporal blessings. This passage is the foundation on which God caused His ancient people to rest. He had blotted out their transgressions, and therefore they might look to Him, as the true object of worship, for consolation, and for deliverance.

I. Clouds the Result of Transgressions.—As the natural clouds are formed by the vapours drawn up from the sea, so, in a degree, those clouds which darken our skies are the effects of our transgressions. Our metaphorical clouds, which produce real misery, are the projected results of our disordered condition. Moral disorder is the consequence of sinful conditions. By our sins we make the clouds, which darken the skies, obscure the landscape, take the sunlight out of existence, and make our days wretched. Our miseries are often our own making. Ideal troubles are very numerous, and very real. Sin disorders the brain, and leads to dread forebodings.

II. Clouds the Ministers of God's Mercy.—The natural clouds are the ministers of God's mercy, the testimonies of His faithful care, of His loving thoughtfulness for the children of men. But how wonderful that the clouds of our sins should be the ministers of His mercy! The misery of sin may be followed by the great blessing of forgiveness. The clouds lead us to appreciate the glorious sunlight.

III. Clouds Dispersed.—There are laws in the natural world, and there must be laws in the moral world. Clouds move in obedience to nature's laws; and the clouds of our sins cannot be blotted out in an arbitrary method. God is a Father, but He is a King and moral Governor. Even He has only a right to blot out transgressions, because He has redeemed. This redemption may refer to temporal deliverance; but Isaiah breathes the very spirit of the Gospel. God blots out sin by devising the method of redemption, and by not sparing His Son. God is not vindictive. God did not force the Son to the work. And yet God did not *spare*. That last word tells the story of God's love for the Son, and tender pity for sinning men.

IV. After Cloud the Sunshine.—God's forgiving, redeeming love scatters the clouds. The sunlight rejoices our hearts. We are gladdened by the sweet light of trustfulness. The life of the Christian is the bright sunshine of an ever-increasing and ever-developing trustfulness. How pleasant thus to dwell! How glorious to feel its sweet and kindly rays playing about our natures, gently but surely nourishing us up to spiritual health and beauty. Hope cannot flourish under a cloud. When the Sun of Righteousness arises and scatters the clouds, then there will be in the soul answering fruitfulness. The very clouds of our sins should make us fruitful when we stand in the sunlight. What return shall we make for love so vast? The forgiven man should be the hopeful, trustful, and fruitful man. When sin is blotted out, then the soul is started on a career of never-ending fruitfulness.

V. Clouds as Pathetic Preachers.—'Return unto Me.' Every time we see the clouds sweeping across the heavens, let us listen to their still small voice; let us hear their persuasive, pathetic entreaty. The Almighty bases His appeal upon the blessed work He has accomplished. He beseeches by means of the departing clouds of our sins. Return! God woos us as if our happiness were necessary to His own happi-

ness. Let all return unto God, the true soul-rest; for all live too much in the cloud, while we might rejoice in the sunlight.

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THE TREASURES OF DARKNESS

'And I will give thee the treasures of darkness.'—Isaiah xlv. 3.

I. There are Treasures of Darkness.—Darkness is approached from two standpoints in God's Book. From one view-point it is something to be feared, dreaded, loathed. But darkness is shown to us from another angle of vision, and then it is desirable, inestimable in worth.

He who knows what is in darkness assures us that He will give us the treasures of darkness. But what is the literal meaning of these words? In the East of old, instead of depositing their wealth with the bankers as we do, they would dig deep pits or excavate and construct subterranean chambers in which they placed their treasures. So that as a matter of fact most of their possessions were 'treasures of darkness'.

God promises Cyrus that he shall tap the buried wealth of Babylon. But what does this promise mean for us? In an infinitely grander sense God promises to us in the ends of the ages 'the treasures of darkness'.

1. There are treasures of *literal* darkness. When darkness covers the earth millions on millions of worlds flash upon our view, all mansions of the Father's house. The stars in their 'mystic dance' are treasures of darkness.

Many of life's best gifts are 'treasures of darkness'. Is not sleep such a treasure?

The world of nature abounds in illustrations of this fact. Every lovely flower is a treasure of darkness: it springs up through the dark earth and blooms a parable of beauty. Every harvest is a treasure of darkness. The whole circle of Nature illustrates abundantly the idea of my text. Our debt to darkness is incalculable.

2. There is *mental* darkness. In a sphere of darkness we dwell, and but here and there are glints of light. Very depressing this darkness is, but God gives us treasures out of it. Facts, truths, philosophies, aspirations that are grander than realizations, dreams that are the true realities.

3. Are there treasures in *social* darkness? Sickness, bereavement, disappointment, business anxiety or reverses. Dark are these experiences. Yet God gives treasures out of them. Philip Melanchthon said, 'Were I without cares I should be without prayers'. It is true of us all. Prayer is a treasure of darkness. The Bible is a treasure of darkness. It is but as a great book to us till sorrow comes, and then it becomes, as it is in truth, the Word of God.

Marvellous treasures come out of social gloom. In literature, in art, but supremely in perfected character, we are always discovering the encircling power of sorrow.

4. Dare we ask if God gives treasures of *moral* darkness? This is the most gruesome darkness the world knows. Bushnell describes moral evil as 'the night side of creation'. And we owe much to it. We speak only of sin that has been repented of. We are humbler, more tender, more ardent after holiness, more instinct with evangelistic sympathy, because of the past sins over which we grieve.

5. The *mortal* darkness will inevitably fall upon us ere long. What men call death will shadow us. Strong consolation. The peace of resignation. Hope on the atoning sacrifice of the Saviour. Blessed anticipations and outlooks. These are treasures of that final darkness.

II. The Treasures of Darkness may be our possession. All life's darkness may yield us enrichment. Our ignorance, our depression, our sorrow, our very sin, our death itself. Out of all our anxieties, loss, annoyance, tribulation, may come a wealth which can never take to itself wings and fly away.—Dinsdale T. Young, *Unfamiliar Texts*, p. 233.

DIVINELY GIRDED

'I girded thee, though thou hast not known Me.'—Isaiah xlv. 5.

Many things are done without our intelligence. Our intelligence is oftentimes our only difficulty and only danger. It would often be happier for us if we had no heads. We are ruined by what we think we do know, and if any man thinketh he knoweth anything as it really is, he knows nothing. The Bible is full of explanations that are clear, simple, definite, and final. There is no book so final as the Bible. There are times when we want the final voice; that is to say, a voice which we feel is final; there cannot be anything beyond it that is contrary to it. That is the strength of every message, that is the sole power of every true ministry. A man who is uncertain of his message had better not deliver it.

I. Concerning the Bible answer I make three submissions. First, that it is adequate. The Bible says, The Lord reigns; you do not see everything just as it is in its real purpose and its full scope, you are walking in shadows, the colours are all blurred, but wait for the end, for the upsumming of life's mystery by the God of life, and God will justify Himself. There is but one Lord, there is only one enduring throne; you must not, therefore, judge anything before the time, the hour of judgment has not come, criticism must not yet be invoked, because the whole case is not before us; wait, wait patiently; O rest in the Lord. We have in this chapter and in the text great voices which bring with them their own adequacy: 'I have holden thee; I will go before thee; I will break in pieces the gates of brass, and cut in

sunder the bars of iron; I will give thee the treasures of darkness and hidden riches of secret places; I have even called thee by thy name; I have surnamed thee; I have girded thee, though thou hast not known Me.'

II. The explanation is reasonable. It puts a living Personality at the head of things, it dismisses blind fate and enthrones a living God: no matter if He be invented, there He is; the imagination that invented fate has but a poor wing compared with the imagination that invented God. It is reasonable to believe that things are governed by an Infinite Intelligence; it is reasonable to suppose that God, having made this universe, has not discarded it: He who created the universe pledged Himself by that very act to redeem it; creation and redemption are terms implying one another.

III. The explanation is not only adequate and reasonable, but it is ennobling. All this was worth going through because of the issue; we are being watched, inspired, guided. Once let that faith get hold of the soul, and that faith will mean Sabbath day, a holy peace, a celestial, unruffled tranquillity. We are being educated, moulded, we are being made meet for the master's service, we are having another faculty added to the sum-total of our present manhood; we are being refined, purified, chastened.—Joseph Parker, *City Temple Pulpit*, vol. vii. p. 39.

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Isaiah xlv. 15.

Compare the words with which Mr. G. T. Romanes closed his *Darwin, and after Darwin* in 1892: 'As I said, at the beginning, the religious thought of our generation has been more than ever staggered by the question—Where is now thy God? But I have endeavoured to show that the logical standing of the case has not been materially changed; and when this cry of reason pierces the heart of Faith it remains for Faith to answer now, as she always answered before—and answered with that trust which is at once her beauty and her life—Verily thou art a God that hidest Thyself.'

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RELIGIOUS USES OF MEMORY

'Remember the former things of old: I am God, and there is none like Me.'—Isaiah xlvi. 9.

Of all the powers that God has given us, none is more wonderful than memory. For what is memory? It is a twofold power. It is the power that gathers in the past, and crowds into some secret cabinet here the twice ten thousand things that we have learned. And then it is the power that out of that crowded storehouse brings the things forth again, calls them to mind.

I. There is no religion which lays such an emphasis on memory as Christianity. What do we call Christ's sayings? We call them memorable words. The words of Jesus are like the seal upon the wax. Once stamped with these, and memory will bear them to the end. Christ recognized the character of memory in making His words so memorable as that.

II. Now I wish to touch on three great offices of memory in the higher life:—

1. It is memory which helps us to consecrate the world. The hallowing of earth is memory's secret. There are villages sweeter than Stratford, and parks more ancient than the parks of Charlcote, but the memories of Shakespeare that cluster there have consecrated these spots for ever.

2. It is an aid to charity. It helps us to understand our friend. It has been said our friends are never ours till we have lost them. It is a strained expression of the certain truth, that of all lights there is none clearer than the light of memory. I cannot judge a man while he is here. Memory redresses things: helps me to see, and know, and understand: lets me do justice to the great, and to the men and women I knew and wronged.

Did you ever regard it as a signal mercy that it is in the light of memory we have to do with Christ? Perhaps you have thought it would be an easier thing to be a Christian if Jesus Christ were here. If I do not know my friend till he is gone, would I have seen the Saviour in a Nazarene? I can look back now. I can appreciate in the light of memory.

3. It helps us to understand ourselves. Only faith and prayer and memory will bring self-knowledge. Faith brings it, for it brings me near to Christ. Prayer brings it, for it shows me what I lack. And memory brings it too.

III. The kind of thing that you remember best is no bad token of the kind of heart you have.

As life advances memory grows richer. Can it be, then, that in the hour of death the memory of the past is blotted out? It is impossible. It is no power extraneous to myself. It is part of this immortal *me*. And when I wake, freed from this hampering body, enlarged and glorified in every faculty, my memory must share in the full tides of life.—G. H. Morrison, *Flood-Tide*, p. 1.

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I WILL MAKE ALL MY MOUNTAINS A WAY

(*Advent Sunday*)

'I will make all My mountains a way.'—ISAIAH XLIX. 11.

GOD says, 'I will make My mountains a way,' and the simplest consideration of the facts of life will demonstrate that the saying is true practically, true ideally, true on the plane of earth, true in the region of spirit, true in the domain of prophecy.

I. In the *natural* sphere the fact of the existence of mountains has ever initiated the stimulus required to surmount them. The physical and moral strength of the race is invigorated through the opposition of mountains, and man, as God's vicegerent, in his work of subduing the earth, has everywhere in all lands, amongst all peoples, made the mountains a highway to commerce, travel, discovery.

II. The *spiritual* analogy of the beautiful saying is even more true. There is a fascination—a challenge to the imagination—in mountain scenery through which He, Who is always appealing to the Divine secret in man, makes 'His mountains a way' to gaze into His face, to think into His heart, to hope into His promises.

III. Is there not in this inspired prophecy the Divine solution of a mystery, and the impregnable assurance of a victory? The sternest moral mountain in this perplexing world is the existence and permission of evil. All mountains, however precipitous and threatening, are God's; the Almighty responsible Father of poor puzzled, trembling humanity says, '*My* mountains,' and it is enough. As the challenge of the rugged mountain crest and mighty glacier provide the impulse to muscular exertion which otherwise would slumber, so the energetic struggle against the mountain of moral evil in the world shall make that mountain a 'way' to your own perfection, and the perfection of the race; 'to him that overcometh,' that maketh mountains a way, 'will I grant to sit on My throne'.

IV. God will 'make all His mountains a way,' but it is His predestined purpose to effect it by the active co-operation of brave-hearted, God-fearing, consecrated men and women in the world. The crowning delusion of modern Christianity is that salvation can be divorced from helpfulness. Do you ask, What shall I do that I may make 'His mountains a way'? Get your springs of action and emotion right, and conduct will be automatically transfigured; incorporate into the verities of your life the spirit of the Master's words: 'One is your Father, even God, and all ye are brethren,' and your actions will start from another base and correspond to a new environment. —B. WILBERFORCE, *The Gospel of the Kingdom*, p. 3.

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THE ONE HELPER

'The Lord God will help me.'—ISAIAH L. 7.

I FOUND these words when I needed them much in Isaiah, chapter fifty, verse seven: 'The Lord God will help me'. We might write this on a signet ring and stamp with it all the record of our life. There are times when we need just these simple daisy texts, spring-violet texts. They seem to have no cubic depth, and yet when we come to live them there seems to be room in their infinite space for the heavens and the earth.

'The Lord God will help me.' I like the sound of it; there is a voice that is all music, a voice which, though we have not heard it before, we recognize it at once, saying, This cometh from eternity, and is the music of God.

I. 'The Lord God will help me.' This is a proved fact. I have proved it, you have proved it; yet we could not explain it. 'I was brought low, and He set me upon a rock.' To hear that sweet testimony makes our hearts glad. Tell us something more, and let the house of Israel say, that His mercy endureth for ever, and let the redeemed of the Lord say so. There may be silent piety, there ought to be also a resounding testimony. I could not be an atheist without first committing suicide, because I have seen the Lord in the house and in the field, in the valley and on the hill-top.

II. The text is not only a proved fact, it is a continual inspiration. We can fall back upon experience; we can say, 'This or that happened to me'. If we can only say, 'This or that is reported to have happened to some other man,' we have no faith, we cannot have faith. We must be able to say that such and such deep joys, thrilling sacramental experiences, have been realized in our own life. This is how young David talked. 'I will fight the Philistine.' But thou art only a child, and no fighter. 'I will fight Goliath.' What justification is there for such a challenge? 'I was keeping my father's flock, and there came a lion and a bear, and they took a lamb, and I rose and caught them and smote them, and tore their jaws in twain, and I am not going to lose that fact: the Lord that delivered me out of the paw of the lion and out of the paw of the bear, He will enable me to deal with this uncircumcised Philistine.' This was good reasoning; this was deriving inspiration from the past. Exactly the same answer ought to be possible to every one of us.

III. The text is not only a proved fact and a continual inspiration, it is, finally, a sufficient rest. You are going to do such and such work: how are you going to accomplish it? And you say almost in musical cadence, 'The Lord God will help me'. You have already won the battle; the victory is not in the fighting, but in the spirit of the fighter. When does the Lord God help His people? Under three conditions. First, when the work is His own. 'Servant of the Lord' is speaking here—that mysterious personage that seems to pervade Isaiah and give personality to every word in the glowing prophecy. He comes to do the Lord's work, and he says, 'The Lord God will help me'. And, secondly, when we have given up self-reliance. That is almost a miracle. We think we can do something. When we come to know that we can do nothing we will do everything that God wants us to do. Even this depends upon the spirit of renunciation. The renunciation must not be made in a spirit of haughtiness or resentment, saying, 'I am formally required to give up myself and my efforts, and therefore I obey'. In that temper you will receive nothing; we must do the Lord's will in the Lord's own spirit; even Christ pleased not Himself. To be nothing is the way to be all we can be. And, thirdly, which, indeed, is a division of the second point, the Lord helps us when we have completed our faith by giving up our substitutes. We sometimes want to personate faith, to set forth something as if it were faith. The Lord will receive no proxies, He will burn all shams, He will have the naked soul in the perfectness of simple reliance upon Himself, and then He will say, 'Son, thy sins, which are many, are all forgiven thee'. And God cannot forsake a forgiven man.—Joseph Parker, *City Temple Pulpit*, vol. v. p. 156.

References.—L. 8.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—Isaiah XLIX.-LXVI.* p. 31. L. 10.—W. M. Taylor, *Outlines of Sermons on the Old Testament*, p. 210. A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—Isaiah XLIX.-LXVI.* p. 39. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxxiii. No. 1935; vol. xxxix. No. 2335. L. 10, 11.—C. Holland, *Gleanings from a Ministry of Fifty Years*, p. 162. L. 11.—G. W. Herbert, *Notes of Sermons*, p. 78. A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—Isaiah XLIX.-LXVI.* p. 47. LI. 1.—C. P. Reichel, *The Anglican Pulpit of To-Day*, p. 366; see also *Outlines of Sermons on the Old Testament*, p. 213. P. M'Adam Muir, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxiii. 1903, p. 91. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xviii. No. 1050.

THE PENTATEUCH—GENESIS

'Hearken to me, ye that follow after righteousness, ye that seek the Lord; look unto the rock whence ye are hewn, and to the hole of the pit whence ye are digged. Look unto Abraham your father, and unto Sarah that bare you: for I called him alone, and blessed him, and increased him.'
—Isaiah li. 1, 2.

To-day we begin to examine the early books of the Old Testament. The first five books stand together by themselves. Sometimes they are called the Pentateuch, which means only 'the book of five volumes'. First we must attend to the place which these five books hold in the history of the Jews. Speaking roughly, we may say that they tell us the beginning of the Jewish people. The early steps and stages by which they become a people.

I. We see at the beginning of all things God Himself, making all things. He is not the earth or the heavens, or anything that is therein: He is distinct from them all: He made them all: He was before them all. Last of all came man. Man was a part of the world, and was meant to remember that. The next step brings us into the state into which sin has entered. Here I wish you to notice especially two things. First the Bible does not begin with sin, it begins with innocence and goodness. Secondly observe that the first evil is distinctly religious evil. The temptation comes through the fruit; but the great force of the temptation lies in impatience of the restraint which God for good reason ordained; in trying to be independent of Him, in other words of being as Gods. Then the outward curses follow. The earth is no longer a garden but a place of thorns for those who have become estranged from its Maker and their own. Estrangement from God leads to estrangement between men even members of the same family. The husband becomes the accuser of the wife. The elder brother is jealous of the younger brother, and his jealousy has its natural fruit in murder. As mankind multiplies so does crime. The earth we are told was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence. Then the just anger of God went forth, and used the power of the world for the punishment of man. A flood of waters overwhelmed the sinful race, and only one small family was preserved. To these survivors, to Noah and his family, God renewed the blessing which He had given to Adam. Immediately, however, evil sprung up afresh. It showed itself in a shameful want of respect in one of Noah's sons towards his father. Presently we hear of men joining together to build a high tower whose top might reach to heaven. This was evidently done out of pride against God; but He scattered them abroad on the face of the earth,

and with the scattering came the beginning of different languages, so that henceforth the different branches of the same race became foreign to each other. Such are the chief points in the first part of Genesis.

II. At this point the new life begins, which was to go on growing till it reached its full height in the person of Christ. God called on an old man named Abram to leave his country and go into a land which He should show him, promising to make him a great nation, and in him to bless all the families of the earth. This was the seed of the Jewish people: here we have in a few words the plan of the whole Bible, God making Himself known to a chosen few, that through them the whole race may be partakers in the blessed gift.—F. J. A. Hort, *Sermons on the Books of the Bible*, p. 24.

References.—LI. 1, 2.—W. J. Knox-Little, *The Journey of Life*, p. 103; see also *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. liii. 1898, p. 134. LI. 2.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxvii. No. 1633. LI. 2, 3.—*Ibid.* vol. xxvii. No. 1596. LI. 3.—H. Jones, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lv. 1899, p. 215. LI. 4.—S. R. Driver, *Church Times*, vol. l. 1903, p. 173; see also *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxiv. 1903, p. 104. LI. 8.—A. Murray, *The Children for Christ*, p. 192.

THE NEEDS OF THE AGE

'Awake! awake! put on strength, O arm of the Lord; awake! as in the ancient days, in the generations of old.'—Isaiah li. 9.

Who can be the speaker of this interesting passage? Is it the Prophet himself? Is it the cry of the Church of God? Or is it the Great Intercessor Himself Who speaks? Is it the Servant of Jehovah Who came in the fullness of time to bear our sins and to work out for us an everlasting righteousness? I am disposed to take this third view, partly because it seems to explain most simply and faithfully the whole passage, and partly because whatever of reality there is in the intercession either of an individual servant of Christ on earth or in the Church of Christ herself here below, as a whole, the strength and value of such pleading are entirely dependent on the work of the great High Priest and Intercessory Himself. It is the call of the Divine Intercessor, the Lord Jesus Christ, the Servant of Jehovah, addressed to God Himself on behalf of the present needs of the Church. What more powerful appeal could be made than by Him? When He speaks, surely He must prevail. It might have appeared sufficient if He had simply urged his personal claim, but He grounds the appeal upon an historical fact; He refers to the past. A pledge for help in the present is taken up from the help given in the past.

What are some of our great needs?

1. There is needed a higher standard of Christian teaching. There is a superficial knowledge of Divine truth in many directions, but those who are to reach the intellect, and heart, and conscience of men must make it plain that they have a distinct message, that they are conscious that this message is of supreme importance.

2. We want the prophetic spirit in our ordained ministers; men who have a witness for God that they must deliver, and if they cannot deliver it they must die. 'O arm of the Lord, awake,' and send us such prophets as these!

3. The masses can be won by holier living on the part of the Church of Christ. Example tells everywhere. A holy life is a searching sermon, a holy life is a homily that cannot be rejected or neglected, and the holy life is not to be lived by the minister alone; it is to be lived by those to whom he ministers, and who are gathered round him as disciples round a teacher. Are you fully aware of the fact that unless you live a holy life for God the kingdom of Christ cannot extend? You may be a stumbling-block in the way of your fellow-men if you make a profession of Christ and do not come up to that profession. A holy Church, men and women that are living according to the mind of Christ, with His example always before them, are an army irresistible. No force of evil can stand against such a power as that.

4. We want more fervent intercession for our great cities. We want a cry to God to go up day by day from the hearts of those who love the Lord, that these places may be given to Him for His inheritance.

5. We want more generous and ready self-sacrifice. We live in an age of great pleasure-seeking, an age of materialism, an age in which the race seems to be one day for the amassing of wealth and another day for the expending of the wealth so amassed upon the pleasures of this life. Will not the spirit of self-denial ever be granted to us again? Will not men put aside this seeking after self-indulgence in order that by sacrifice of this kind they may have time, and energy, and wealth to give unto the Lord?

6. If England is to be won for Christ, those who are in authority as Christ's ministers must pay much more earnest heed to the question of visiting from house to house those who are ignorant about Divine things. The sympathizing touch, the sympathizing look of a servant of Christ in some miserable so-called 'home' is of infinite value. O, if all who have this sympathy in their heart were to go out, give of their best, and touch with the hand of love those who seem cut off from all the joy of this life or the life to come, and who say, 'No man has cared for my soul'.

References.—LI. 9; LII. 1.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—Isaiah XLIX.-LXVI.* p. 51. LI. 9, 10.—G. H. Wilkinson, *Outlines of Sermons on the Old Testament*, p. 214.

THE FEAR OF MAN AND THE FEAR OF GOD

'I, even I, am He that comforteth you; who art thou, that thou shouldest be afraid of a man that shall die, and of the Son of man which shall be made as grass; and forgettest the Lord thy Maker, that hath stretched forth the heavens, and laid the foundations of the earth; and hast feared continually every day because of the fury of the oppressor.'—Isaiah li. 12, 13.

Man is here represented as standing between two powers—God and his fellow-man—each claiming to influence his life; and God calls upon him to consider whether, being what he is, his conduct should be influenced by the fear of man, or by the fear of God.

I. Man is first to consider what he is—to look into

himself. And what does he find? Two things—weakness, and therefore dependence. Man is as grass, which groweth up in a day and withereth; and man is dependent for the preservation of his life, and for the supply of his needs, to some extent, upon his fellow-man, but far more upon God. That which a man knows of himself—that he is weak and unable to stand alone—this he knows also of his fellow-man. Why, then, should he live in continual fear of the world, which is made up of men like himself, weak and dependent, whilst he forgets God, Who is All-Powerful and absolutely independent?

How wonderfully this passage brings before us the folly of moral cowardice! It is an anticipation of the teaching of our Blessed Lord, Who said, 'Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear Him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell'. Not only is our own life in God's hands, but the life of those who oppose us. Not only can He give us strength to meet the difficulties put in our path by others, but He can remove those difficulties.

There is another way in which this fear of man affects our life. It robs our Spiritual life of all definiteness and power. The man whose words are inspired, whose actions are directed by mere human respect, the fear of what men will say or think, is never likely to dare anything noble for love of God.

II. Consider what forgetfulness of God carries in its train:—

1. It results in loss of faith.
2. Loss of hope, for hope depends largely on memory.
3. Loss of love.

III. What does God promise if, instead of fearing man, we fear Him? We find it in the first words: 'I, even I, am He that comforteth you'. Life is full of sorrows; the world is not a congenial environment for those who love and fear God; but God says to such, 'I, even I, am He that comforteth you'. The reiteration of the pronoun emphasizes the greatness of the Comforter.—A. G. Mortimer, *The Church's Lessons for the Christian Year*, part i. p. 126.

References.—LI. 12, 13.—J. Martineau, *Hours of Thought*, vol. ii. p. 150. LI. 15, 16.—H. Scott Holland, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xlix. 1896, p. 49. LI. 16.—J. Hamilton, *Faith in God*, p. 112. LII.—Rutherford Waddell, *Behold the Lamb of God*, p. 81. LII. 1.—S. Martin, *Rain Upon the Mown Grass*, pp. 72, 83. J. Martineau, *Hours of Thought*, vol. ii. p. 334. LII. 2, 3.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons Preached in Sackville College Chapel*, vol. iv. p. 196. LII. 3.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—Isaiah XLIX.-LXVI.* p. 71.

Isaiah lii. 7.

Ruskin remarks on this verse: 'How strange it seems that physical science should ever have been thought adverse to religion! The pride of physical science is indeed adverse, like every other pride, both to religion and truth; but sincerity of science, so far from being hostile, is the pathmaker among the mountains for the feet of them that publish peace.'

References.—LII. 7.—W. J. McKittrick, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxvii. 1905, p. 29. LII. 10.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. iv. No. 185. R. E. Hutton, *The Crown of Christ*, vol. ii. p. 543. R. F. Horton, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxxiii. 1908, p. 296. LII. 11.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—Isaiah XLIX.-LXVI.* p. 75. LII. 11, 12.—*Ibid.* p. 78. LII. 12.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. v. No. 230; vol. xxx. No. 1793. S. A. Tipple, *Sunday Mornings at Norwood*, p. 233; see also *Outlines of Sermons on the Old Testament*, p. 215. W. L. Watkinson, *The Blind Spot*, p. 227.

THE PRUDENCE OF CHRIST

'Behold, My servant shall deal prudently.'—Isaiah lii. 13.

The word rendered prudent is a two-sided word, and, strangely enough, both the Authorized and Revised Versions only bring out one side of the significant word. Bishop Chadwick translates it 'shall deal prudently, so that prosperity shall be the result'. Very often prudence fails, but the prudence of Christ is to succeed.

I. Christ dealt prudently in not prematurely surrendering His life. Till He knew His work was done He would not allow His life to be squandered. He came to earth to die, but He refused to die prematurely.

II. Christ's prudence appears in His insight into character.

'He needed not that any should testify of man, for He knew what was in man.' Still does He deal prudently. For this prophecy is an eternal prophecy. He knows us and acts towards us with unerring wisdom.

III. The adroitness of His replies is a great evidence of His prudence. When He was but twelve years old the people in the temple were 'amazed at His answers'. And ever afterwards His answers amazed all men. He still deals prudently herein. We can take our present problems to the Divine man ascended. He may delay to answer. But the very delay is education.

IV. Christ's prudence is seen in His concessions to the limitations of His hearers.

Many a public teacher is destroyed through lack of prudence. Christ was established by His prudence. 'He that is able to receive it, let him receive it,' is His wise word. Christ will never put a cross upon the intellect that the intellect is unable to bear. Still, Christ only asks men to receive for the time being truths they are able to receive.

How prudently He dealt in graduating truth. He spake 'as they were able to hear it'. He graduated truth not only in respect of its quality but its season. 'I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now.'

V. By His encouragement of good Christ dealt prudently. He told the scribe he was 'not far from the kingdom of God'. He commended the religionists of the day in this: 'Ye search the Scriptures'. He shed the light of hope on a penitent woman by saying, 'Neither do I condemn thee'. This was His encomium upon a pardoned one, 'She loved much'. Said He to His sorrowing disciples, 'Already ye are clean'. Is it not always highest prudence to encourage all good, however incipient in all souls?

VI. Christ's prudence was the larger prudence. His was not the prudence of many so-called prudent people, which is but the instinct of self-preservation acutely developed. Christ's was the noble, the sacrificial prudence. Estimate prudence by the Eternal. Take long views of prudence.

VII. Christ dealt prudently in His procural of salvation.

The Son of God took pity on our flesh and blood. Through death He won us everlasting life. Most wonderful prevision marks that method of redemption. There is equal prudence in the condition of salvation. Salvation by faith, by trustfulness, by reliance! By such a method God reaches *the many*.—Dinsdale T. Young, *The Crimson Book*, p. 157.

Reference.—LII. 13-15.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxi. No. 1231.

THE MARVELLOUS MARRING

'As many were astonished at Thee; His visage was so marred more than any man, and His form than the sons of men.'—Isaiah lii. 14.

'Many were astonished at Thee: His visage was so marred!' Not His power, then, but His weakness; not the blazing glories of the full-orbed Sun of Righteousness, but its mysterious and dark eclipse is herein held up to us as matter of astonishment!

I. It is suffering that mars the visage. Suffering mars the countenance sometimes almost beyond the possibility of recognition. And if the visage of the Son of God was marred more than any man, it was because He suffered more than any man.

In those sufferings there were indeed natural elements, such as are found more or less in the experience of all men. He was, like all, from time to time hungry and weary. He, like others, had no home. Then also He suffered much from *loneliness* of spirit.

II. But there were other exceptional and peculiar causes of the marring of the Saviour's visage. (1) That all the sorrow and the agony from the beginning to the end were steadily foreseen by Him. (2) To the depth of His sorrow and the intensity of His sufferings, in a certain way His very *sinlessness* must have contributed. And this the more because, unlike ourselves, again He saw men just as they were. 'He knew what was in man.' He saw through all disguise, and saw it constantly; saw the whole of that awful moral corruption around Him, and, because of His infinite purity, felt it as none of us could feel it even if we saw it. (3) It is with us that we know the power of God's grace. But herein was the last supreme woe that came upon the Saviour, that in His ultimate hour of anguish, when that conscious presence and felt love of the Eternal Father was most needed, then, of all times, in a manner unfathomably mysterious and incomprehensible, that presence and manifested love of the Father was withdrawn from the Man Christ Jesus. (4) But there is a still deeper mystery about the marring of the visage of the Son of God, that He who so suffered knew no sin. The wonder yet increases when we remember what this Sinless Man claimed for Himself to be. 'I and the Father are One.' Not only, then, is it perfect sinlessness, but the supremest dignity for which utter and peculiar anguish is reserved. (5) His ineffable sorrow is again yet the more marvellous, that it did not come upon Him as under any inevitable necessity, a resistless compulsion that He could by no means escape. 'I lay down my life,' He said.

III. There is one thing yet more a matter of astonishment than the marring of the visage of Jesus Christ, and that is, the *reason* of that marring. The same Prophet who tells us of the marvellous marring, tells us in never-to-be-forgotten words the reason of the marring also. 'Surely He hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; He was wounded for our transgressions; He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon Him.' He suffered for others. All this peculiar and ineffable suffering was not for Himself but for others. Here is the final supreme reason why we may well be astonished at the strange marring of the Saviour's face, that it was marred *for men!* He suffered not for righteous men, for such there were none; He suffered for sinners.—S. H. Kellogg, *The Past a Prophecy of the Future*, p. 183.

References.—LII. 14.—C. G. Clark-Hunt, *The Refuge of the Sacred Wounds*, p. 9. T. B. Dover, *Some Quiet Lenten Thoughts*, p. 142. LIII.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxxix. No. 2290; vol. xliii. No. 2499; vol. xliii. No. 2534; vol. xlix. No. 2840; vol. xlix. No. 2827. Rutherford Waddell, *Behold the Lamb of God*, p. 81. A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—Isaiah XLIX.-LXVI.* p. 88. LIII. 2.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xviii. No. 1076. C. H. Wright, *The Unrecognized Christ*, p. 102. "Plain Sermons" by contributors to the *Tracts for the Times*, vol. v. p. 9. W. L. Watkinson, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxiii. 1903, p. 225. F. E. Paget, *Faculties and Difficulties for Belief and Unbelief*, p. 86. LIII. 2, 3.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—Isaiah XLIX.-LXVI.* p. 92.

THE OFFENCE OF THE CROSS

'He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrow, and acquainted with grief.'—Isaiah liii. 3.
'The offence of the cross.'—Galatians v. 11.

Around the Cross a certain romantic interest has gathered, but what the Cross really stands for is an offence, a stumbling-block and a scandal to men. The Prophet Isaiah, with his piercing vision, saw the truth. In his prophecy of Christ he tells us that men shall see no beauty in Him that they should desire Him. The offence of the Cross has not yet ceased. Why?

I. The Cross of Christ is *the condemnation of the world*. It was the condemnation of the world of Christ's own time. As that Cross has come down through all the centuries it has passed its unfaltering judgment upon the vanities and prides, and hates and greeds, the self-indulgent pleasures and the lusts of men. To-day the Cross visits our worldliness with the same condemnation.

II. The Cross of Christ is an offence because it *sets forth an imperative ideal of life*. Christ's

ideal of life was concentrated into the one act of His dying. Christ hung upon His cross from His cradle to His grave. That life of self-denial and self-crucifiction, in which He pleased not Himself whenever He endangered His pleasing of God, is the imperative ideal of life He lays upon men.

Are we not all conscious of our deeply seated offence at this imperative of the Cross? Are we not all pagans at heart? We all chafe at the restraint of a life like Christ's. We refuse to give up what we know His Cross condemns.

III. The Cross of Christ is an offence because it claims to be the power of God unto salvation. It makes this claim without an alternative. It throws up our sinful state in clear relief, and demands from every man, as his first duty, to get right with God. From its sacrifice there comes the stern word that nothing else in life is to be put before this getting right with God, and that this reconciliation is to be attained only through the Cross.

What is it which sin has done and always will do?

1. The first effect of sin is *an altered universe.* The reaction against your sin is not only in your conscience and in your body. It is in the world which environs you. You know that in the moment of your sin you spoiled all. There is that sobering and chilling experience of 'the moment after'. The story in the third chapter of Genesis sets that law of sin in a clear light. Adam and Eve found themselves in an altered world. But Christ's Cross has redeemed the world. It will become God's perfect poem again.

2. The second effect of sin is *death.* Whenever we sin something dies within us. The connexion of sin and death is constant, immediate, inescapable. But what is death? The Bible says, and, says always, from Genesis to Revelation, that had there been no sin there would have been no death. It has made death a tragedy, awful, terrifying, unbearable. But the Cross has annulled this penalty of death. 'He died for us.'

3. A third effect of sin is *an estranged God.* I have set this down as third in order although it is really first in fact. Yet the sense of the estrangement of the real and living God is the last of which we are conscious. It is not until we know and bewail the estrangement of God that we see and lament the effect of sin.

IV. When does the offence of the Cross cease? It ceases only when the soul is visited not merely by remorse but by repentance toward God, followed by a meek confession of one's sin, issuing into a faith in Christ Jesus Who died to reconcile us to God, to give us a new life in our soul, and to make this world a possible Eden again.—W. M. Clow, *The Cross in Christian Experience*, p. 115.

References.—LIII. 3.—Archbishop Lang, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lv. 1899, p. 394. S. Parkes Cadman, *ibid.* vol. lx. 1901, p. 180. R. J. Campbell, *ibid.* vol. lxxi. 1907, p. 145. J. J. Tayler, *Christian Aspects of Faith and Duty*, p. 202. J. A. Alexander, *The Gospel of Jesus Christ*, p. 446. "Plain Sermons" by contributors to the *Tracts for the Times*, vol. ii. p. 58. W. Brock, *Penny Pulpit*, vol. xii. No. 693, p. 213. W. J. Knox-Little, *The Mystery of the Passion*, p. 15. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xix. No. 1099; vol. liii. No. 3033. J. Keble, *Sermons for the Holy Week*, p. 102. LIII. 4.—Archbishop Lang, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lix. 1901, p. 402. J. Baldwin Brown, *The Divine Treatment of Sin*, p. 51. F. D. Maurice, *Christmas Day and Other Sermons*, p. 266. George Tyrrell, *Oil and Wine*, p. 116. W. J. Knox-Little, *Labour and Sorrow*, p. 269. A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—Isaiah XLIX.-LXVI.* p. 97. LIII. 5.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xiv. No. 834; vol. xviii. No. 1068; vol. xxxiii. No. 2000; vol. xliii. No. 2499; vol. l. No. 2887. H. J. Wilmot-Buxton, *Sunday Lessons for Daily Life*, pp. 97, 305. F. B. Cowl, *Straight Tracks*, p. 100. F. E. Paget, *Faculties and Difficulties for Belief and Unbelief*, p. 172. C. G. Clark-Hunt, *The Refuge of the Sacred Wounds*, p. 17.

THOU SHALT ANSWER, LORD, FOR ME

'The Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all.'—
Isaiah liii. 6.

'The constant and characteristic effort of our Lord's life,' says Dr. Smith in his work on Isaiah, 'was to assert and explain Himself as the Only.' His contemporaries tried to make Him the First among them, but with that He was not satisfied. He pressed on to a singularity beyond, to be realized in suffering. In suffering men feel their oneness with their kind; through suffering He became like unto men, 'but only in order to effect through suffering a timely and a singular service for them'. He did not feel as they did about pain. 'Pain never drew from Him either of those two voices of guilt or of doubt. Pain never reminded Christ of His own past and made Him question God.' Nor did He seek pain for any end in itself. To Him pain was not in itself meritorious, a thing to be gloried in or desired: He shrank from it. 'And when He submitted and was in the agony, it was not in the feeling of it, or the impression it made on others, or the manner in which it drew men's hearts to Him, or the seal it set on the truth that He found his end and satisfaction, but in something beyond it. Jesus *looked out of the travail of His soul and was satisfied.*

I. Why is the Gospel the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth? Is it because it reveals the eternal purpose of the Divine love? Or because it refashions life by an influence exerted on man's heart? Or because it breaks the chain that holds us to our past? St. Paul's answer is: *For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith*—that is, it unrolls the Divine righteousness and displays faith as its secret at each disclosure. God set forth Christ Jesus to be an expiatory offering through faith in His blood. This was to declare God's righteousness, that He might be seen by all His creatures as at once jealous for the law and judicially acquitting the guilty.

II. It is this judicial aspect of the Atonement which the Apostles set in the forefront as sovereign and prime. The Cross has many relations, and we are coming to understand some of them better. Others are beyond our knowledge, for to understand the whole we must be able to comprehend all the

love and agony of the infinite nature. But the history of the Church shows that there is no fact which believers understand so readily, and rest upon so firmly, as the meritorious Sacrifice. Their teachers may be perplexed, but they are not. Whoever rejects the Stone, it is to them the head of the corner; 'it is still the tried Stone, the sure foundation, the Rock whereof Faith speaks, "Set me upon it, for it is higher than I"; Love's sure abiding Pillar of remembrance, whereon Love's secret is written and graven with a pen of iron for ever'. They delight in all statements, however naked and literal, that bring it into clear relief.

III. The desire to explain the Atonement may go too far. All help is welcome, but the fact itself is much more easily understood than many explanations of it. Its 'Onlyness' is the main thing. No analogy goes more than a little way. The Cross far transcends reason and experience. It is indeed inscrutable in its very nature, and must be trusted implicitly if at all. The human mind offers a dull and wearied resistance to explanations which, as it easily perceives, do not touch the central mystery. In the Epistles we have the fact set forth in a variety of phrases which have been found sufficient for the soul's needs. Such explanation as these furnish must be used to the full. For, running to another extreme, evangelical preaching sometimes misses the mark by continual, exhausting demands for faith. The cry 'Believe, believe,' mocks and irritates when it is not accompanied by a setting forth of the ground on which faith may rest—how God is just and the justifier of them who believe in Jesus.—W. Robertson Nicoll, *Ten Minute Sermons*, p. 227.

MANIFESTATION OF SUFFERING

'The Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all.'—Isaiah liii. 6.

No one ignorant of the nature, power, and guilt of sin can understand this text, but to the humbled sinner it is 'good tidings of great joy,' of which Christmas and the Epiphany speak to us.

I. For the Sacrifice is for His Salvation.

(*a*) *It gives him rest from the works of the law* (Rom. viii. 1-4; Gal. iii. 10-13).

(*b*) *It brings reconciliation and communion with God* (Rom. v. 9-11).

(*c*) *It assures his heart with a triumphant confidence* (Rom. viii. 32-34).

II. The Virtue of this Sacrifice is its Completeness (John xix. 30; Heb. x. 14).

(*a*) *The sinner has broken the holy law of God* (Rom. iii. 20).

(*b*) *His own righteousness is of no avail* (Is. lxiv. 6).

(*c*) *But Christ is a complete surety for the sinner* (Heb. vii. 20-22); an accepted surety (2 Cor. v. 21); and the sinner stands complete and accepted in Him (Eph. i. 6; Col. ii. 10).

III. Shall we not Lay our Sin where the Lord hath Laid it—on Him? (Lev. xvi. 21).

(*a*) *Shall we dare to trifle with that sin*, which cost Him such bitter suffering? (Zech. xii. 10; Heb. x. 29).

(*b*) *Shall we allow self-righteousness to rob us* of the precious hope of full redemption in Him? (Gal. ii. 21; iii. 12, 13; v. 2-4).

(*c*) *Shall we not rise to the heavenly privilege of praise* for this great work? (Rev. i. 5).

References.—LIII. 6.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xii. No. 694; vol. xvi. No. 925. W. Hay M. H. Aitken, *Mission Sermons* (2nd Series), p. 112. W. Howell Evans, *Sermons for the Church's Year*, p. 93. Ambrose Shepherd, *The Gospel and Social Questions*, p. 49. A. Maclaren, *Paul's Prayers*, p. 168. LIII. 7.—W. H. Hutchings, *Sermon-Sketches*, p. 105. G. S. Barrett, *Outlines of Sermons on the Old Testament*, p. 221. Rutherford Waddell, *Behold the Lamb of God*, p. 69. "Plain Sermons" by contributors to the *Tracts for the Times*, vol. v. p. 86. A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—Isaiah XLIX.-LXVI.* p. 103. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxvi. No. 1543. LIII. 10.—*Ibid.* vol. iv. No. 173; vol. x. No. 561; vol. xxxvii. No. 2186; vol. li. No. 2963. A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—Isaiah XLIX.-LXVI.* p. 108. G. W. Herbert, *Notes of Sermons*, p. 267. J. Martineau, *Endeavours After the Christian Life*, p. 54. A. Mursell, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxxvii. 1890, p. 77.

THE TRAVAIL OF CHRIST'S SOUL

'He shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied.'—Isaiah liii. 11.

The travail of His soul! The Prophet lays no particular emphasis upon Christ's bodily suffering, because, though most visible, it was not the main part of His atoning sufferings. He emphasizes the inward mental spiritual agony, as that in which chiefly He bore our iniquities. Mental is in itself harder to bear than bodily pain. The soul, with its larger capacities, finer sensibilities, and chief place as governor of the body, is more sensitive. Bodily pain is narrower in its range and exhausts itself sooner. What physical agony can compare with the sharp sting of inward anguish?

Let us reverently note some of those things which we may conceive constituted for our Lord 'the travail of His soul'.

We must not limit Christ's atoning mental sufferings to His actual endurance on the cross, or forget what He endured before the last scenes of His ministry on earth. His closing sufferings were more intense, but in the death-sufferings we should not lose sight of the life-sufferings; for the whole period of His public ministry was a 'temptation,' and to Him temptation was suffering, as He met and fought it. It came upon Him from friend and foe.

I. He Endured the Contradiction of Sinners against Himself.—What neglects and oppositions were heaped upon Him! Ignorant but well-meaning friends tried His patience, failed to understand His character or believe in His words, and sought to thwart His aims which they could not grasp (cf. St. Matt. xvi. 8 *seq.*, xvi. 23, xvii. 17; St. Luke xxiv. 25). Enemies gainsaid Him, refused His counsel, despised His teaching, caricatured His doctrine, said

all manner of evil against Him falsely, even calling Him Beelzebub. Such contradiction, with all the irritation, and sorrow, and pain, and heaviness it caused Him, no one has ever endured, and none can understand what a humiliation and grief it was for Him to put up with it from those whom He came to save, and over whose sinful souls, even as they blasphemed Him, His pitying heart yearned with boundless compassion.

II. The Sight and Contact of Human Sin and Misery as they lay Passive around Him must have Deeply Wounded His Soul.—He was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners. He had all sources of personal happiness within Himself, yet He went down into the depths of society, into the depths of this fallen world, where only scenes of sin and misery could meet His eye, and tear His heart, and pain His purity. How must that native purity of His sinless humanity have been repelled and shocked as He, with His exquisite susceptibilities all instinct with holiness and love, beheld the sin, and selfishness and woe of the men among whom He dwelt!

III. His Foresight of the Doom Coming on God's Chosen People caused Him Pain.—His tears over Jerusalem, forsaken and doomed to utter desolation, expressed the real sorrow of His soul. He alone knew the wrath that *His* nation was treasuring up, and how hopeless was their position through rejecting His gracious efforts. He wept in the anguish and pity of His heart that such vengeance was in store for them, and that they themselves had made it for ever impossible for Him to avert it. Very acute such sorrow, venting itself in such tears, must have been to Him who came to 'save the lost sheep of the house of Israel'; who carried the knowledge of that doom with Him through life, and found all his efforts to rescue them vain, and had at last to confess His impotence, and give them up in sorrowful despair.

IV. The Shadow of the Cross Projecting itself over His Life cast a Burden over His Spirit as He anticipated the end of His ministry. Ever and again that burden pressed Him to speak of it, especially as time went on. But it was always with Him in daily consciousness, ever growing heavier and more distinct, and straitening Him more and more until His baptism should be accomplished. What a weight He must have carried on His soul in the knowledge of the death He was to die! How hard it must have been for Him to labour on with this prospect before Him! His humanity might well and naturally shrink from such painful anticipations. He was fitted to enjoy life perfectly and abundantly as none else; to delight in all beautiful things in nature; to appreciate all Divine and human truth; to feel the impression of all that was pure and lovely and virtuous and of good report. Yet He denied Himself, put a restraint on these holy and heavenly natural instincts of His, and bent Himself to the task of obedience, though He knew it was to be obedience unto death, even the death of the cross. Truly 'He learned obedience by the things which He suffered'.

The travail of soul during life culminated at death, assuming a distinctness and bitterness peculiarly great as that crisis arrived. All the past was intensified and concentrated, and additional elements of pain were experienced. Thus His friends forsook Him and fled. One denied Him. One betrayed Him. Did not this experience, to One who was so sympathetic and social Himself, and who then needed all the human sympathy and society which His friends could give Him, cause sorrow of soul of no ordinary kind?

V. Learn—

(*a*) The costliness of His redemption.

(*b*) The evil and shamefulness of sin.

(*c*) The reality of our Lord's sympathy for all who are in the world as He was, and follow in His footsteps.

(*d*) The greatness of the suffering of the impenitent.

SATISFIED

'He shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied.'
—ISAIAH LIII. 11.

OUR text speaks to us of the 'satisfaction' the Lord will experience at the result of His great atoning work. Many a man is not satisfied with the fruit of all his labour; no man is indeed in this world ever satisfied with the results of his expenditure. But Christ is satisfied at every stage with the progress made. His satisfaction keeps pace with every enlarging vision of the travail of His soul. His satisfaction shall be full when the vision is complete. When the sons and daughters are all brought home, He will desire nothing more, and regret nothing. His delight is then perfect. He shall be satisfied with His people.

I. Satisfied with their Number.—There will be a multitude that no man can number; the vast majority of the race: a mighty gathering, countless as the dewdrops from the womb of the morning (Ps. cx. 3); and as He casts His eye over the General Assembly and Church of Himself, the First-born, He will not murmur that He has not more. Sufficient reward will He deem them to be for His travail of soul.

II. With their Variety.—All kindreds and nations shall be represented there; all varieties of generations, and ages, and climes, of culture, and temperament, and experience, of rank and degree in the social and the moral world, shall be brought together in perfect unity, to satisfy Him with the sight of their diversity in unity, and of the suitability of the 'common salvation'.

III. With their Character and Attainments.—All shall stand perfect and complete in all the Will of God; each, in his measure and degree, according to his capacity, filled with the Spirit, conformed to the image of the 'First-born among many brethren,' and partaking of the Divine nature, and beginning an eternal progress; so that He shall see them faultless and worthy of Himself, and have no greater joy than see them walking in the truth, and desire no greater perfection in them at any stage of their eternal history.

IV. With their Prospects.—They shall have fullness of joy, pleasures for evermore, new reaches of duty, new anticipations of higher felicity in His presence; and, under His guidance, enlarged and ever-enlarging capacities. There will be no drawbacks and deductions with God Himself their portion, heaven their home, His truth their study, His service their duty, His presence their light and glory. He will ask nothing more for them. He shall be satisfied with what God has given to Him for them.

V. With their Praises.—They shall thank Him, cast their crowns at His feet, fill heaven with His glory, and bless Him with full hearts and unfaltering lips as they never could on earth; and as they cry, 'Worthy is the Lamb that was slain!' He shall be satisfied, and feel such adoring gratitude ample recompense for the travail of His soul. How great must be the number, variety, attainments, prospects, and thanks of Christ's redeemed to satisfy Him for His sorrow, and make Him think that that was not too sharp and sore for what it has brought!

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LENGTHENING THE CORDS AND STRENGTHENING THE STAKES

(A Sermon to Clergymen)

'Enlarge the place of thy tent, and let them stretch forth the curtains of thine habitations; spare not, lengthen thy cords, and strengthen thy stakes.'—ISAIAH LIV. 2.

My subject is *steadfastness* and then *extension*. We have the same connexion of thought in that pair of parables which ought never to be separated—the Parable of the Ten Virgins and the Parable of the Entrusted Talents—the connexion between secret faith in the heart and the life of active obedience—life *in* Christ and life *for* Christ. I shall consider the subject in two aspects:—

I. As to our individual inner life.

II. As to our special position as ministers of Christ.

I. To 'strengthen the stakes'—to drive in the tent-pegs—is a striking picture of the deepening and establishing of the inner life, and the lengthening the cords is a no less striking image of the gradual extension of our area of usefulness in the Church of God and in the world. As I shall dwell almost entirely on the first figure, let me remind you that the two must go together. The proportion must be complete. If you lengthen your cords, but do not strengthen your stakes, your tent will be liable to be swept away by the blast of temptation and trial. On the other hand, it is in vain to deepen your stakes unless you lengthen your cords, for the end of all religion is consecration of God and His service, to be used for His honour and glory.

There is one more point which must be settled before we proceed. That is the underground upon which we are building. If the foundation be sand, we drive in our tent-pegs in vain. They will not hold. Years ago I had an experience in the Lebanon. A sirocco was expected. My tent was pitched on rocky ground. I drove in my pegs to the hilt in narrow crevices in the rocks. The hurricane came in all its violence. My tent was shaken, but it stood. Let us ask ourselves once again the old, old question, Am I building upon the rock? Am I vitally united to Christ by faith? Is the living Christ the author of my salvation, the object of my faith, the inspiration of my love, the source of my power? If not—if some blast of temptation should assail me—if I should grievously fall, then should I have to cry in the words of the prophet, 'My tent is destroyed, and all my tent-pegs are plucked up; my children are gone away from me and are not, and there is none to spread out my tent any more, or to set up my tent curtains' (Jer. x. 20).

Let me mention two stakes which need to be strengthened.

1. First, we must rivet our souls more firmly on the Word of God.

2. The second 'stake' of which I would speak is prayer. Do we not all feel amid the endless claims upon our time that there is special danger of minimizing our seasons of private devotion? The very distraction of our work demands and necessitates increased carefulness in the habit of prayer. I have often sought refuge from the din and noise of the Strand in the repose and stillness of the Temple Gardens. The very act of prayer is soothing to the mind apart from the blessing we look for in return, just as we are refreshed in the darkness by the fragrance of the garden, even though we cannot see to cull the flowers. St. Paul constantly realized this. He tells us that one of the five conditions upon which the peace of God is to be maintained in the soul amid the distractions of life is this: 'In everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. *So* the peace of God which passeth all understanding shall fortify your hearts and minds'.

But not only for repose but for safety's sake we must pray. If our souls are not strengthened by prayer we shall certainly fall a prey to temptation. We marvel that some mighty tree is broken by the blast, until we discover the inner decay. The great Origen, under fear of death, denied his Lord. The heathen were exultant. They did not know that Origen that morning had left his chamber without his wonted prayer. His last biographer denies the recantation, but his sermon in Jerusalem on Psalm I.

16, 17, seems to authenticate the fact. Even if it be not true, the instinctive feeling that it is likely is a proof of our consciousness that all our inconsistencies, every yielding to temptation, each fall, secret it may be, is to be traced up to the neglect of habitual communion with God. Let the old question come back with all its ancient force: 'Will you be diligent in prayer?' For our own soul's sake, for our ministry's sake, we must be more and more men of prayer. All mighty works for God are done by His saints upon their knees. The man of prayer is the man of power in the Church of God.

II. I must now look at a wider field. The tent, or tabernacle, is an emblem of the Church; and here we will use the command, 'Spare not; lengthen thy cords and strengthen thy stakes,' in a more catholic sense.

I would guard myself against three dangers in my pulpit ministrations:—

1. *The danger of forgetting the only remedy for sin.* All reading must be subject to this. When the mind is full of the theme, and your motto is 'Nihil humani a me alienum puto,' and you have notes on your desk from theology, history, poetry, fiction, biography, science, and you feel and know that you can interest your people, beware! Is there a remedy for sin amongst it all?

2. *Let us guard against the danger of vanity.* 'Why is it, father,' said one of the friends of St. Francis d'Assisi, 'that all the world goes after you?' 'Why,' he replied, 'even for this. The Lord saw no greater sinner in the world than I—none less wise, none viler, and so He chose me above all to accomplish a wonderful work on the earth.' 'Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints,' said St. Paul, 'is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ.'

3. *Let us not forget our entire dependence upon God the Holy Ghost,* that we may not be left to our own barrenness and blindness, but that our faculties for teaching may be directed and perfected.—J. W. Bardsley, *Many Mansions*, p. 89.

'Enlarge the place of thy tent.'—Isaiah liv. 2, 3.

From this text William Carey preached his famous sermon before his fellow-ministers at Nottingham in 1792. He divided the passage under two heads, which as Mr. Eugene Stock says, have been an inspiration to the whole Church of Christ from that day to this. (1) Expect great things from God. (2) Attempt great things for God. The sermon was preached on 30 May, and on 2 October the Baptist Missionary Society was formed. In the following year Carey himself sailed for India as its first missionary.

LENGTHENING AND STRENGTHENING

'Lengthen thy cords, and strengthen thy stakes.'—Isaiah liv. 2.

This splendid and glowing chapter is a magnificent example of prophetic faith. The people were exiles in what looked like a hopeless captivity. Yet this chapter throbs and burns with the prophet's passionate conviction that many years shall not pass before he and his are restored again to their native land. His nation had been overwhelmed with disaster and political extinction, and when the people had been deported beyond the Euphrates, it looked as if the last chapter in the history of Judah had been written, and that its very name had been blotted out for ever from the roll-call of nations. But in this chapter the Prophet dares to predict for that ruined, desolate and wellnigh extinguished kingdom, a future greater even than its heroic past.

I. 'Lengthen your cords' is the Divine appeal to the Church. We must enlarge the place of our tent. We must continually be making more room. The danger of the Church is ever to be content with narrow boundaries, to be satisfied with less than God has in store for her. And so, to a Church always ready to sit at ease, God has always to be saying, 'Lengthen thy cords, stretch forth the curtains of thy habitations'. In many directions we must 'Lengthen our cords'.

1. We must be ever lengthening our cords in the way of *seeking to win new territories* and *heathen lands* for Jesus Christ.

2. We must be ever lengthening our cords in the way of seeking to bring *daily life more and more under the sway of religion.*

3. There must be a lengthening of the cords in the way of opening our minds to receive *the new ideas and the larger truth* that God from age to age reveals. For God does, from age to age, reveal new truth. No one can study the history of the centuries without seeing it. The Spirit is from time to time taking of the things of Christ and revealing them unto us.

II. But we must not only lengthen our cords, we must *strengthen our stakes.* There must be the inward confirmation as well as the outward development. Seek to win heathen countries for Christ; bring more and more of daily life under the sway of religion; keep an open mind for the larger truth; but see to it that the strengthening goes hand in hand and keeps pace with the lengthening; strengthen your hold upon the great Gospel verities, upon foundation truths, upon bottom facts. Strengthen your stakes, the great beliefs of your life; strengthen them, confirm them; in a word, while extending on this side and that, see to it that *you are tightening your own grip upon Jesus Christ.*

The *lengthening* without the *strengthening* can only issue in disaster.—J. D. Jones, *Elims of Life*, p. 155.

References.—LIV. 2, 3.—A. T. Pierson, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xli. 1892, p. 360. J. Clifford, *ibid.* vol. xli. 1892, p. 344. J. Thoburn, *ibid.* vol. li. 1897, p. 267. LIV. 4.—Hugh Black, *ibid.* vol. lx. 1901, p. 138. LIV. 7-10.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxii. No. 1306. LIV. 9.—*Ibid.* vol. xxxvi. No. 2176; vol. li. No. 2962.

THE KINDNESS OF THE LORD

'For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but My kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of My peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee.'—ISAIAH LIV. 10.

THERE are features of this earth which suggest eternity, voices which mysteriously speak of infinity. The *sea* is such a feature. Yet we are assured the time shall come when 'there shall be no more sea'. The mountains are another such feature; we read of the 'everlasting hills'. Yet, as the text assures us, 'The mountains shall depart and the hills be removed'. They serve to symbolize the Divine nature and attributes. But there is a contrast drawn. These stable things of earth shall pass away; but, saith the Lord, 'My kindness shall not depart from thee'. The Lord's loving-kindness towards His people is set forth in three clauses of this verse.

I. His Gracious Disposition is Revealed.—Very human and very encouraging is the language in which our God speaks of Himself and His feelings towards us. His kindness is not mere indulgence; it is a desire for our holiness as well as our happiness.

II. His Tender Mercy is Recorded.—Mercy is not a mere feeling; it is practically displayed. He 'hath mercy upon' us. Whilst righteousness alone might condemn, mercy forbears and forgives.

III. The Covenant of Peace is Established.—A covenant here is not a bargain, but a faithful declaration of Divine purposes. The former covenant was with Israel; the new covenant is with the race which Christ redeemed, the Church which Christ purchased. The element of the covenant is peace with God, with self, with men.

IV. The Unchangeableness of the Lord's Love.—This is shown by contrast, viz. with earthly objects, as mountains and hills; and implicitly by contrast with earthly possessions and with human friends.

(*a*) It is independent of us, i.e. of our desert, had we any; of our feelings, which are always varying.

(*b*) It cannot be affected by anything outside us. 'Who, what shall separate us from the love of Christ?'

(*c*) It is part of God's unchanging nature, whose power cannot fail and whose promises cannot be broken.

(*d*) It is assured to us in Jesus Christ, who by His advent and by His sacrifice reveals and ratifies a love which never changes and a faithfulness which never betrays.

V. Our Response.—What shall be our response? Let us think not how we feel towards the Lord, but how He feels towards us. Let us not misinterpret the changes, losses, and sorrows which, so far from being evidences of changes in the Divine heart, are ministrations of His kindness. But in all weakness and discouragement let us rely upon Him Who is independent of all our variableness and inconstancy.

REFERENCE.—LIV. 10.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—Isaiah XLIX.-LXVI.* p. 125.

ISAIAH LIV. 11, 12, 13.

RUSKIN says: 'How will you evade the conclusion, that there must be joy, and comfort, and instruction in the literal beauty of architecture, when God, descending in His utmost love to the distressed Jerusalem, and addressing to her His most precious and solemn promises, speaks to her in such words as these: "Oh, thou afflicted, tossed with tempest, and not comforted,"—What shall be done to her?—What brightest emblem of blessing will God set before her? "Behold, I will *lay thy stones with fair colours*, and thy foundations with sapphires; and I will make thy *windows of agates*, and thy gates of carbuncles, and all thy borders of pleasant stones." Nor is this merely an emblem of spiritual blessing; for that blessing is added in the concluding words, "And all thy children shall be taught of the Lord, and great shall be the peace of thy children".'

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THE TRUE IMPERIALISM

'Ho, every one that thirsteth.'—ISAIAH LV. 1.

I. 'Ho, every one that thirsteth!' That is a call to the faint and the weary. What is he to do? 'Incline your ear.' 'Hearken diligently unto Me.'

1. There has to be a discipline of the ear. There has to be a determined and resolute effort to listen to God. The voices of the world are so plausible, so fascinating, so easily seducing, that if a man is to catch the higher voice he must set himself in the resolute act of attention. 'Hearken diligently unto me.' For the individual and for the nation the discipline of the ear is the first step to the attainment of a strong, restful, unwearied, and satisfying life.

2. The discipline of the ear is to be accompanied by the discipline of the heart. Listen, and then yield. Right hearing necessitates strong and unequivocal doing. Hear the highest, and then uncompromisingly obey it.

II. What would be the issues of such obedience? They are unfolded for us in this chapter with wondrous prodigality. (1) There is the assured promise of a fuller life. 'Your *soul* shall live.' Life shall be no longer scant and scrimpy. (2) 'Behold, thou shalt call a nation that thou knewest not, and nations that knew not thee shall run unto thee, because of the Lord thy God, for He hath glorified thee.' What does that mean? It means that a true and glorified natural life is to create a true and glorified Imperialism.

That is the true imperialism—empire by moral and spiritual sovereignty, allurement and dominion by the fascinating radiance of a pure and sanctified life. (3) A true imperialism is to be accompanied by a splendid magnanimity. The thoughts of the Eternal are characterized by loftiness, by breadth, by compre-

hensiveness, by an all-inclusive sympathy which vibrates to the interests of each, as though each contained, as indeed it does, the welfare of the whole. The truly imperial people is to share this spacious and inclusive thought.

III. Note the climax of the sequence. All this exalted and glorified character, this true imperialism, this splendid magnanimity, is to issue in a rich, assured, and beautiful ministry. There is to be nothing wavering and uncertain about the moral empire and sovereignty of such a people.—J. H. Jowett, *Apostolic Optimism*, p. 19.

THE GREAT PROCLAMATION

'Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.'—Isaiah lv. 1.

I. To Whom this Offer is Made.

It is to every one thirsty and penniless. That is a melancholy combination, to be needing something infinitely, and to have not a farthing to get it with. But that is the condition in which we all stand, in regard to the highest and best things.

The man that knows what it is of which he is in such sore need is blessed. The man who only feels dimly that he needs something, and does not know that it is God whom he does need, is condemned to wander in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is, and where his heart gapes, parched and cracked like the soil upon which he treads.

But there are dormant thirsts too. It is no proof of superiority that a savage has fewer wants than we have, for want is the open mouth into which supply comes. And you all have deep in your nature desires which will for ever keep you from being blessed or at rest unless they are awakened and settled, though these desires are all unconscious.

And yet there are no desires so dormant but that their being ungratified makes a man restless. Until your earthly life is like the life of Jesus Christ in heaven even whilst you are on earth, you will never be at rest.

'Ho, every one that thirsteth.' That designation includes us all. 'And he that hath no money.' Who has any? Notice that the persons represented in our text as penniless are, in the next verse, remonstrated with for spending 'money'. Which being translated out of parable into fact, is simply this, that our efforts may and do win for us the lower satisfactions which meet our transitory and superficial necessities, but that no effort of ours can secure for us the loftier blessings which slake the Diviner thirsts of immortal souls.

II. In What it Consists.

Jesus Christ Himself is the all-sufficient supply, and the soul that has Him shall never thirst.

III. How do we Get the Gifts?

The paradox of my text needs little explanation, 'Buy without money and without price'. The contradiction on the surface is but intended to make emphatic this blessed truth, that the only conditions are a sense of need, and a willingness to take—nothing else, and nothing more.—A. Maclaren, *The Wearied Christ*, p. 113.

Illustration.—They tell an old story about the rejoicings at the coronation of some great king, when there was set up in the market-place a triple fountain, from each of whose three lips flowed a different kind of rare liquor, which any man who chose to bring a pitcher might fill from, at his choice. Notice my text, 'Come ye to the *waters*' . . . 'buy *wine* and *milk*'. The great fountain is set up in the market-place of the world, and every man may come; and whichever of this glorious trinity of effluents he needs most, there his lip may glue itself and there it may drink, be it 'water' that refreshes, or 'wine' that gladdens, or 'milk' that nourishes. They are all contained in this one great gift that flows out from the deep heart of God to the thirsty lips of parched humanity.—A. Maclaren, *The Wearied Christ*, p. 121.

References.—LV. 1.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—Isaiah XLIX.-LXVI.* p. 142. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. iv. No. 199; vol. xx. No. 1161; vol. xxix. No. 1726. C. Jerdan, *Pastures of Tender Grass*, p. 327. H. J. Wilmot-Buxton, *Sunday Lessons for Daily Life*, p. 109. J. H. Jowett, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lvii. 1900, p. 401. J. A. Alexander, *The Gospel of Jesus Christ*, p. 332. LV. 1, 2.—A. G. Mortimer, *The Church's Lessons for the Christian Year*, part i. p. 139. LV. 1-3.—R. W. Pritchard, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxiii. 1903, p. 99. LV. 1-7.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xliii. No. 2534. LV. 1-13.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—Isaiah XLIX.-LXVI.* p. 134.

WISE INVESTMENTS

'Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not?'—Isaiah lv. 2.

Money and labour are the two great commodities which rule the exchange of life. The rich man gives his money, the poor his labour; and the words of our text therefore challenge the two classes of society—the one because they make a foolish expenditure of wealth, and the other because they get a poor return for their work.

I. Unwise Expenditure.—It is, perhaps, necessary to do no more than mention the very unwise expenditure of money and labour, of which most of us can tell, in the years that are past; how much has gone for flowers in the banquet of life, and how little for 'bread'. What care and toil have been devoted for that which, after all, has brought in the least possible amount of satisfaction. The leanness of many of our souls, and the restlessness of the hearts of thousands, could well bear witness to the necessity of the remonstrance, 'Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not?'

II. Some Good Investments.—It will suit our purpose better if we consider what are some of life's good investments, which bring in solid advantages—such as a man really wants if his soul is to prosper.

(*a*) *Peace of Mind.* I place first among the gains of life peace of mind, and for that the investment is simply and alone acts of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

You must commit your whole self, as a poor miserable sinner, absolutely to His grace and power. Your soul must go forth, without question upon that bold venture—accepting the promise as endorsed with the faithfulness of Almighty God. Do it fearlessly; and the result is sure: there will come back a sense of pardon; and the interest of that pardon, if I may so call it, pays you every day and every moment.

(*b*) *Truth.* The next thing which you will do well to traffic in is truth, the clear knowledge of God's truth. No man can get truth without labour. It is the wages of severe work. You must be always looking out for the teachings of truth. You must make your Bible a real daily study. You must pray over it; you must hold fast the little you get, and continually add to it. You must gather it as the Israelites gathered their manna, little by little—morning and evening, every day.

(*c*) *Affections of our Fellow-creatures.* I place next the affections of our fellow-creatures. Every affection is a real possession, and well worth the purchase, cost it what it may, so we do not barter truth. Therefore, lay yourself out for affections—not selfishly, not that you may be liked, not that you may be gratified, but for real affection's sake, and as a means to a high end; and especially, I should say, the affection of any who from any cause have been placed at some disadvantage, say persons who are afflicted, or the poor—for there are no affections so generous, so precious.

(*d*) *Usefulness.* Following this, and as a consequence (for unless we are loved we cannot do it), comes usefulness, one of the few things worth living for—usefulness to the body, usefulness to the mind, usefulness to the soul. I pity the person who is content to live on without trying to be useful. Whatever you have, remember He is the proprietor of all, and will take account whether it has been used selfishly, or for Him and His—His poor, His sick, His children, His sufferers, His outcasts, His saints, His Church, His world. Have some definite work always in hand for usefulness.

(*e*) *Treasure in Heaven.* Everything which we give or do for God is actually laying up for us treasure in heaven: transferred from this insecure and bankrupt world to the high places of that safe bank. It is gone before, and awaits us there against the time we come, and every day we may increase that hidden treasure within the veil. The return it pays us now, in God's retributive justice, is a payment of all we touch; and we shall receive it all back again at last a hundredfold.

References.—LV. 2.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxxviii. No. 2278; vol. xlviii. No. 2786. J. A. Alexander, *The Gospel of Jesus Christ*, p. 345. LV. 3.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxxv. No. 2092; vol. xxxix. No. 2316. K. A. MacLeay, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxx. 1906, p. 44. LV. 4.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xlviii. No. 2787. LV. 4-6.—*Ibid.* vol. xliii. No. 2534. LV. 4-8.—H. Hensley Henson, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxxiii. 1908, p. 65. LV. 6.—R. H. McKim, *The Gospel in the Christian Year*, p. 114. J. A. Alexander, *The Gospel of Jesus Christ*, p. 357. LV. 6, 7.—W. H. Hutchings, *Sermon-Sketches*, p. 48. F. D. Huntington, *Christian Believing and Living*, p. 129. W. Reiner, *Sermons*, p. 85. C. Kingsley, *Sermons on National Subjects*, p. 221. LV. 7.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xx. No. 1195; vol. xlviii. No. 2797. C. Perren, *Revival Sermons in Outline*, p. 332. J. M. Neale, *Sermons Preached in Sackville College Chapel*, vol. iv. p. 207. LV. 7-9.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, xxxvi. No. 2181. LV. 8.—W. M. Taylor, *Outlines of Sermons on the Old Testament*, p. 231. H. Wilmot-Buxton, *Sunday Sermonettes for a Year*, p. 163. LV. 8, 9.—H. Wace, *Christianity and Morality*, p. 55. G. Granville Bradley, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xli. 1892. J. Percival, *Some Helps for School Life*, p. 20. A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—Isaiah XLIX.-LXVI.* p. 152. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xii. No. 676; vol. xxiii. No. 1387. *Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. xii. p. 23. W. M. Taylor, *Old Testament Outlines*, p. 231. "Plain Sermons" by contributors to *Tracts for the Times*, vol. iv. p. 302. J. Foster, *Lectures* (2nd Series), p. 129. C. Morris, *Preacher's Lantern*, vol. ii. p. 60. H. W. Beecher, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxv. p. 106. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xii. No. 676; vol. xxiii. No. 1387. J. Keble, *Sermons for Christmas and Epiphany*, p. 27. LV. 8-11.—E. S. Talbot, *Sermons at Southwark*, p. 71. LV. 9.—S. Horton, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lviii. 1900, p. 270. T. G. Selby, *The Strenuous Gospel*, p. 2.

THE RAIN AND THE WORD

'For as the rain cometh down and the snow from heaven,' etc.
—Isaiah lv. 10, 11.

The Gospel is compared to rain and snow in its

I. Origin.—'From heaven.' All truth is Divine in its source.

II. Operation.—'Watereth the earth.' The Gospel produces a marvellous change on the human heart.

III. Benefits.—'That it may give seed to the sower and bread to the eater.' The Gospel gives instruction, comfort, strength, confidence.

IV. Final Results.—'It shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.' We do not see this yet; but we shall by and by.—F. J. Austin, *Seeds and Saplings*, p. 48.

References.—LV. 10.—W. Simpson, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxxix. 1891, p. 361. LV. 10, 11.—H. Hensley Henson, *ibid.* vol. lxxi. 1907, p. 56. T. P. Boultbee, *Outlines of Sermons on the Old Testament*, p. 232. F. E. Paget, *Studies in the Christian Character*, p. 41. G. E. Jelf, *Plain Preaching to Poor People* (9th Series), p. 25. LV. 10, 13.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xli. No. 2410.

THE REPUTATION OF GOD

'And it shall be to the Lord for a name.'—Isaiah lv. 13.

By 'a name' we mean a reputation. This old Testament word carries the same signification in my text.

I. It is Necessary that God should have a Name.—It is not necessary that we should have a name, but it is obviously necessary that God should. One of God's earliest rights is the right of reputation. This shall be accorded Him, says my text, 'And it shall be to the Lord for a name'.

God desires a name. Some believe in an impassive God. Surely not such is the God of the Bible. It is necessary God should have a name that His people may realize it. One of our greatest spiritual blessings is to realize the reputation of God. Men must know what God is that they may appreciate Him with reverent appreciation.

It is necessary God should have a name for the world's sake. Man, considered as separated from God by sin, needs to know that august and redeeming name. Give God a name, for till men know God they are dead whilst they live.

II. God's Deliverances of His People give Him a Name.—Note the prophecy in v. 12, 'For ye shall go out . . . and be led forth'.

God has a wondrous reputation in all things. But that He is the God of deliverances gives Him His greatest name. God has such a conception of redemption as never entered into the heart of man.

God delivers from *guilt*. God delivers from *evil habit*. God delivers from *sorrow*.

III. The Characteristics of God's People give Him a Name.—The emancipated ones are to be marked by 'joy' and 'peace'. We give God a name when gracious characteristics mark us. Joy is the privilege of the Lord's redeemed. But peace is an even richer gift.

IV. Nature, as Suggestive of the Spiritual, gives God a Name.—'The mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands.' Nature has a mystical value. To some souls Nature is non-spiritual. They find God eludes them in that province. To others Nature is a shrine of God and is crammed with heaven.

Said Blake, who was alike painter and poet, 'You ask me if, when I look at the sunrise, I see a round disc of fire something like a guinea. No, I do not. I see an innumerable company of the heavenly host, crying, "Holy, Holy, Holy".' He added, 'I look through the window, not with it'.

V. All Beautiful Transformations give God a Name.—'Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir-tree, and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle-tree: and it shall be to the Lord for a name.' Every renewed nature is a testimony to God. National and world-wide conversion will glorify God's reputation in inconceivable degree.—Dinsdale T. Young, *The Crimson Book*, p. 221.

References.—LV. 13.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xiv. No. 833; vol. liii. No. 3044. A. W. Mathews, "Let the Myrtle Flourish," *Sermons*, 1900-1902. LVI. 2-5.—H. D. M. Spence, *Voices and Silences*, p. 259. LVI. 4.—J. Parker, *City Temple Pulpit*, vol. iii. p. 69. LVI. 4 and 6.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xlviii. No. 2762. LVI. 8.—*Ibid.* vol. xxiv. No. 1437. LVI. 12.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—Isaiah XLIX.-LXVI.* p. 162. LVII. 1.—J. Keble, *Sermons for the Saints' Days*, p. 41. LVII. 6.—S. A. Tipple, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxix. 1906, p. 377.

WEARIED IN THE GREATNESS OF THE WAY

'Thou art wearied in the greatness of thy way.'—Isaiah LVII. 10.

Weariness—spiritual weariness—that is our subject to-night. It seems that in this chapter, as so often, the language of the Prophet is suggested by the incidents of national history. The memorable journey of Israel through the wilderness, in the passage from Egypt to Canaan, was fraught with many lessons concerning human infirmity and concerning Divine righteousness and grace. In this passage, where Isaiah laments the sinful defections of the nation, he makes use of the wanderings of the wilderness to illustrate the experience of rebellious and apostate Israel. The people wander and wander, and know no repose; they are 'wearied in the greatness of their way'.

I. Causes of Spiritual Weariness.—These are mainly two:—

(*a*) *Abandonment to error and sin.* 'There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked.' They who are led by Satan are led in a devious, an aimless, and altogether unsatisfactory and wretched road.

(*b*) *The deceitfulness of false religion.* Men, feeling their spiritual need and misery, strive to make out a way of safety and of peace for themselves. They sometimes submit to many sufferings in the hope of propitiating the Deity and of appeasing their own conscience. The self-imposed penances and pilgrimages and privations of the religious who yield themselves to the devices of human religions are chargeable with no small part of the misery of mankind. Men following the lead of such delusive lights grow 'wearied in the greatness of their way'.

II. Signs of Spiritual Weariness.—These are:—

(*a*) *Dissatisfaction.* The journey is too 'great' for human strength. They who undertake it find no peace.

(*b*) *Distress.* This is natural enough when effort has been put forth and sacrifices have been made, and all in vain.

(*c*) *Despondency.* They who journey for long, and who find themselves in no way advanced towards their goal, or who return to the point whence they set out, are likely enough to abandon themselves to despair.

III. Remedy for Spiritual Weariness.

(*a*) *Confess the error and folly of the past.* If the whole course has been a mistake, it is well to find out that it has been so, to cease deluding self, to acknowledge that the weariness of the spirit is owing to having 'followed too much the devices and desires of our own hearts'.

(*b*) *Abandon the ways which have brought only to weariness and to misery.*

(*c*) *Accept Divine guidance*, that the feet which have so long and so often erred may be led into the way of peace.

References.—LVII. 10.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xii. No. 634. LVII. 14.—*Ibid.* vol. xxvii. No. 1579. H. Ward Beecher, *ibid.* (4th Series), p. 90. G. W. McCree, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxxix. 1891, p. 275. J. H. Jowett, *ibid.* vol. xlvi. 1894, p. 35. F. Hastings, *ibid.* vol. l. 1896, p. 403.

THE ETERNAL AND HIS HABITATIONS

'For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.'—Isaiah LVII. 15.

I. The first great theme of meditation the text brings before us is *God's inhabitation of infinite time.* In all eternity past there is no vacant century, no unpeopled epoch, no barren, unillumined, God-lacking

millennium. He fills immeasurable time to its utmost dimension, every moment of the vast eternity, past and to be, pulsating with God's conscious presence.

II. We are reminded of *God's inhabitation of selected space.* 'I dwell in the high and holy place.' God presents Himself to us in these words as a being who brings His noblest attributes within space-limits because the dwellers in the high and holy place with whom He communes are beings to whom space-limits attach.

God dwells here with *an express and intentional manifestation* wanting in those extensions of His wisdom and power which touch every part of the universe alike. God is present, but not equally present and unveiled in all the orbs of the firmament. There are elect realms in which He vouchsafes peculiar epiphanies of His majesty and spiritual perfection.

III. God's inhabitation of *the individual hearts of His contrite ones is declared.* This rests upon His pure compassion. Not only does He stoop to the finite that is holy but also to the finite that is frail.

That He Who inhabits eternity and receives the homage of the high and holy place should seek this latest enshrinement is a mystery, but it is a self-consistent mystery. In making the humbled heart sensible of His presence He appeals more directly to man's consciousness than would be possible by any other method. He must deal with us first in the sphere of the affections. His opening revelations are revelations of healing tenderness to that part of man's nature which is most susceptible to His influence. 'Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him.' That truth gets into the affections and puts mystic fire at their source.

IV. This is a mystery of condescension, but it is a self-consistent mystery. The revival and homeward return of the life that came from God is the clue to this enigma of pity and gentleness. It is no slight thing to recover and restore that life. By this inhabitation of contrite hearts the Eternal will add at last a new kingdom to the high and holy place where He is enshrined. From those to whom He so strangely bows Himself He will attract a devotion of which those never needing a Saviour may be incapable. 'We love Him because He first loved us,'—true for angels, but uniquely true for us.—T. G. Selby, *The Lesson of a Dilemma*, p. 165.

References.—LVII. 15.—G. McHardy, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. li. 1897, p. 134. R. J. Campbell, *City Temple Sermons*, p. 199. F. W. Robertson, *Sermons Preached at Brighton* (3rd Series), p. 230.

GOD'S TWO HOMES

'For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones. For I will not contend for ever, neither will I be always wroth: for the spirit should fail before me, and the souls which I have made.'—Isaiah LVII. 15, 16.

We know and believe separately the doctrines of the majesty and of the mercy of God, but it probably seldom occurs to a Christian to think of one as a result of the other. It would not occur to us to say that God sent His Son into the world because He is almighty and infinite, and all-glorious, or that Jesus came to save us because He is the eternal God. Yet this or something very like it is what Isaiah does say in the text.

I. Isaiah, who says so much elsewhere, both before and after this chapter, of the work and the sufferings of Jesus, here does not mention Him; he speaks of the dwelling of God with the humble, of the mercy of God to the contrite, not as fruits of the Incarnation or of the sacrifice of Christ, but as results of the glory of the Eternal Father, the High and Lofty One that inhabiteth eternity. The special truth that seems set forth in these verses is, that the Incarnation and the Sacrifice of Christ, while they are to us the cause and the source of all blessing, of all pardon, of all grace, of all holiness, of all salvation, are themselves not the cause but the effect of the mercy and the love of God the Father; as Jesus says Himself, 'God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son'.

II. The reason why God is so eager to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones, is simply His own majesty, His greatness, before which they are so little. This is a great and glorious thought if only we can bring our minds to the effort of grasping it. Our creation, our preservation, our redemption, and all the mercies of the Gospel, are not merely acts of God, things that He has been pleased to do, and which we may rejoice that He has done, but which might have been otherwise; they are all the overflow of the fullness of God's own nature. Because He is what He is, He has done what He has done. The time will come when the world and all the works therein shall be burned up, even the works of God Himself. The time will come when there will be no Holy Bible, no Christian Church, no faith in Christ; but those who now know and trust in the redeeming work of God know that their salvation rests, not on the Bible, not on the Church, nor on their own faith, but on Him who is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever; that it can never fail until there be no God, or not the same God as our God.

III. Thus then God's promises are made surer than certainty; we know and more than know that He is ready to dwell with us. Only let us be such as those with whom He dwells: 'With him that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the spirit of the contrite ones'. Do not think that this is said only of the beginning of the Christian's conversion: that though he must have a contrite and humble spirit before God will come to dwell with him, yet his heart is healed and his spirit exalted as soon as God comes. It is with the heart that is—not only that has been—humble and contrite, that God will dwell; it is with the spirit that does not forget its own sin, even when it feels and knows and rejoices in God's grace. We have not to do anything that we cannot do, only what our

own nature requires of itself. Being weak, we ought to be humble; being sinful we ought to be contrite, even though we had nothing to hope for by it. To this simple confession of the truth—a thing that has no merit, that ought to require no effort—to this God promises His presence.—W. H. Simcox, *The Cessation of Prophecy*, p. 48.

References.—LVII. 16-18.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxv. No. 1490. LVII. 18.—*Ibid.* vol. xxii. No. 1279. LVII. 19.—*Ibid.* vol. xxvi. No. 1558. LVII. 20-21.—*Ibid.* vol. l. No. 2886. LVIII.—A. Rowland, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxxvii. 1890, p. 321. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xli. No. 2411

THE DANGERS OF FASTING

(Ash Wednesday)

'Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and show My people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins.'—Isaiah lviii. 1.

There are two classes of people to whom Lent brings no blessing—those who do not keep it at all, and those who, while they observe it with outward formalities and even with strictness, yet do not keep it in the spirit of true penitence.

I. What a strange picture is here drawn! a nation seemingly most religious, not only fulfilling the *ordinances* of religion, but delighting in them, and yet absolutely without spiritual life. This character is described in other parts of Isaiah, notably in the first chapter, and is the character which is most difficult to change.

What is the character which Isaiah is describing? We must carefully bear in mind that it is not the conscious hypocrite, but the self-righteous, the self-deceived man who is here brought before us. It is not the man who is wearing the garb of religion in order to deceive his fellow-men, but who all the time knows himself to be a hypocrite. On the contrary, this man is conscious only of virtue, he delights in approaching God, religion is the interest of his life. He is the prototype of the Pharisee in the temple. The Pharisees of our Lord's day, like those Jews in the time of Isaiah, to whom this rebuke is addressed, looked upon the externals of religion as its important part, and entirely ignored its life in the soul.

God demands external worship as the *manifestation* of the religion of the heart, not as a *substitute* for it.

II. Jehovah points out what was wrong in the fasting of His people:—

1. The *motive* of their fasting was wrong. They looked upon fasting as constituting a claim upon God, rather than as a help to penitence.

2. The *method* of their fasting was wrong, as God points out, 'Behold in the day of your fast ye find pleasure, and exact all your labours'.

3. The *accompaniment* of their fasting was wrong.

III. God proceeds to indicate the manner in which they may make their fasting acceptable to Him and of value to their own soul:—

1. Fasting should be accompanied with *penitence*.

2. Fasting should be associated with *almsgiving*, that is, with works of charity.

3. Fasting must always be attended by *prayer*.

We must fast with Christ in the wilderness during Lent if we are to rejoice with Christ in the gladness of Easter Day.—A. G. Mortimer, *The Church's Lessons for the Christian Year*, part ii. p. 229.

References.—LVIII. 1, 2.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxxix. No. 2308. LVIII. 3.—F. E. Paget, *Studies in the Christian Character*, p. 167. LVIII. 3-7.—J. G. Rogers, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. iii. p. 145. F. W. Farrar, *ibid.* vol. xxxi. p. 129. S. Pearson, *ibid.* vol. xii. p. 225. W. Archer Butler, *Sermons Doctrinal and Practical* (2nd Series), p. 148. T. Dale, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 2977. W. M. Punshon, *Sermons* (2nd Series), p. 317. G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 262. LVIII. 5.—H. J. Wilmot-Buxton, *Sunday Lessons for Daily Life*, p. 211. LVIII. 6.—A. D. Spong, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xli. 1892, p. 78. LVIII. 6, 7.—W. M. Punshon, "An Acceptable Fast," *Sermons*, p. 343.

THE NECESSITY OF SELFLESSNESS TO CHARITY

'Thy righteousness shall go before thee; the glory of the Lord shall be thy rereward.'—Isaiah lviii. 8.

I. This whole chapter is an exhortation to charity. The Prophet is urging men to deeds of ministration—to sympathy with the poor, compassion for the sorrowful, help for the needy. He says that such a life of sacrifice is of more value than the keeping of sacred days or the attendance at holy festivals. But he says that even this life of sacrifice will have no value unless it is sought for its own sake—that is to say, for the sake of the sufferer.

II. Do not think of the glory with which God will recompense you. Let that glory be to you in the rear—a thing not before your eyes. Let the only thing before your eyes be the cause of righteousness, the duty to minister, the need to succour man; 'Thy righteousness shall go before thee; the glory of the Lord shall be thy rereward'.

III. In the life for God there is an invitation to personal glory. But the Prophet tells us to put the promise behind our back until we have finished the sacrifice. He bids us forget the glory until we have surrendered the life. He says: 'There is joy in heaven to a sacrificial soul; but I would not have that soul keep the joy of heaven before its eyes. I would have it, when it serves the beggar, forget the golden streets and the pearly gates and the unsetting suns and the crystal rivers and the living fountains. I would have it remember only the claims of love. I would have it remember only the cries of the perishing and the groans of the wounded and the deep inarticulate longings of those who are too feeble to cry, let the glory of the Lord be my rereward.'—G. Matheson, *Messages of Hope*, p. 53.

References.—LVIII. 8.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxx. No. 1793; vol. liii. No. 3028. A. Ainger, *Sermons Preached in the Temple Church*, p. 268. LVIII. 9, 11.—S. Martin, *Sermons*, p. 169.

THE GUIDANCE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

'The Lord shall guide thee continually.'—Isaiah lviii. 11.

In very deed the promise given to God's people by Isaiah of old is fulfilled in the Christian Church; and

as we live our lives in union with Jesus, we are called on to live them under the constant guidance of the Holy Spirit of God.

I. Jesus is our Director. Notice how truly His direction supplies our need.

1. The first qualification which a wise director must possess is *knowledge*—a threefold knowledge. (*a*) He who would direct me aright must know clearly what it is that God wills me to be, he must have a clear apprehension of the end of my life. (*b*) He must know the nature of the one he guides. (*c*) He must have a continuous knowledge of the external circumstances of my life.

2. *Firmness.* Jesus Christ is firm; most tender, most patient, most constant, yet most firm.

3. We need *sympathy* also in our director; we need one who will feel with us as he guides us along the road which leads to eternal life. For of necessity this road is the *Via Crucis*, there is no other way which can bring us to the haven where we would be.

II. Notice *how* He directs us; it is by the ministry of the indwelling Spirit. Who is the Holy Spirit? You know full well that He is the Third Person of the Ever Blessed Trinity. Yet there are many who *practically* think of the Holy Ghost as simply an Influence coming forth from the Father and the Son. We can put this easily to the test. How often do you offer in your devotions direct adoration to the Holy Ghost? How often do you offer thanksgiving to the Holy Ghost? How often do you offer direct prayer to the Holy Ghost? If direct worship of the Holy Ghost is lacking from our devotions, is it not because the verity of His Divine Personality is not really laid hold on by us?

God the Holy Ghost is in us. Why? To lead us as our indwelling Guide. 'Let Thy loving Spirit lead me forth into the land of righteousness.' Such was the ancient cry, and that cry has been answered in an arresting manner in the Church of God. Speaking to His Apostles on the night of His betrayal, Christ uses these words about the Holy Ghost: 'He dwelleth with you and shall be in you'. Of old He was *with* them, guiding them from without, but now He is *in* us, guiding us from within; and this is the essential condition of all true Christian liberty, that we are taught by an indwelling Teacher, and guided by an indwelling Guide.

How does He guide us? Not by sensible visions and signs. (1) He guides us first by His action on our minds; He instils into them holy thoughts; He reveals truth after truth, each of which calls for moral correspondence. (2) He acts not only on our minds, but on our hearts. (3) He acts upon our wills. (4) He guides us by acting upon our conscience.

III. Practical rules to help you in living this guided life:—

1. We must obey our Lord's calls *promptly*.

2. Our Lord's calls must be *fully* responded to.

3. When Christ calls, we must respond *perseveringly*.—George Body, *The Guided Life*, p. 3.

A WATERED GARDEN

'A watered garden.'—Isaiah lviii. 11.

'A watered garden.' There is too much music in these two words; we could have done with one of them. 'A garden'—beautiful; 'Watered'—music in itself, but 'a watered garden,' both things together and both things in our possession, and we ourselves representing that dual wealth. Who can handle a Psalm so magnificent, so majestic?

I. Yet even this text may give us pause, may lead us to the asking of some piercing questions. The further such questions penetrate the soul the better for the soul's health. 'A watered garden:' cannot a garden water itself? No. That is the answer, definite, cold—discouraging, encouraging, as we may take the term. Is it not enough to be a garden? what matter about the sunshine? who cares about the rain or the dew? Is it not enough to be a garden, a geometric form, pearled and diamonded with many a flower? The king's gardens cannot do without rain; Solomon's parterres wither away but for the morning dew and the summer shower. We need something from without. We are always reminded that there is no one world; you may write it up and sneer at the other worlds, and enclose yourselves in little square cages in which there is no room for an altar; you can do this; but again and again the Lord of the vineyard cometh to seek fruit, and if we have not supplicated His sunshine and His rain, His morning dew, we shall have no fruit for Him when He comes to visit His own land.

Cannot a man sustain himself by his own resources? He cannot. If any man has tried to do so he will be the loudest in his confirmation of my reply. We soon exhaust ourselves, we want the other man, the other hand to touch, the other eyes to look into, the other voice to fill the dull vacancy of our solitude. Is it not enough to be a man? What do you mean by being a man? A figure is not a man, a corpse is not a man; a mere personality, if it could be detached from all other personalities, would not be a man. We cannot live upon stature or figure or aught that our hand can hold. Life is deeper; there is a sanctuary of life, a well far away, where spring water bubbles and gurgles and flashes out in the sunlight like a great gospel preached to the thirst of man. You think you can do with your own resources; let us test your foolish argument for one moment, if we may dignify it by the name of argument.

II. Self-sustenance is not the law of the body; why should it be the law of the mind? Let us reason from the lower to the higher. Every day every man has to go out of himself to keep himself going. If he would study that simple philosophy, he would soon begin to pray. But he will not: he is led captive by Satan at his will. Who can believe that the body not living upon its own resources proves to the soul that it has resources enough within itself? The mind is not sustained by itself. You have books; lay them down, be your own book. You cannot. You need some other man to write you a book, and sometimes to ex-

plain it to you. You have libraries. What are libraries but wheatfields for the mind? If I ask you in the autumn, What do you want with all these golden growths, all these purple riches and vegetable and fruit? you say, We require all these things for the sustenance of the body. And what do you want with all these libraries, and museums, and academies, and colleges, and schools of every name and degree? These are the wheatfields which the soul reaps, and it needs them every one, for the soul is bigger than literature. The soul lives by friction with some other soul. God is fire. To come into happy attrition with Him, or contact, or friction, who can tell what may come out of that soul touching soul, man praying to God? Prayer is a kind of friction if truly wise and honest, and out of that friction come sparks to lighten the night and put out the common sun.

III. As we do not leave a garden to take care of itself, neither should we leave ourselves to ourselves.

God waits to give us every one more water, more sustenance, more sunshine. What we might be if we would enjoy our privileges! Into what great distance we might have entered the sanctuary if we had really cared to be at the upper and inner altar that we might be blessed by its sacrifices! Oh that thou hadst hearkened unto me! then had thy peace flowed as a river and thy righteousness had been as the waves of the sea. A branch cannot bear fruit except it abide in the vine, and the Vine is Christ, and except we be in Christ our souls cannot receive the true culture or the true nourishment.—Joseph Parker, *City Temple Pulpit*, vol. II. p. 194.

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SIN AS SEPARATION FROM GOD

'Your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid His face from you, that He will not hear.'—Isaiah lix. 2.

We cannot fathom the mystery of sin; we may not even ask the questions, How? and Why? But we may contemplate the terrible fact, and remind ourselves of what it is.

All sin, in its degree, *separates* the soul from God: and whatever separates from God is sin.

I. All sin in its degree separates the soul from God, 'and sin, when it is perfected, bringeth forth death'. For as the separation of the body from the soul is the death of the body, so the utter separation of the soul from God is the death of the soul. *Absolute separation from God must be eternal death.* Every hope of restoration, every prayer for pardon, every upward glance to God as the soul's true good, is based on, and is the proof of, the fact that the soul is not yet altogether separated from God.

II. Sin is the great separation of the soul from Him Who is our Life. We talk of degrees of sin, of little sins and great ones, of sins mortal and sins venial. And though there is a sense in which all sins are mortal and all sins are venial, yet the distinction is a real one. Some sins tend more directly than others to widen the breach between the soul and God. We call them *mortal* because they have more power to weaken the will, and to blind the conscience; or because they imply a greater rejection of God's love, or estrange us more entirely from holy things, or bow us down more closely to the earth. And yet the little sins play a more terrible part than we know in the soul's tragedy. A great sin often brings its own visible punishment, its own recoil. We see its loathsomeness. But the little sins are so little we hardly notice them. They are like the drizzling rain which wets us through before we think of taking shelter.

III. And as sin is primarily the act by which the soul turns away from God, so the revelation of God's Love in Christ is primarily a *Reconciliation*, an Atonement; in the old sense of that word, an At-one-ment. Christ healed us, paid our debt, bought us with a price, satisfied the Law—all that He did; but they were all parts of the work of *reconciliation*. And that reconciliation is always in the Bible, a *reconciliation of man to God*. In the Incarnation the restoration of human nature is begun. On Calvary the work of Atonement is complete.

God in creation willed that man should serve Him with a willing love, and man refused. God wills that all should be reconciled to Him in Christ, and men reject His love.

IV. Sin is the unutterable mystery of our lives. We cannot solve it; but this we know—it is man's work, not God's. Not one soul shall be separated from Heaven which has not rejected the appeal of love: 'Ye will not come unto Me, that ye might have life'.—Aubrey L. Moore, *Some Aspects of Sin*, p. 65.

THE TRAGIC SCHISM

'Your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid His face from you.'—Isaiah lix. 2.

It is said that sometimes the ridge of rock or the sand-bank separating the island from the mainland to which it was once joined may be walked across at low tide, or at least traversed by one who will consent to wade. And so when the floods of passion ebb we may see traces of connecting pathways between ourselves and God and prove that converse with His presence is not a lost possibility of our history.

I. It was thus with Israel in the days of humiliation and reproach. Its people could look back to times of memorable intimacy with the Most High when God seemed to be very near and the prayers of prophets and righteous men possessed an efficacy

that had perished from the formal service of recent years. There may possibly be in us and in the communities to which we belong a like experience of decline. Restraints and reservations, which we call the spirit of the age, have wedged themselves in between our souls and God. There was once a union that seemed to be vital, but much has come between us. God's resources can never verge on exhaustion. It is only a moral impediment of the most portentous character that can keep God and the children of His household apart. Sin is the tragic schism, the great divide, parting off worlds in which God hides His face from those in which He reveals the glory of His loving kindness. And this is the paramount condemnation of sin; it bereaves the human spirit of God—its one essential good.

II. The conditions of modern business life are sometimes adduced as an excuse for the waning spirit of prayer and the outfading consciousness of Divine help. God, however, can make Himself known to men under all conditions but those of wilful sin, and if He has fixed your vocation and there is something in it that puts God far from you, that barrier is what you have perversely built up, and not what God has placed there by the determinative act of His Providence.

III. We are sometimes ready to put down this tragic schism to the progress of scientific thought. God is desiccated, systematized into a scheme of mechanics, turned into an ingenious automaton conditioned by His own methods. Perhaps we may one day see that the modern argument against prayer is the cast-off garment of the old theological fatalism, turned and remade with a few scraps of science to trim it into the fashion.

IV. The inscrutable methods of God's sovereignty are sometimes adduced to explain away this ominous separation referred to by the Prophet. More often than not it is sin which veils God and His goodness from the sad breaking, woe-begone heart, and we shall not get out of the gloom by closing our eyes to the explanation and assuming that this terrible silence of the Most High, this apparent indisposition to help at the mere thought of which the heart sickens and faints, is one of the decrees of His unsearchable sovereignty. This separation is often veiled from us by the illusion of the senses and the pomps of this present evil world. If sin is ignored, unconfessed, unforsaken, if unflattering truths are obstinately disguised, we shall find at last that our capacity for communion with God is lost and our doom is an abyss from which there can be no uplifting.—T. G. Selby, *The Unheeded God*, p. 24.

HOPELESS WEAVING

'Their webs shall not become garments.'—Isaiah lix. 6.

The Prophet Isaiah has laid hold on the idea, now a commonplace of our thought, that all character is a web. And from our text we wish to look at one or two methods of character-weaving which are doomed to miserable failure when the web of life is spun.

I. Half-done Duties.—To find a man who confesses that he does not do his duty is as rare as to find one who admits he has not got common sense. But experience shows us that multitudes perform their duty in such a way that it is but half-done. In the ordinary routine of life they are always a little late, and consequently have to work with haste—a small thing in itself did we not consider that this habit forms itself into a character which is discounted in the eyes of God and man. Or take the higher duty of man to love God and keep His commandments. There are moments of Pisgah vision, but what weary leagues of plain are there unredeemed by any thought of God! This half-done duty is life's shuttle plied with a palsied hand, and the fabric of character is such as in the end will put the weaver to the blush.

II. Half-conquered Temptations.—Many a man is conquered who does not fall. Such grace may be given that a man is able to stand, but if Satan can leave behind one little thought of evil he reckons it as a triumph. Our Saviour was tempted as other men, but when the tempter was gone there was not one spot of evil upon the pure lustre of our Redeemer's mind.

III. What is the Secret of Duties half-done, of Temptation half-conquered?—The secret is *half-consecrated* lives. If all the provinces of the soul do not obey the Divine mandate, we need not be astonished if rebellion sometimes shows its head. What we want is enthusiastic piety. The enthusiast spares no pains, counts no cost, deems no labour too much. Once let a soul be fired with the love of God, and body, soul, and spirit will be laid on the altar, a living sacrifice.

IV. When we have done our best to weave, we are not to go to heaven in our own garments. Christ has provided raiment for His people, woven on the cross and dyed there in colours more enduring than Tyrian purple. We have to weave as those who have to prove their calling, not win it.—J. Wallace, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lvi. 1899, p. 279.

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THE 'NO MORES' OF LIFE

'No more violence.
No more wasting nor destruction.
No more sun.
No more moon.
No more mourning.'—Isaiah lx.

I. The tone is very wonderful. No more sun, no more moon, no more wasting, no more violence, no more earth, no more firmament heaven, but quite another heaven, which that great firmament has been trying, and trying in vain, to hint at all these countless thousands of ages. It is very curious to notice how

many things you can part with without parting with yourself. It is astonishing how many things you could cut off your own self and leave yourself in all its superior faculties and capacities.

Now it is proposed, and given to us as a promise to be kept in the heart, that there shall be no more sun, no more moon, no more stars and planets and other fiery points. How foolish therefore we have been to have regarded all these things as of any importance beyond a very limited line! Yet how mightily we have been taken up with these things, and how forgetful we have been of prayer! Is it not like man, is it not a map of himself drawn by his own hand, that he should be so busy looking at things that were doomed before they ever came into existence?

II. What is the eternal in relation to this particular text and context? The words are beautiful: 'Thy God thy glory'; that is to say, thy God thy sun, thy God thy moon, thy God thy morning. Find all things in God, all you want, all you need, all that can be dreamed by sanctified fancy. I saw no temple in that upper city, said the seer in his Sabbath vision. And why did he see no temple in that upper city? Because the city was all temple. People forget that. They say that institutionalism will be done away; I would rather say that institutionalism will be purified, ennobled, sanctified; for God has been aiming at something even through the blunders of religion and civilization. All things are moving forward even when they seem to be moving backward, and things are often moving backward when they seem to be moving forward. We did not start the action, and we cannot control it. When one poor wondering man said, How can this thing be? how can a little one become a thousand, how can a small one become a strong nation? the great religious triumphant answer was, 'I the Lord will hasten it in His time'. So He orders out of His way all mean interruptions and all the temporary substitutes for Himself.

III. Then think, looking at the text and the context, what a wonderful process, taking the Bible as a whole, there is going on under what may be called the category of the 'no mores' of life. 'No more sun, no more moon, no more sea, no more light, no more death, neither shall there be any more pain'—thus you can look at God cutting away the universe until He gets at its soul, meaning, personality, outliving matter and surviving it by countless ages of ages.

No more violence, no more destruction, no more wasting. All these things exhaust themselves. Whatever burns is burning itself out. But if we could get behind the burning and see the meaning, then we would know that burning of that sort such as Moses saw at Horeb is a self-renewing burning. So that we read further in the context that the sun shall be as it were restored with another significance. 'Thy sun shall no more go down; neither shall thy moon withdraw itself: for'—God will give them both a new handling, He will take them up into Himself—'the Lord shall be thine everlasting life, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended'.

God has always been moving along the line of progress. This is His programme. 'For brass I will bring gold, and for iron I will bring silver, and for wood brass, and for stones iron;' everything shall change places with everything else. The Lord's providence is a great movement, a continual action and interplay, and no man can stay the action: it is God's. O rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him, and He will give thee thine heart's desire.—Joseph Parker, *City Temple Pulpit*, vol. v. p. 213.

Reference.—LX.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xlviii. No. 2764.

Isaiah lx. 1.

It is recorded that in Athens there was a law according to which any man who had a lighted candle and refused to allow another to light his by its means, was to be punished by death. This kind of communication is illustrated even in connexion with physical light, since it spreads and imparts itself to some other thing without itself diminishing or losing anything; and still more it is the nature of spirit itself to remain in possession of what belongs to it, while giving another a share in what it possesses.—Hegel.

Isaiah lx. 1.

Mrs. H. B. Stowe, in her reminiscences of her grandmother, tells how 'on one occasion, after her hearing had become slightly impaired, a wordy battle had been raging round her for some time, which, as she could not understand what we said, and as we seemed to be getting more and more earnest, moved her solicitude very deeply. At last she called one of my brothers to her, and said, "There, now, if you have talked long enough, I want you to read something to me," and gave him that eloquent chapter in Isaiah which begins, "Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee"; and goes on to describe the day when the whole earth shall be full of the glory of the Lord. Her face, while he was reading, was like a transparency, luminous with internal light. At the close she said, "Bishop Heber tells in his memoirs how, off in India, there were four ministers of Christ met together, all of different denominations, and they read this chapter together, and found then there was one thing they all agreed in exactly".'

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LIGHT OBTAINED: LIGHT DIFFUSED

(The Epiphany)

'Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee. . . . And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising.'—Isaiah lx. 1-3.

We ourselves are a part fulfilment of this prophecy. It is Israel's God we worship, Israel's faith that beats

in our hearts, Israel's hope we cherish, Israel's Messiah in Whom we trust for salvation, Israel's privilege to which we are admitted. The light is risen. It has spread to the dark places of the earth. Many out of every nation have come to its beams; they bask in its glory.

The Church of to-day is what it is through the fulfilment of this prophecy in part; the Church of the future will be what it shall become through its fulfilment in completeness. God hath not cast off His people whom He foreknew. The Redeemer shall come to Zion (chap. LIX. 20; Rom. XI. 26). Israel shall be converted. Their conversion will have a powerful reactive effect on the Gentiles. 'For,' says St. Paul, 'if the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be but life from the dead?' (Rom. XI. 11-16).

Dropping the special reference to Israel, and viewing the text in its universal bearings, we have—

I. The Church Enlightened by Christ's Coming.—'Thy light is come. . . . The glory of the Lord is risen upon thee' (v. 1). The reference is to the coming of Christ, the God-man Redeemer. Christ arose upon His Church like a great sun, imparting light, reviving courage, diffusing gladness, making bright with glory. 'The Sun of Righteousness' (Mal. IV. 2). Christ gives light—

(*a*) *By imparting saving knowledge.* He taught men of the Father. He showed the way of life. He put into the precepts of the law a depth of spiritual meaning never seen in them before. He could say of Himself, 'I am the Light of the World'; 'I am the Truth' (St. John VIII. 12; XIV. 6). Christ could give this light because He was Himself the sent of the Father for the salvation of the world. He came with full knowledge of the Divine purpose. He spake with absolute authority. There was nothing the world needed to know that Christ could not tell it.

(*b*) *By restoring the Church to power and influence.* The godly in Israel were but a handful. They were down-trodden and despised. The Church of the exile stood sadly in need of comfort. But Christ would lift up its head; He would reinstate it in power and influence among the nations; He would give it prosperity. This was bringing it light. Accordingly, a new spring-time came with the advent of the Saviour. He made His Church a power. Its power speedily became felt, and continues to this day. Christ's kingdom is at this hour the highest thing on earth. It is a permanent and influential factor in history—a thing of might.

(*c*) *By conferring on the Church the beauty of holiness.* This may answer to the 'glory' which the Prophet declares 'shall be seen upon it' (v. 3). Christ confers a glory on the Church by the spiritual gifts which He bestows, and by the graces which become visible in the character of His people through the operation of His Word and Spirit.

II. The Light of the Church in Contrast with the Surrounding Darkness.—'For, behold, darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people,' etc. (v. 2). The Church, believers, Christian nations, enlightened by Christ, stand in marked contrast with the darkness of the world around. The effect of the light is to make the darkness more visible. Contrast—

(*a*) *The enlightenment of faith with the boasted enlightenment of reason.* 'The world by wisdom knew not God' (1 Cor. I. 21). The world's cleverness did not lead it to the truth. It leads it often to reject the truth now that it has come. The boasted enlightenment of antiquity left it profoundly immoral. The theories, schemes, reasonings of our philosophers to-day leave the mind in just as great uncertainty on the chief questions of existence (God, the soul, future life, etc.); are often as hopelessly astray in their first principles (materialism, utilitarianism, etc.); and are as powerless as the ancient systems to reach the conscience and renew the heart.

(*b*) *The enlightenment of nations which have received the truth with the darkness of surrounding heathenism.* The nations which have the most light of every kind on earth are the *Christian* nations. The purer the gospel, the more advanced the peoples. Where this light has not penetrated, the darkness is gross and the peoples are stationary. Heathenism is sadly uniform in the spectacle it presents of idolatry, debasement, cruelty, gross moral corruption, hideous superstition, etc.

(*c*) *The enlightenment of individuals who have obeyed the truth with the darkness of those who are still in sin.* The believer recognizes in his own experience that, whereas he was once darkness, he is now light in the Lord. The change in his character manifests this to be true. The unbeliever, on the contrary, knows his state to be one of darkness, of moral evil, of unhappiness; through lack of true knowledge of God, of hopelessness as regards the future.

III. The Duty of the Church to take Advantage of and to Diffuse her Light.—'Arise, shine' (v. 1). 'And the Gentiles shall come,' etc. (v. 3).

(*a*) *The Church's duty to take advantage of her light.*—Arise to welcome it. Shine in the beauty of it. Reflect the glory of it. Shine (1) in the light of a fuller knowledge; (2) in the light of a more perfect sanctification; (3) in the light of a higher gladness (Phil. IV. 4). The light may shine on the sleeping or the dead, and no benefit be derived, no gladness communicated. 'Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light' (Eph. V. 14).

(*b*) *The Church's duty to diffuse her light.* She is to let her light shine that others may behold it. She is to use active measures to spread it abroad. Here the figure fails. The sun shines by natural law; the gospel is not spread abroad save by human exertions. Missionary effort is of the essence of the Church's calling (St. Mark XVI. 16).

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ENLARGEMENT OF HEART

'Thine heart shall fear, and be enlarged.'—Isaiah lx. 5.

The word 'heart' has a very wide meaning in the Scriptures of the Old Testament. It is used to express the whole inward nature of man. It is the seat of knowledge, it is the home of feeling, and it is the spring of action.

As to the word rendered 'fear,' it is not exactly fear itself which is meant, but the excitement, the exaltation, the throb which comes when a man trembles on the verge of action, that is meant by this word. It is the thrill which comes to a man as he girds himself up to a new departure.

I. 'Thine heart shall throb with an emotion corresponding to the greatness of the situation.' So it is in life at every great crisis of living. It is the way by which human nature is made, by which men attain to manhood, by which Christian men attain to Christian manhood.

The vision comes, and the response comes also, and the heart fears and is enlarged. Passing from the fact that this has been so in the case of all the great workers of the world, let us dwell for a little on the state of mind depicted here. Wide and deep feeling are needed in the making of man. Nor is deep feeling possible without the vision of the true, the beautiful, and the good. Feeling keeps pace with intelligence, and it responds to every enlargement of the vision. Feeling is needed to strengthen the vision, and the wider vision calls forth a deeper emotion, and these translate themselves into action.

II. There are those who fail to respond to the vision, and who thus lose the power of feeling that deep emotion which the Prophet here describes. There are those who respond to the vision at once, and having seen and felt the glory of it, desire to live always in the enjoyment of that exalted emotion. But the emotion passes, as the vision, or that form of the vision, becomes familiar. The great emotion was not meant to last, it was to accomplish something, and having done its work it passes away.

III. There is progress in the Christian life, and at each progressive stage there is the added vision and the responsive emotion.

Thus we ought not to seek to ask for a repetition of the former vision, or for a renewal of former experiences; there is some better thing in store for us. There is the fullness of Him in Whom there is all the fullness of God.

The text discloses the abiding interest of Christian life. It can never be without interest to Him who lives it, it can never be monotonous; for as it unfolds itself and becomes more fully conscious of its great meaning, it opens to itself fresh fields, higher intellectual, emotional, and volitional possibilities, and calls on us to make them actual.—J. Iverach, *The Other Side of Greatness*, p. 35.

References.—LX. 7.—Bishop Simpson *Sermons*, p. 209. LX. 8.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. ii. No. 63; vol. xlviii. No. 2764; vol. liii. No. 3051. T. De Witt Talmage, *Sermons*, p. 282. C. Perren, *Revival Sermons in Outline*, p. 337. J. M. Neale, *Sermons on the Prophets*, vol. i. p. 245.

OFFERINGS FOR THE SANCTUARY

'The glory of Lebanon shall come unto thee, the fir-tree, the pine-tree, and the box together, to beautify the place of My sanctuary; and I will make the place of My feet glorious.'—Isaiah lx. 13.

The earth is full of God's wonderful works, do you say, and what are we to do with them? what to do with marbles and precious stones, gold and silver, and fine linen? Give them to God. Render them to Him from Whom, and through Whom, and to Whom are all things. This is their proper destination. Is it a better thing to dress up our sinful bodies in silk and jewels, or to ornament therewith God's house and God's ritual? Does anyone doubt what all these excellent things are meant for? or, at least, can he doubt what they are *not* meant for? not meant, surely, for sinners to make themselves fine withal. What presumption would that be, what senselessness! Does not the whole world speak in praise of God? Does not every star in the sky, every tree and flower upon earth, all that grows, all that endures, the leafy woods, the everlasting mountains, speak of God? Do not the pearls in the sea, and the jewels in the rocks, and the metals in the mine, and the marbles in the quarry—do not all rich and beautiful substances everywhere witness of Him who made them? Are they not His work, His token, His glory? Are they not a portion of a vast natural temple, the heavens, earth, and sea, a vast cathedral for the Bishop of our souls, the All-sufficient Priest, who first created all things and then again, became, by purchase, their Possessor? Does it not strike you, then, as extreme presumption, and a sort of sacrilege, to consecrate them to anyone's glory but God's.—J. H. Newman.

References.—LX. 17.—J. S. Maver, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. liv. 1898, p. 302. J. Keble, *Sermons for Christmas and Epiphany*, p. 327. LX. 18.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—Isaiah XLIX.-LXVI.* p. 188. Bishop Simpson's *Sermons*, p. 279.

THY GOD THY GLORY

'Thy God thy glory.'—Isaiah lx. 19.

This is the end; this is the final meaning; this is the upshot. We wanted to know how things would terminate, and the Prophet tells us, and the Apostle tells us, and they both say, God shall be all in all. The Prophet saw it from afar. We need men who can see the morning; most of us can see and feel the night. There were men in the old, old time whose face was warmed by the morning beam. They persisted because God was with them. God said, Cry aloud, spare not, and tell the world that the morning is coming. We need these morning singers, people who have great sweet words to say when appearances are against them

and all the heavens appear to crush them down. Some of us have moods, we see light now and then, we have good times; but the Prophet saw the morning afar off, and spake of it according to the Spirit of God.

The point that I wish to fix attention upon is, that the end of all things is God. We must end where we began; the last note and the first must melt into one burst of music. The Apostle says the end of all things is God; Isaiah says thy God shall be thy glory; and all through there is a feeling that Alpha is Omega, that Omega has in it Alpha, and the purposes of God are one.

I. 'Thy God thy glory.' It might have been so from the first; God meant it, but man turned away from God. Then came the promise, and from that point God has been working to bring man back again into His movement. Consider that things were not done to-day and to-morrow; consider that God, having uttered a purpose and revealed a plan, will keep to it till the end. The centuries will die, and be as white ghosts on the fields of time, but God's eternity quietly, calmly, majestically, goes on.

II. 'Thy God thy glory.' It might always have been so, but it was not so. What happened? Sin happened, and it will take God many a century to get sin out of the universe, but it shall go. God showed man the way back to Himself, but it is of grace, not of works, or discovery, or invention, or human plan; the way back to God is the very wonder of love.

III. 'Thy God thy glory.' He will never be less than God: He will be on the throne for ever and ever, and He will be the glory of man. What has God done to recover man's apostasy, to bring him into right relation to himself? He has sent him a Saviour, Christ the Lord; that Saviour has come to seek you and me, to seek the whole human race. He speaks to every man in His own tongue wherein he was born. He adapts Himself, He reincarnates Himself, He will be to us what we can be to Him, that He may raise us up into His own personality and majesty. He is determined to win; there cannot be two Gods. He has set to His seal that the world is His, and He will redeem it, and has redeemed it with blood more precious than gold.

IV. 'Thy God thy glory.' Do not imagine that we can easily get to the end; through much tribulation we must enter every kingdom that is worth entering—how much more in entering into the kingdom of God! And make of the passage what you like, degrade it, you cannot take all the poetry out of it—'These are they which washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb'. That is a secret meaning, a sacred meaning, a practicable and intelligent meaning, and until we get at that meaning we have not yet begun the great Gospel way.

We have not given God field enough; we should have given Him more elbow-room. He will take it, and not until we see things from that point of view shall we be able to believe that His will will be done on earth as it is in heaven. 'Thy God thy glory'—a recovered God, a reconciled God, a reconciled man, all things tending to unity, radiance, music; then God shall say, 'It is finished!'—Joseph Parker, *City Temple Pulpit*, vol. vi. p. 204.

References.—LX. 20.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xx. No. 1176. T. Gasquoine, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxxvii. 1890, p. 330. J. Page Hopps, *Sermons of Sympathy*, p. 93. LX. 22.—G. Matheson, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lv. 1899, p. 36. P. T. Forsyth, *ibid.* vol. lvii. 1900, p. 305. J. Percival, *Some Helps for School Life*, p. 264. J. Keble, *Sermons for Christmas and Epiphany*, p. 299.

Isaiah lxi. 1.

Speaking against the South, on 3 February, 1863, John Bright declared: 'I cannot understand how any Englishman, who in past years has been accustomed to say that "there was one foul blot upon the fair fame of the American Republic," can now express any sympathy for those who would perpetuate and extend that blot. And more, if we profess to be, though it be with imperfect and faltering steps, the followers of Him who declared it to be His Divine mission "to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised," must we not reject with indignation and scorn the proffered alliance and friendship with a power based on human bondage, and which contemplates the overthrow and the extinction of the dearest rights of the most helpless of mankind?'

References.—LXI. 1.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxvii. No. 1604; vol. xl. No. 2371. G. Matheson, *Voices of the Spirit*, p. 73. T. G. Selby, *The Holy Spirit and Christian Privilege*, p. 25. C. Kingsley, *Sermons on National Subjects*, p. 17. W. M. Punshon, *Sermons, the Year of Jubilee*, p. 171; see also *Outlines of Sermons on the Old Testament*, p. 239. LXI. 2.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons on the Prophets*, vol. i. p. 254. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxiii. No. 1369. LXI. 3.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—Isaiah XLIX.-LXVI.* p. 191. J. Pulsford, *Infoldings and Unfoldings*, p. 1. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xvii. No. 1016. LXI. 4.—Mandell Creighton, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. li. 1897, p. 324. LXI. 7.—J. B. Brown, *The Soul's Exodus and Pilgrimage*, p. 392. LXI. 10.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xliii. No. 2543. LXI. 11.—*Ibid.* vol. xix. No. 1104.

THE REIGN OF SOLOMON

'For Zion's sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth.'—Isaiah lxii. 1.

I. Solomon reigned over a great empire. The Jews were never masters of so wide an extent of land before or after as in his days. The king himself began his reign in a spirit which promised well for the coming time. He asked God neither for long life nor for riches, nor for victory over his enemies; but for a wise and understanding heart to discern between good and bad, that he might be able to do true justice among so great a people; and immediately the wisdom given in answer to his prayer was put to a sore trial, and proved itself equal to the need; and all Israel, we are told, feared the king for they saw that the wisdom of God was in him to do judgment. This is the first mark of Solomon's reign.

The ruler of the people is also the wisest of the people. The second mark is of another kind; we must attend to it well if we would understand the rest of the Bible. It is the building of the temple.

II. When the peaceful Solomon was settled in his kingdom, he began to build the temple of the Lord. He knew as he said 'that the heaven of heavens cannot contain the Most High; yet he rightly prepared for Him a house set apart from all common uses, which should bear His name and be the sign of His presence, and he rightly poured forth upon this house of God all his riches to make it beautiful and wonderful to behold. That temple of Solomon was the beginning of our Churches.

III. The latter end of Solomon's reign is sad to think of. His many heathen wives turned away his heart after other gods. He had freely spent his riches in building a temple for the Lord, but he did not keep his own heart pure and true to the Lord; that Divine temple he neglected. His sin no doubt spread far and wide among the people. The worship of idols came in once more in the very sight of the new temple. When he died and his son Rehoboam became king, a day of reckoning followed. By his bad conduct as a ruler Rehoboam goaded a large part of the people into rebellion. Ten out of the twelve tribes refused to obey him and set up another king; only two remained faithful to him. From this time the ten tribes are called the Kingdom of Israel or Ephraim, the two tribes are called the Kingdom of Judah. Cut off from Jerusalem and the temple the Kingdom of Israel fell at once into idol worship, yet great and true prophets were not wanting; and the deeds of Elijah and Elisha remind us that God did not forsake even those who were estranged from His holy place and from the kingly family of David. The story of the Kingdom of Judah is sad enough likewise. The end of both kingdoms is the same. Both become the victims of powerful foreign nations. The Kingdom of Israel is destroyed by the Assyrians who carry the people into captivity. The Kingdom of Judah, often threatened, often reduced to sore straits, lasts on three or four generations longer and then its day of doom comes. Jerusalem is taken, and the people of Judah are dragged away as captives to Babylon.—A. F. Hort, *Sermons on the Books of the Bible*, p. 59.

References.—LXII. 1.—W. C. E. Newbolt, *Church Times*, vol. lviii. 1907, p. 586. T. T. Carter, *Lent Lectures*, 1860-1866, p. 374. LXII. 1, 2, 6, 7.—A. G. Mortimer, *The Church's Lessons for the Christian Year*, part i. p. 151. LXII. 1, 6, 7.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—Isaiah XLIX.-LXVI.* p. 200. LXII. 2.—"Plain Sermons" by contributors to the *Tracts for the Times*, vol. ix. p. 3. LXII. 4.—R. F. Horton, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxvii. 1905, p. 276. LXII. 5.—R. E. Hutton, *The Crown of Christ*, vol. ii. p. 417. H. P. Liddon, *Sermons Preached on Special Occasions*, 1860-1889, p. 320. J. Stalker, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. liv. 1898, p. 371.

'Take ye no rest and give Him no rest.'—Isaiah lxii. 6, 7 (R.V.).

This is the double counsel for the Christian soldier, and it links together working and praying.

I. Observe how the natural blends with the supernatural. Take *ye* no rest. Therein our Lord was our pattern. How He toiled! 'I must work while it is day. The night cometh when no man can work.' I am inclined to think that never perhaps since the beginning of the Christian Church was this precept nearer to receiving a complete obedience. Take ye no rest. Most of us are very busy. The day begins early and ends late, and some of the hours are long, and perhaps the most comforting thought that comes to you ere you sleep is that you have done the best that ever you could. Often, no doubt, the tired body makes a tired soul, and there is too frequent feeling of disheartenment and defeat.

II. So let us lay the stress on the second part of the precept—'Give *Him* no rest'. That is what the issue of the battle turns on. You give yourself no rest, you give no rest to the workers under you; you are prompt to censure anyone who seems to neglect anything; you are willing to rally the little strength you have left for any new burden. Try this, Give *Him* no rest.

Our Lord in a peculiar and remarkable manner insisted on this and practised this. He taught it in those strange parables which shed such a shower of light on His inner mind. It is strange to think that He Himself gave His Father no rest. It might seem as if He, least of all, needed to pray. The Prince of this world had nothing in Him; He was holy, harmless, and undefiled, separate from sinners. Yet to this duty and privilege of importunate prayer the mystical body are called by their Covenant Head. We know how He prayed on the mountain and in the desert. I agree with Bishop Monrad, who says that the words 'He offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears,' refer rather to a habit than to a particular instance. He prayed without ceasing, and He calls upon us to do the same.

In temporal things there is often a limit to importunateness. God may say to us, 'Speak no more to Me of this matter'. 'I besought the Lord thrice,' said St. Paul. But when we are praying for conversions importunity cannot be pressed too hard. We are not to give runaway knocks at the heavenly door; we are to knock there till we are answered. —W. Robertson Nicoll, *British Weekly*, 25 March, 1909.

References.—LXII. 6-7.—A. F. Winnington Ingram, *Banners of the Christian Faith*, p. 76. W. F. Cobb, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. liii. 1898, p. 58. J. T. Briscoe, *ibid.* vol. lvi. 1879, p. 181. R. Waddy Moss, *The Discipline of the Soul*, p. 153. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxxvii. No. 2189. LXII. 10.—*Ibid.* vol. xix. No. 1131. H. J. Wilmot-Buxton, *Sunday Lessons for Daily Life*, p. 122. W. Brooke, *Sermons*, p. 256. LXII. 11, 12.—Spurgeon, *ibid.* vol. xxxiii. No. 1947. LXII. 12.—*Ibid.* vol. ix. No. 525. C. A. Kelly, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxviii. 1905, p. 57.

MIGHTY TO SAVE

'Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? this that is glorious in His apparel, travelling in the greatness of His strength? I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save.'—ISAIAH LXIII. 1.

How is this free salvation to be appropriated so that it shall have a practical influence on our hearts and lives? How are we to lay hold of it individually?

I. Grasp the Meaning of Your Baptism.—God Almighty applied this free salvation to each of us at our baptism.

God chose you: He elected you into Jesus Christ at your baptism. He gave you His Holy Word, and He gave you the Holy Spirit to dwell in your heart and to reveal to you clearly what is taught in that Bible about your Saviour.

II. Submit Your Will to God.—As soon as you understand your position, believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. Act on what is revealed. Having learnt that God has given you a Saviour, and that this Lord Jesus Christ has broken down every barrier, and that, having been baptized into Him, your debt has been paid by Him, go on to the next step. In the dark, with but very imperfect knowledge as yet, and with no eye upon you, it may be, but His, make up your mind, though without feeling any improvement in yourself, without love, without any power to pray—make up your mind to *trust* Him, as a child in the dark trusts its mother.

III. Seek to be Filled with the Peace and Joy of Believing.—Having *first* trusted Him, instead of waiting to trust Him till you have found peace, try to obtain, in God's way, the peace which passeth understanding. Seek for it as God has taught us to seek; not, at this stage, by hard struggling self-examination, although that is most useful afterwards; but by simply *looking up to the Brazen Serpent.* Read about Jesus. Try to realize His presence. Speak to Him, if only by a few short words such as 'Lord help me! Open mine eyes! If Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean.'

IV. Seek, if Need Be, the Help of God's Ministers.—If you are not able alone to realize your acceptance in Christ, use the other help that God has provided for you. Go to one of His ministers. He has ordained them for this very work—to lead you to Christ.

Whether by the help of others or alone, this step must be taken. Until we know something of the peace of God which passeth all understanding, true progress is impossible. Till we have realized the forgiveness of sins, the very earnestness which might have raised us into the rank of saints will only drive us into the depths of a morbid superstition, or of a hopeless despair.

Forgiveness is the beginning, and not the end, of the Christian life. We are set free at once from the burden of guilt, in order that we may *run* in the way of God's commandments with a heart at liberty; that we may live in Him and for Him; that, being nourished by the Body and Blood of our Lord, we may grow in grace, and bring forth fruit unto holiness, to the praise of the glory of His grace who hath made us accepted in the Beloved.—G. H. WILKINSON, *The Invisible Glory*, p. 70.

REFERENCES.—LXIII. 1.—S. R. Driver, *Sermons on Subjects Connected with the Old Testament*, p. 178. J. B. Lightfoot, *Cambridge Sermons*, p. 19. A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—Isaiah XLIX.-LXVI.* p. 217. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. iii. No. 111; vol. xxx. No. 1947. LXIII. 1-4.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons on the Prophets*, vol. i. p. 266. LXIII. 2, 3.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—Isaiah XLIX.-LXVI.* p. 221. LXIII. 3.—Cosmo Gordon Lang, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lv. 1899, p. 244. C. Vince, *The Unchanging Saviour*, p. 137. F. D. Huntington, *Christian Believing and Living*, p. 202. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xliv. No. 2567. LXIII. 7.—*Ibid.* vol. xix. No. 1126.

THE SYMPATHY OF GOD

(Passiontide)

'In all their afflictions He was afflicted.'—ISAIAH LXIII. 9.

I. THERE are two great afflictions in which our Saviour may be said to have been afflicted. There is, in the first place, the affliction of sin. It is a wondrous and overwhelming truth that God in the person of Christ chose to learn by a personal experience the power of evil. And so ever more and more He, the sinless One, bears the sins of men upon His own heart, feels them even as if they were His own, until at last they seem even to obscure the Father's Face. . . . What else is the meaning of that cry, 'My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?' . . . What does it mean except that, in that darkest hour, the Son of God had so completely identified Himself with His sinful brethren that 'in all their affliction He was afflicted'.

And it is this which gives Him His power to-day; the fact that He stooped to learn by a personal experience all the strength of evil, that He descended to enter into the common human struggle, and in issuing victorious to be the leader against the forces of evil everywhere. He can save because He has conquered. And in our own private and personal struggles against evil, is it not the sense of Christ's victory and Christ's sympathy which is our chief encouragement in what might seem a hopeless battle?

II. The other great affliction of which I am thinking is the affliction of suffering. Do we not feel the suffering of the world to be one of our great difficulties in the way of believing in the goodness of God—the undeserved suffering of the world?

The mystery of pain may be insoluble, but at least it is illuminated by the truth which Passiontide proclaims, that by pain was the world redeemed; that He Who was 'in the form of God,' Himself entered into the bitterness of our human experiences—made them all His own—and became 'obedient to death, even the death of the cross'.—H. R. GAMBLE, *The Ten Virgins*, p. 115.

THE PASSION OF GOD

'In all their afflictions He was afflicted.'—ISAIAH LXIII. 9.

I. HEBREW piety has taught us two truths regarding God which are not always united in human thought,

but which are necessary to the perfect idea, and the first is not His sympathy but His spirituality. With travail of soul the saints of the Old Testament extricated the Being of God from the phenomena of nature and safeguarded His personality from the abstractions of philosophy. God who made the clouds His chariot and rode upon the wings of the wind was the creator of the ends of the earth, and He Who was the source of righteousness and power dwelt with the contrite and humble heart.

Surely it was enough for one school of religious thinkers to bequeath this heritage to the world! But it was an even greater achievement when the prophets of Israel infused that pure spirituality with a most intimate sympathy and convinced many generations that the Holy One of Israel is the most gracious Deity who has ever entered into the heart of man. There is no emotion of the human heart they did not assign to God, no tender relation of life they did not use to illustrate His love.

Is not the Incarnation of Christ the convincing climax of the Divine sympathy? Jesus born of the Virgin Mary and crucified upon the Cross of Calvary is God with us, baptized into the very depths of human suffering. When Jesus came and lived among us the heart of God was laid bare, and every one can see in the Gospel that patient wistful love which inhabits the secret place of the universe. The cross is not only in the heart of human life, it is also in the heart of God. He is the chief of all sufferers, because He is the chief of all lovers.

II. One does not forget, while insisting on the fellow-suffering of God, that there is a certain danger in analogies between the human and Divine, and one lays to heart the warnings against Anthropomorphism. But we must not allow ourselves to be beaten by big words, and we can surely distinguish between what is real and unreal. Has it not been the religious expert—the saints, the mystics, and the prophets—who have most loved to dwell upon this likeness between God and man? When we make a sacrifice for those whom we love and stand upon the height of our heart, may we not be sure that our love is the outcome of the passion of God, and that if we deal kindly by our flesh and blood He will be ten times more kind to us all?

III. With this glimpse into the heart of God we gather riches for our creed because we learn the idea of a lovable God. It is possible to think correctly about God, but not kindly. Master thinkers miss their footing when they speculate on the Being of God, but the simplest can hide himself in God's protecting love, who is perfect father and mother, perfect husband and friend.

With this glimpse into the Divine heart we also gather riches for the struggle of life, because we have a sympathetic God. It is hard enough in any case to pray unto one whom we cannot see, and it is beyond our power if we imagine Him untouched by this world's agony, which breaks beneath His feet as spray upon the base of a cliff.—J. Watson (Ian Maclaren), *The Inspiration of Our Faith*, p. 85.

Illustration.—

Think not thou canst sigh a sigh,
And thy Maker is not by;
Thinkest thou canst weep a tear
And thy Maker is not near.

O He gives to us His joy
That our grief He may destroy,
Till our grief is fled and gone
He doth sit by us and moan.

—William Blake.

References.—LXIII. 9.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—Isaiah XLIX.-LXVI.* p. 226. J. Baines, *Twenty Sermons*, p. 15. C. Kingsley, *Sermons on National Subjects*, p. 59. T. B. Dover, *Some Quiet Lenten Thoughts*, p. 23. E. A. Draper, *The Gift of Strength*, p. 37. R. W. Church, *Village Sermons* (2nd Series), p. 84. LXIII. 10.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxxvi. No. 2179. LXIII. 11-14.—*Ibid.* vol. xxxviii. No. 2258. LXIII. 12-14.—*Ibid.* vol. xxxvii. No. 2229. LXIII. 13.—T. G. Rooke, *The Church in the Wilderness*, p. 153. LXIII. 14.—G. Matheson, *Voices of the Spirit*, p. 76.

JEHOVAH OUR REDEEMER

'Our Redeemer from everlasting is Thy Name.'—Isaiah lxiii. 16.

If we wish to learn the full content of these terms 'Redeemer,' 'redemption,' as descriptive of Christ's salvation, we must go back to their earliest use in the Old Testament revelation. For Isaiah, we must not forget, was a Jew, and his prophecy in the first instance was delivered to Jews. And when he used this word 'Redeemer,' and told the Jews that 'Goel' or 'Redeemer' was Jehovah's name from of old, the ideas which both he and his hearers would attach to the word would be the ideas which were attached to it in its common use in their law.

I. The law concerning the redeemer thus involved these particulars as belonging to his office.

(1) The redeemer must be *near of kin*. (2) The *duties* of the kinsman-redeemer were three. If any of his brethren had through poverty been dispossessed of his inheritance, the redeemer was to buy it back with a price, and reinstate his poor brother therein. If, worse yet, any of his poor brethren had through stress of poverty sold himself into slavery, the kinsman-redeemer was to buy him out of his slavery by giving a price to the master, and set him free again. If, finally, any of his brethren should be maliciously slain, it was his duty to 'redeem his brother's blood,' as the phrase was; to redeem his brother's blood by slaying the murderer.

II. And now, in the light of this history, we come back to the text, '"Our Redeemer" from everlasting is Thy Name!'

The word plainly contains *a prediction of the Incarnation*. For to Hebrew thought there was no such thing known as that a redeemer should be other than a kinsman. They also teach the *voluntariness*, and thus the *grace* of the great salvation. **For**

while the avenging of blood was a *command* laid on the next of kin, it was not so with the redemption of persons or possessions. The word is not 'he shall,' but 'he may'.

Further, the text shows *what is included in Christ's work as Redeemer.*

We are reminded, then, that Christ's work as Redeemer involves first of all the redemption of our *persons.* That the sinner is, by reason of his sin, fallen into bondage is one of the most familiar thoughts of Scripture. The Scripture represents this bondage as fourfold. There is *a bondage to the law.* There is also *a bondage to sin,* in which we have been bound. We are in bondage to the power of sin, and from this Christ came to set us free. We have also been redeemed by Christ from *the bondage to death* in which we were aforetime. But there is also *a bondage to Satan,* and from this bondage also Christ's work as our Kinsman-Redeemer has freed us.

III. He was also to redeem his brother's *inheritance,* and reinstate him in it.

This word Redeemer, illumined by that old Mosaic law, manifestly bears in its bosom *the promise of resurrection from the dead.* For the Levitical *goel* did not buy back the lost estate of his impoverished brother that he might himself enter into it and enjoy it. No: he bought it back for that poor brother. So it follows from this text that those whom Jehovah Jesus redeems must be reinstated in the inheritance from which they have been cast out.

IV. The redeemer was, in virtue of his office, *the avenger of blood.* Christ, then, not although Redeemer, but because He is Redeemer, must be the Avenger of blood. It is, therefore, just because Christ is *Redeemer* that He will yet destroy—as it is written that He shall destroy—him that hath the power of death, that is, the devil, and cast him into the lake of fire.—S. H. Kellogg, *The Past a Prophecy of the Future,* p. 116.

OPTIMISM

'Doubtless Thou art our Father, though Abraham be ignorant of us, and Israel acknowledge us not. Thou, O Lord! art our Father, our Redeemer from everlasting is Thy name.'—Isaiah lxiii. 16 (R.V.).

This grand challenge of Isaiah represents the final appeal of the spirit of man—baffled, confounded, heartbroken with the 'riddle of this painful earth'. It is the standpoint of the optimist, who, in spite of the difficulties and horrors and failures in a world wet with tears, persists in enthroning a good God behind all phenomena, an infinite and responsible Love Spirit behind all visible things, and challenging Him in the words: 'Doubtless Thou art our Father, though the pessimist be ignorant of us, and the facts of life seem against us'.

I. Practically, there are only three possible conceptions of God's relation to that which we, in our limited comprehension, call evil. The first is that evil exists independently of God's will; that He was, as it were, taken by surprise and His will thwarted. To believe this, however you may deck your thought in Christian phrases, is to be a dualist. If God, and God alone, has not existed from all eternity, He does not exist at all. The reflections of the really thoughtful will not entertain the conception for a moment.

Secondly, that moral evil and its consequences are self-engendered. That God is one, and irresistibly omnipotent, and therefore could have prevented evil if He would, but did not. This is worse than Atheism, inasmuch as it is Bad-Godism, and that, practically, is devil worship. It predicates that God is the sole supreme power, and yet not good; that man at his best is better, far better, than God. And so this conception, though it may be enshrined in tradition, is a *reductio ad absurdum.* There remains the third conception. That God is the Infinite, Eternal, Universal Spirit; the one self-existing substance expressing Himself in all visible things; perfectly conscious everywhere; with an individuality higher than what we mean by personality. That whatever is, is not in spite of, but because of, a 'determinate counsel and fore-knowledge'.

II. Now, consider, is not this the conclusion to which St. Paul had arrived?

1. He lays emphasis on the magnitude and universality of the mystery of evil. 'The whole creation,' he says, 'groaneth and travaileth together in pain'. There is no minimizing or ignoring of facts.

2. He absolutely fearlessly attributes it to its one only possible elemental source. 'The creation,' he says, 'was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of Him who subjected it.' That is the supreme ruler, God.

3. He positively and dogmatically affirms that evil is only temporary; only a passing incident of the present; only a means to an end. 'The creation,' he says, 'shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption'.

He deliberately estimates the sum total of the agony as establishing a direct claim upon the justice of the Creator for abundant compensation, who, he declares, will liquidate the debt, with accumulated interest, when the purpose of the infliction is fulfilled. He does not explain, but he declares that the future shall redeem the present. 'I reckon,' he says, 'that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared to the glory that shall be revealed.'

III. There is, however, one profounder thought than this. St. Paul has taught us that one Life is immanent in the universe, and that this one Life realizes itself specially in man. He said, at Athens, 'in Him we live, and move, and have our being'. Therefore, in us He lives, and moves, and has His being. This is not Pantheism. St. Paul does not teach that God has no being apart from the universe. He never says or implies that the universe is God. He does imply that all visible things are an expression of God, a clothing of God, a mode of God's thinking; and that humanity is the highest expression, the highest mode of God's thinking; and that Jesus is the climax, the epitome of this expression, this mode of God's thinking. Thus he teaches the inseverability of God and

man. Now the conclusion from this underlying principle is almost confusing in its grandeur. If God is not external to His universe, but the central evolving life in all, then there is not a pang in this suffering universe that does not pierce the heart of God before it reaches man, and God is suffering in and with His world. The Divine self-sacrifice is creation, not Calvary alone.—Basil Wilberforce, *Feeling After Him*, p. 159.

References.—LXIII. 16.—B. Wilberforce, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xlvi. 1894, p. 321. D. Macrae, *ibid.* vol. lii. 1897, p. 363. Lyman Abbott, *ibid.* vol. liv. 1898, p. 68. C. Stanford, *Outlines of Sermons on the Old Testament*, p. 240. LXIV. —Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxxviii. No. 2258; vol. xl. No. 2391. LXIV. 1.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons Preached in a Religious House*, vol. i. p. 139.

Isaiah lxiv. 1.

'A phantasmagoria of men and events floats before the historian,' says Mr. J. H. Shorthouse; 'men seem in history to have walked in a vain show; the more he inquires into men and creeds, the more he is perplexed—he finds none which he can say is absolutely right, no one fully wrong; the course of Nature maintains its impartial calm, shutting out the sight of God from him, and his constant prayer is that ejaculation of Isaiah, "O that thou wouldest rend the heavens and come down!"'

References.—LXIV. 1, 2.—F. D. Maurice, *Lincoln's Inn Sermons*, vol. vi. p. 164; see also *Sermons*, p. 193. LXIV. 3. —Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxvi. No. 1538. J. Keble, *Sermons for Sundays After Trinity*, part i. p. 212. LXIV. 4.—A. Murray, *Waiting on God*, p. 110. LXIV. 5.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons Preached in Sackville College Chapel*, vol. i. p. 95. A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—Isaiah XLIX.-LXVI.* p. 231. LXIV. 6.—S. Horton, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lx. 1901, p. 283. J. Parker, *City Temple Pulpit*, vol. iii. p. 261. T. De Witt Talmage, *Sermons*, p. 70. R. Collyer, *Where the Light Dwelleth*, p. 299. J. E. Vernon, *Plain Preaching for Poor People* (6th Series), p. 85. C. Silvester Horne, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxxiv. 1908, p. 230.

FADING LEAVES

(*An Autumn Sermon*)

'We all do fade as a leaf.'—Isaiah lxiv. 6.

The literal reference of these words is to a spiritual rather than to a physical condition. The sap—the inner life—of the Jewish people had failed, for they had separated themselves from God, who was their life (Deut. xxx. 20). 'And the destruction of the transgressors and of the sinners shall be together, and they that forsake the Lord shall be consumed; for ye shall be as an oak whose leaf fadeth, and as a garden that hath no water' (Is. i. 28, 30).

The object-lesson before us is not simply a leaf, but a fading leaf. 'We all do fade as a leaf,' and fading leaves suggest four special lessons:—

I. *They are emblems of man's mortality.* Scripture abounds with images descriptive of the shortness and uncertainty of human life, but none is more striking than the emblem of a leaf. How weak, how frail it is! By what a slender bond does it retain its place! How slight is its tenure! Even if it last a whole season and live its appointed time, it does not retain its verdure and vigour; the sap of life begins to fail; the tints which give it such a beauty are the symbols of weakness and decay. The leaf fades sooner than it falls. To change the figure, the 'flower' withers before the 'grass' upon which it grows. Man's physical and mental 'glory' begins to decline often long before the man himself departs.

Death comes with noiseless steps. He is not heard; he is not seen; he is not perhaps suspected. He enters our chamber—the chamber of the poorest; for this king knows no distinction. His majesty is so great that he can afford to dispense with the adventitious adjuncts of pomp and circumstance. His cold shadow falls upon us, and his dark form stands between us and the light of the living world. Let us look the fact in the face; let us not put it from us. And as we contemplate it in the light of Him who died upon the cross and who burst the bars of death in His garden sepulchre, the aspect of the fact will change, and we shall not fear to die. As regards the soul, like the angel who visited Peter's prison, death is but the Lord's messenger to break off its fetters and lead it from the prison-house to the open streets of the celestial city. And as regards the body, 'the grave will be like the bath of Esther, in which she lay for a time to purify herself with spices that she might be fit for her Lord'.

II. *When the leaf fades it exhibits its greatest beauty, and is in this an emblem of the end of a Christian life.* Before the leaf falls it breaks forth into its richest hues.

'And have you never known,' says Mr. Vaughan of Brighton, 'known better than you like to confess, by the exquisite advancing loveliness of his moral features, as by a surer symptom than any physical indication, that one whom you loved so well was going to his end? Have you not seen those mellowed glows of tempered intellect and joy and Christ-like sweetness, which showed by how slight a tenure the life was held, and how soon the scene would change, and all that made earth so pleasant was all going from your sight? "We all do fade as a leaf;" but let us "fade" as the leaves do, and let our last be our best; and the truth of God be reflected and Himself made glorious in the sanctity of our later years, in the peace, and love, and grace of our dying!'

III. *The fading of a leaf is a proof that its work is accomplished and that its mission is fulfilled.* The leaves of trees are made subservient by an all-wise Creator to most important ends. One of their chiefest functions is to keep up the purity of the atmosphere. As Christ said of His disciples, 'Ye are the salt of the earth,' we might say of them, 'Ye are the leaves of the world'; your office is to stay the moral pollution which surrounds you and to breathe a healthy and life-giving influence. To have done this is not to have lived in vain. Who shall account how much we in this twentieth century are indebted to those who have passed away before us like the leaves of a hundred generations? Each

leaf in its turn withered and went back to its kindred earth, but left behind it the elements of a continuous life. Have the deaths of patriarchs and prophets, of evangelists and apostles, of ministers and missionaries, of district visitors and Sunday School teachers, of godly parents and children, of brothers and sisters in Christ, of relatives and friends, been in vain? The teachings of their holy experience, their words, their writings, their letters, their living examples, their dying testimonies, all live on. They cheer, they instruct, they quicken us. These fallen leaves have entered into the experience of the living Church to-day. They are part of our heritage, they enrich and strengthen our spiritual life. Thus also may we of this generation live, and then fade and fall. The tree of the Church will never die; it is the Tree of Life in the midst of the Paradise of God, and therefore the history of each leaf will live in it and abide for ever and ever.

IV. *The fading leaves of autumn tell us that death is the necessary precursor of life.* Every leaf that falls carries with it not only the memorial of death, but of resurrection-life.—J. W. Bardsley, *Many Mansions*, p. 215.

References.—LXIV. 6-8.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. viii. No. 437. LXIV. 7.—*Ibid.* vol. xxiii. No. 1377. LXIV. 11.—J. Marshall Lang, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxii. 1902, p. 149. LXIV. 11, 12.—T. Spurgeon, *ibid.* vol. liii. 1898, p. 257. LXV. 1.—F. E. Paget, *Sermons for the Saints' Days*, p. 19. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxxii. No. 1919. LXV. 5.—*Ibid.* vol. xxv. No. 1497. P. McAdam Muir, *Modern Substitutes in Christianity*, p. 33.

THE CHURCH A BLESSING IN THE WORLD

'Thus saith the Lord, As the new wine is found in the cluster, and one saith, Destroy it not; for a blessing is in it: so will I do for my servants' sakes, that I may not destroy them all.'—Isaiah lxv. 8.

As a rule, the pious and good are of little value in the eyes of the world, and are despised often as foolish and 'narrow' men. The 'religious public' is spoken of contemptuously and scornfully. But God's judgment is a different one. It is the judgment that Abraham recognized when he pleaded for Sodom and Gomorrah for the sake of even (at length) ten righteous persons. It is the judgment of the text. The vinedresser is about to hew down the unfruitful tree, but espies a rich cluster in one part, and it is spared, and so orders are given that it shall be spared. Thus is the world itself indebted for its preservation to the 'cluster' of the righteous. The Church is the 'blessing' in the world. 'Ye are the salt of the earth.' The text teaches us:—

I. Why God's Judgment on the World is Restrained.—1. *Because He is a righteous God*, Who will not destroy the guiltless with the guilty (Gen. xviii. 25). Rather will He remove the righteous from the world or save them from the danger (as Noah, Lot, Isaiah from the Babylonian exile, etc.).

2. *Because He is a merciful God*, Who must hear the prayers and petitions of His children and let Himself be entreated (Ezek. xxii. 30). As a rule, we think too little of the power of prayer. If we only knew what a power it possesses and how it avails with God, we should knock at the door of heaven until heaven itself resounded (Ps. l. 14, 15; St. Matt. vii. 7, 18, 19, 20; Abraham, Jacob, David, Elias).

3. *Because He is a wise God*, Who has certain great purposes to fulfil, and proceeds with calm leisure to carry them out in His own way. He desires that none should perish, and He sets before the evil the example of the pious for their salvation. How many a trifling mind has been made serious by a single casually spoken word of the good? How many a home has been blessed because a pious Joseph is in it? How many a house prospered like the house of Obed-edom because of the ark of God? How many cities and lands are spared because of a 'cluster' of the good and holy in it? The land of Israel is not utterly corrupt, destroyed, and degenerate while there are the seven thousand who have not bowed the knee to Baal—life in the very midst of putrefaction. The influence of pious men will be seen in eternity, if it is lightly esteemed here. There are great names in the world, artists, poets, sculptors, statesmen, princes, who have done great things, broken up new paths, provided bread for thousands; but what are these to 'the blessing' which Moses gave mankind in his law, David by his Psalms, St. Paul by his letters, Thomas à Kempis by his 'De Imitatione Christi,' Bunyan by his 'Pilgrim's Progress,' Charles Wesley by his 'Hymnology?' Truly a blessing is in it, this poor degenerate humanity. The text equally teaches us:—

II. Why God's Judgment on Individual Sinners is Restrained.—'Wherefore do the wicked live?' As long as there is a spark of good left, He will not quench it in anger, if it be even natural goodness, uprightness, like that of Nathanael, 'in whom there was no guile'; benevolence, as in Cornelius, 'thine alms are come up as a memorial before God'. He recognizes it, does not overlook it, fans it to a flame. And so the great Daysman, the Vinedresser, says, 'Spare it; there is a blessing in it'. The man is not all degenerate, his heart not all rottenness.

1. What an infinite *mercy!* We should long ago have given up the fickle, unfaithful man, but not so the mercy of our great God.

2. What a *comfort!* If we can only discern a spark in the ashes of our sinful hearts, a fire may yet be enkindled. Deal not rashly with yourself. Do not despair. There is a blessing in it.

3. What a *warning!* Not to judge harshly of our fellow-men, nor to condemn them as long as our Lord will hear them, and says, 'There is a blessing in it'. This may also teach us charity towards those who have for various reasons split up the Catholic Church of God into sects, parties, and denominations. So long as the fundamental truths are not cast aside, it is not all bad, though greatly to be deplored. There is a 'blessing in it,' some good in each.

References.—LXV. 8.—J. C. Miller, *Disestablishment*, p. 5. H. Hensley Henson, *Christ and the Nation*, p. 17.

LXV. 16.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—Isaiah XLIX.-LXVI.* p. 237. LXV. 17-19.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxxvii. No. 2211.

ON KEEPING YOUNG AND GETTING OLD

(Sunday School Anniversary)

'There shall be no more thence an infant of days, nor an old man that hath not filled his days: for the child shall die an hundred years old; but the sinner, being an hundred years old, shall be accursed.'—Isaiah lxv. 20.

I. You cannot quite see how a child can die a hundred years old. No, but it is possible for a man with a great weight of years to live and die just as hopefully and happily as a child lives. It is possible to have a very old body and a very young heart; and it is just as possible to be only thirty or forty years old, and yet to be as weary, and sad, and heavy-hearted, and gloomy-hearted, as if you were tottering down to the grave with a hundred winters on your shoulders.

II. A real Christian calls himself a *child* of God. It is no empty figure of speech. He is a child of God, and feels it. He is ever learning like a child, and he is as trustful as a child, and as restful; and he looks forward to a bigger life, and dreams beautiful dreams and his heart sometimes dances for joy, though his feet have not much spring and movement left in them. I tell you it is not the calendar and the birthday book that determine your age. It is the soul within, and the eyes you look out with, and the mind that thinks, and the heart that feels. It is health that makes young blood, not mere health of body, but health of spirit, health of temper, health of affection. A bad life, as this Prophet says, comes to bear the weight and weariness of a hundred years upon it.

III. There are three things in a child which makes child-life happy and beautiful—faith, hope, and love. Faith in God, mother, friends, and all men. Hope of to-morrow, hope for the years which are coming, hope of the better things which lie beyond; and love: the joy of loving, and the joy of being loved. There you have all the best things in a child's life. And these three things are in the life of every good man and woman. Certainly they are in the life of every Christian. They never leave him however long he lives. They are with him through all life's rough scenes. They are with him on his dying bed. Now abideth these three—faith, hope, and charity.—J. G. Greenhough, *Christian Festivals and Anniversaries*, p. 150.

References.—LXV. 22.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons on the Prophets*, vol. i. p. 275. F. E. Paget, *Helps and Hindrances to the Christian Life*, vol. ii. p. 185. LXV. 24.—"Plain Sermons" by contributors to the *Tracts for the Times*, vol. x. p. 208. LXVI. 1, 2.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xviii. No. 1083. W. H. Hutchings, *Sermon-Sketches*, p. 57. A. J. Parry, *Phases of Christian Truth*, p. 74. LXVI. 2.—Spurgeon *Sermons*, vol. xxxv. No. 2071. LXVI. 8.—R. F. Horton, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxix. 1906, p. 328. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xvii. No. 1009. LXVI. 10.—*Ibid.* vol. xxxv. No. 2085. LXVI. 11.—J. M. Neale, *Readings for the Aged* (3rd Series), p. 45. LXVI. 13.—P. M. Strayer, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lx. 1901, p. 39. S. Martin, *Comfort in Trouble*, p. 1. J. T. Stannard, *The Divine Humanity*, p. 1. LXVI. 13.—T. Gasquoine, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxxvii. 1890, p. 157. LXVI. 21.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xvii. No. 992. J. Keble, *Sermons for Advent to Christmas Eve*, p. 332.

THE PRAYERS OF THE SAINTS

'It shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear.'—Isaiah lxv. 24.

All through the great ages of the Christian Church the people of God have been a people of prayer. They have had their faults, they have had their grievous inconsistencies, but, throughout, they have clung to the Throne of Grace, and, with all the differences which divide good and Christian people of the Church of God to-day, the true men of Christ are men of prayer. The first evidence that a man shows in his life that there is a work of grace in his heart is his desire to pray. When St. Paul's heart was opened, St. Paul's lips were opened too, and somebody said at once, 'Behold, he prayeth'.

I. The measure of our real religion is the measure of our prayer-life, and no less the measure of our love to Christ is the frequency, the earnestness, the heartiness with which we come to God in prayer, because, depend upon it, what we really are before God is what we are when nobody is with us but Himself. Is it not a very lamentable thing to know how often there is a spirit of great earnestness in the public gathering, and yet that we go home to sometimes a very slight and slender approach to God in secret prayer? We catch the spirit of the day, and the spirit of the place, and the spirit of the people, and we seem to be in earnest, and we are; but how often we go home to a comparatively neglected Mercy-seat, and to an unknown God! Gauge your religious life by the earnestness and the heartiness and the warmth of your secret addresses to God.

II. The praying Christian is, above all, the Christian that grows and the Christian that thrives. It is so in the material life. The material life is built up not half so much, we should say, by the food which we eat, as by the atmosphere that we breathe. The conditions of health are not only good food and pure water, but they are sweet air as well. And the soul that lives, and moves, and speaks, and thinks, and acts with a very distinct and definite sense of the Divine nearness is a thriving one and a growing one. There is feebleness and sickliness in the souls and the spiritual lives of those who are neglecting the secret Throne, but the breezes of heaven are blowing on those who are, again and again, kneeling at its Court.

III. Then the third thing is this. A praying Christian is the Christian who gets the most from God. The praying Christian is the Christian who gets everything from God. How is it that this is so? Because he goes where everything is; that is the reason, and no other. He goes to the Throne of Grace, where is the residue of grace. He goes to the very seat over which Jesus Christ not lingers but permanently sits, and Jesus Christ shows to those who come to Him in secret prayer what, otherwise, the world cannot see. The greatest trophies of the Christian soul that have

ever been taken have been taken on the field of prayer. I believe with all my heart, that whether a prayer is answered, or whether it is unanswered, it is impossible for a Christian to syllable one single prayer without that prayer bringing in some way a blessing to his own soul. Some of our prayers seem to go a very long voyage, but they are not lost at sea, and it may happen that the prayer that is latest in port may, after all, be richest in blessing.

Let me offer three or four suggestions in reference to secret prayer.

1. First of all in prayer be careful that you have a cleansed conscience.

2. And, secondly, let there be a felt need. You cannot express a thing till you feel a need. We kneel down to pray, sometimes because it is the time to pray, or the place to pray, or the hour of prayer, not because we have a real urgent need that makes us importunate before God, and we feel we must speak to Him. Get a sense of need, and if you have not one, tell the Master so, and He will give it you, and you will find that the sense of need is a means of grace.

3. And then, thirdly, disentangle yourselves, if you can—it is difficult to do so sometimes—disentangle yourselves from the things that hinder you. The Apostle speaks of 'hindered prayers'. He says: 'That your prayers be not hindered'. They are hindered, perhaps, by their wretched coldness, perhaps by their want of faith, perhaps by their want of believing reverence to Jesus. Sometimes we hinder our own prayers by not being conformed to the Will of God because, if we are not willing to do the Will of God, how is it to be expected that He will trouble to do our will?

4. And then remember, fourthly, that prayer is not only an act, but a state and a spirit. God, I daresay, loves the act of prayer, but He likes the spirit of prayer better, because an isolated act of prayer on your own part or on mine may be absolutely unworthy.

5. And, lastly, remember that in the midst of all your weakness and infirmities, you have the power of God's Spirit to help you, if you will only ask for it. It is difficult to pray without the Spirit; it is drudgery. If we come pleading the merit, the mediation, and the righteousness of Jesus Christ, and trusting to the Spirit to help our infirmity, then depend upon it, again and again, in your believing experience, you shall know the truth of these glorious words and promise of the text: 'It shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear'.

6. Learn to be definite. Generalities are the death of prayer, and they will kill the spirit of it. Learn to be thankful, because the way to get new blessings is to be thankful for old ones. Learn to trust, because God is worthy of our confidence. Learn to persevere, because God has plenty of time, and what He does not give to-day He may give to-morrow. And learn to wait, because oftentimes the richest fruit is that which comes latest in the autumn. To such souls He graciously says, as He did to the humble suppliant who came to Him of old, 'Be it unto thee even as thou wilt'.

> 'It shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear. The wolf and the lamb shall feed together. . . . They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain, saith the Lord.'—ISAIAH LXV. 24, 25.

THIS text was quoted by Henry Venn in the last report he drew up for the Church Missionary Society. He pointed out that 'one of the richest promises of answer to prayer is given in immediate connexion with the full establishment of Christ's kingdom'.

THE GENESIS OF DELUSIONS

> 'I also will choose their delusions.'—ISAIAH LXVI. 4.

THEY will think it is the devil, but I am behind it all; they will ascribe it to some peculiar condition of the brain, and they will endeavour to trace that condition to indigestion, to the wrong food, to a mistake in choices and fancies; they will never suspect that I am in it. We are not worshippers of a limited Sovereign; the universe is not split up into sections, God presiding over, it may be, the larger section, and the devil presiding over the remaining fraction. Yet it would seem as if this was the religion of some people; what wonder if they are disturbed and perturbed and dealt with vexatiously, the whole process ending in confusion twice confounded? They do not know the central reality of things; they have no faith; they have a kind of meagre and struggling sentiment, but a deep, living, eternal faith they have not; and they cannot have until they get back to the centre and metaphysic of things.

The Apostle uses the word which we have correctly translated delusion: 'For this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie' (2 Thess. II. 11). The Apostle Paul was not so dainty and whimsically sensitive as we are; his God ruled the heavens and the earth, little time and great eternity. And he said that the object of this delusion was that 'They all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness'. We should carefully consider the exact terms used by the indignant and ever-majestic Apostle. God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe not *a* lie, as it is written in this English, but that they should believe *the* lie—the lie of the day, the popular lie.

I. When does God choose for us our delusions, intellectual devices, and mean and false-tending imaginings and nightmares? Often when we have sinned away our privileges. We have attended church so long as to have become quite familiar with it, with a familiarity of that kind which breeds, if not contempt, at least indifference. A man may have sat through a ministry thirty years long, and have remained a hard heart at the last. A man may boast that he sat under the brilliant ministry of one teacher, and the instructive teaching of another expositor, and under the comforting ministry of one tender-hearted as Bar-

nabas; and yet when we come to ask him concerning the result of it all, we may find him under the spell of a delusion which keeps him out of the Church and makes him an alien and a stranger who ought to have been like a child at home. It is a dangerous thing to have too many spiritual privileges; such an abundance of opportunity of understanding somewhat of the kingdom of God may tell against us in the judgment.

II. When we have trusted our own imaginations God may have turned imagination itself, our finest faculty, into a delusion. When the imagination carries us too far God simply breathes upon us, and it becomes a delusion; He takes the poetry out of it, He robs day of the morning light, and that which might under some circumstances have been to us as wings, great strong pinions that flap themselves in the upper airs, yea, even at the gate of heaven, may be turned into a poor cripple, a mean dreamer, a man who is the victim of his own misguided impression. God often chooses our oracles for us or our delusions for us when we seek for guidance at forbidden oracles.

III. God always sends us delusions when we undertake the management of our own lives. A man thinks that he will undertake everything on his own account and do it in his own strength, not knowing that he has no account and that he has no strength but such as may be given to him by a condescending and loving God.

Then what are we to do? We are to go back to God, we are to live and move and have our being in God, we are to have a sanctuary in the rock, we are to possess the key of a chamber in high places into which we can retire prayerfully, lovingly, and penitentially, there to learn what God would have us do on this particular day and at that particular hour. Then we shall have no delusion.—Joseph Parker, *City Temple Pulpit*, vol. III. p. 69.

JEREMIAH

JEREMIAH

References.—I.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xlvi. No. 2684. I. 4.—*Ibid.* vol. liii. No. 3049. I. 4-10.—A. B. Davidson, *The Called of God*, p. 209. A. Ramsay, *Studies in Jeremiah*, p. 3. I. 5.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. liii. No. 3035. C. J. Vaughan, *Sermons Preached in Christ Church, Brighton* (7th Series), p. 169; see also *Outlines of Sermons on the Old Testament*, p. 243. H. Scott Holland, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lvi. 1899, p. 168.

PREDESTINED

'Before I formed thee in the womb, I knew thee.'—
Jeremiah i. 5.

It is a great thing for a man to believe that he is where God means him to be; but it is a greater thing for him to believe that, in order to put him where he is, God has been shaping all his past, and that He was even thinking of him and planning for him before he was born. Such was the feeling with which Jeremiah entered upon his great career, and it is this that explains his life-long fidelity to his mission, continually assailed as he was by warrings without and fears within. It was not only the sense that God was with him, but that, even before his birth, he had been in the mind of God.

I. We must remember that such a vision comes only to the man who is worthy of it, and, in a measure, prepared for it. Jeremiah, like Isaiah at his call, was a young man—he cannot have been over twenty-five, if as much; but so thoughtful and tender-hearted a man must have often brooded over the sins and the follies of his people. To such a people somebody must speak for God; and there gathers within him half unconsciously the feeling that his is the voice that must be lifted up—that he is the man; till, in one sublime moment, the whole wonderful meaning of his career—his birth, his youth, his special and peculiar experiences—is flashed upon him. He sees that God had been thinking of him, caring for him, preparing for him, before he was born. Clearly, if the past and present have any meaning at all, he is God's marked man. No human life is hidden from God.

II. It is often the greatest who hesitate. To shrink is at least to show that we have measured the magnitude of the task and the slenderness of our own resources. But the man who has heard the voice must obey it, unless he is prepared to see his future filled with desolation and remorse. There is a humility which is perhaps even more disastrous than pride. The proud man injures himself; the man who, in mistaken humility, makes the great refusal, injures the world by depriving it of the service he is fitted to render. Think for a moment of the incomparable loss to the world had Jeremiah finally yielded to the voice that spoke within him. His sense of weakness was, after all, a high qualification; it gave him sympathy with men, and it threw him back upon God. In some important directions Jeremiah's contribution to the religion of Israel is profounder than that of any other Hebrew, and there is no Old Testament character who is such a marvellous prototype of Jesus. And all this would have been lost to the world had he listened to the voice that pled so plausibly for keeping aloof from the public life of his time.

III. The whole career of Jeremiah is a proof that this Divine promise had been kept. In his own strength he could never have faced the fearful odds that were arrayed against him. Look at him as he calmly stands before a howling mob that demands his execution. At such a moment he is, indeed, in his own words, firm as a brazen wall against the whole land—kings and priests and people. Why is he, the timid and the tender Prophet, so calm amid these cruel shouts? Is it not because his God is with him, as He promised to be? With Jeremiah, as with Paul, power was made perfect in weakness. Each of these great men had to contend with serious natural disadvantages: their intrepid careers are proof abundant that the power which they displayed was not their own, but that their work was done in the strength of Him whom they served. Of themselves they were weak; but the grace of Another was sufficient for them, and the power of Another rested upon them.—J. E. McFadyen, *The City With Foundations*, p. 117.

Jeremiah i. 6.

Lifting my eyes in the sunshine of yesterday to the flowering orchards above me, the 'summer snow' that stretches away southwards to the hills, and the very avalon of apple-trees that makes an 'awful rose of dawn' towards the east—an impulse seized me to tempt you with a description of their beauty. But I threw down my pen, guiltless of a line or a word, helpless before this unapproachable world, and able only to cry out, with the prophet, in my heart—'ah, Lord God, behold I cannot speak; for I am a child'. —Sydney Dobell to *Charlotte Brontë*.

References.—I. 6, 7.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons Preached in Sackville College Chapel*, vol. ii. p. 275. I. 6-9.—J. B. Lightfoot, *Ordination Addresses*, p. 3. I. 8.—"Plain Sermons" by contributors to the *Tracts for the Times*, vol. v. p. 248. I. 10.—P. M'Adam Muir, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxvii. 1905, p. 339. I. 11, 12.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xlvi. No. 2678.

I. 30.—J. Parker, *Studies in Texts*, vol. i. p. 172. II. 1-19.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. li. No. 2926. II. 2.—*Ibid.* vol. xli. No. 2399; vol. li. No. 2926. Hugh Black, *Christ's Service of Love*, p. 316. II. 9.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—Isaiah and Jeremiah*, p. 245. II. 11.—*Ibid.* p. 246. II. 13.—*Ibid.* p. 249. W. M. Punshon, *Broken Cisterns, a Sermon*, p. 601. C. Perren, *Revival Sermons in Outline*, p. 322. II. 18.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. vii. No. 356. II. 19, 20.—Jesse Brett, *The Soul's Escape*, p. 42. A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—Isaiah and Jeremiah*, p. 252. II. 20-37.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. li. No. 2931. II. 26.—Hugh Black, *University Sermons*, p. 153. II. 32.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxvii. No. 1634.

TRIMMING

'Why trimmest thou thy way to seek love?'—JEREMIAH II. 33.

WHAT is trimming? It is the holding of a middle course or position between parties, so as to appear to favour each. The Jews trimmed between God and the idols. And the just God who loathes all that is not straight and upright shakes their equivocal souls with this stormy interrogatory, 'Why trimmest thou thy way to seek love?'

I. Expressions of Trimming.—We often find trimming expresses itself in speech. Quite as often it shows itself in conduct. Policy is the regulating principle of some men's action. They act with a view to universal conciliation. They would establish themselves upon the basis, always most insecure, of general approval. Silence is quite commonly the result of trimming. The trimmer knows well the value of taciturnity: but he prostitutes it into a vice.

Every sphere of life unhappily has those who trim their way to seek love. The religious trimmer is worst of all.

II. The Motive of Trimming.—The motive which actuates a trimmer is here succinctly and accurately described. It is 'to seek love'—to win favour, to gain commendation, to stand well with everybody.

III. The Folly of Trimming.—This system cannot permanently attain the end it seeks. No 'love' worth having can be thus won. A trimmer is soon discovered, and his judgment does not linger. Contempt becomes his portion.

Moreover trimming destroys our individual testimony. It makes us echoes of other voices, but prevents us being voices ourselves. We bear no personal witness if we thus trim our way.

This mean habit also hinders the prevalence of truth.

And what an evil influence the trimmer has upon others! Hear how God impeaches him in the words which ensue upon my text; 'therefore hast thou also taught the wicked ones thy ways'. Trimming is infectious: all evil is.

When we understand that the trimmer will be condemned at the judgment-seat of God, we are indeed convinced of the folly he works. Truth alone will stand the scrutiny of the 'Bar severe'.

IV. The Cure of Trimming.—As the previous verse (v. 32) shows, it is forgetting God which leads to this trimming of our way. If we walk before Him we can never grieve Him by such folly.

Would we avoid this paltry habit we must seek depth of conviction.

To recall the examples of the heroic saints who scorned to trim their way is another means of health and cure in this regard.

The example of our Lord is the grand deterrent from this evil. He died upon the cross because He would not by trimming His way seek love. When we are tempted to be trimmers let us remember our Saviour's bright example and pursue it.
—DINSDALE T. YOUNG, *The Travels of the Heart*, p. 237.

REFERENCES.—II. 36.—W. G. Rutherford, *The Key of Knowledge*, p. 30. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. lii. No. 3007. III. 1-23.—*Ibid.* vol. xlii. No. 2452.

THE HEAVENLY GUIDE

(Sermon to the Young)

'Wilt thou not from this time cry unto me, My Father, Thou art the Guide of my youth?'—JEREMIAH III. 4.

WE are all travellers, but are not all travellingin the same direction. We need a guide. There is no difficulty in finding one. There is only one to be relied upon.

I. Some of the Reasons Why we Need a Guide.

1. Our ignorance of the way.
2. Our liability to take the wrong path.
3. Our liability to leave the right path after we have chosen it.

II. Some of the Reasons Why we Should Take God as Our Guide.

1. Because He knows the way.
2. Because He knows the trials that will befall us.
3. Because He knows the perils that we shall encounter.
4. Because He is our Father, and therefore kind and considerate.

III. Some of the Reasons Why we Should Ask God to Guide us now.

1. Because the present time is the best.
2. Because the present time is the safest.
3. Because the present may be the only time.

—F. J. AUSTIN, *Seeds and Saplings*, p. 27.

THE LIMITATION OF EVIL

'Behold, thou hast spoken and done evil things as thou couldest.'—JEREMIAH III. 5.

I. WE indicate some of the restraining influences of life.

1. There is the restraint imposed by *revelation*. That Israel did not fall into the flagrant wickedness of the surrounding nations was not the consequence of their innate strength or goodness—the Lord their God restrained them. The voices of Sinai ringing in their ears warned and strengthened them against the destructive errors of paganism. Are we not to-day restrained by the same gracious influence?

2. There is the restraint imposed by *grace*. The direct Divine action on our mind, will, conscience, feeling. This was the master-restraint of the ante-diluvian world. So has the self-same Spirit striven in all hearts, and in all generations.

3. There is the restraint imposed by *society*. There is the restraint of civil law. There is the restraint of public opinion. There is the restraint of our business. There are the restraints of domesticity.

II. 'Notwithstanding the restraints of life, we discover the wickedness of our nature by going as far as possible in the direction of transgression.' Men have power to fling themselves over a precipice, but for obvious reasons they usually stop short of these desperate deeds. So Israel hitherto had abstained from the extreme acts of transgression which would have involved immediate retribution, but they showed their disposition by playing with the fire, by trifling on the edge of the abyss. The lively manner in which we have used our rarer opportunities to sin shows that increased leisure and facility would only have exaggerated our misdoing.

III. It is sufficiently clear that 'many would at once proceed to greater lengths of wickedness if the restrictive influences of life were withdrawn'.

1. Note the extent to which men 'resist these saving influences'. Opportunity no longer permits us to stone the prophets, or to crucify the Son of man, but we reveal the same hatred of truth and righteousness by doing despite to the Spirit of grace.

2. And the second sign of 'the irregularity and inordinativeness of our desire is found in the popularity of certain imaginative literature'. The lark singing from its little cage in Seven Dials is a pathetic attempt on the part of the city poor to restore in some measure the rural delights they may no longer share; and just as certainly do we seek in our literature to compensate ourselves for liberties and pleasures denied or curtailed by civilization.

We conclude with a few practical reflections:—

1. Let us recognize 'the glory of God's preventing grace'. The Dutch call the chain of dykes which protects their fields and their firesides from the wild sea 'the golden border'. God's grace directly affecting our heart, or expressed in the constitution of society and the circumstances of life, is a golden border shutting out a raging, threatening sea of evil.

2. Let us confess 'the folly of our self-righteousness'. The consciousness of a self-righteousness often stands in the way of men attaining the righteousness which is of God, but the foregoing reflections show how little our self-righteousness may be worth.

3. We see 'the necessity and urgency of the grace which converts and perfects'. It is by no means wholly satisfactory that we are kept by restraining grace; we must go on to seek the grace which renews.—W. L. Watkinson, *The Transfigured Sackcloth*, p. 47.

References.—III. 12, 13.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxxi. No. 1833. III. 12, 14, 22.—*Ibid.* vol. li. No. 2931. III. 13.—C. Holland, *Gleanings from a Ministry of Fifty Years*, p. 41. III. 14.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xiii. No. 762. III. 16.—*Ibid.* vol. xxvii. No. 1621.

THE TENDERNESS OF GOD

'But I said, How shall I put thee among the children, and give thee a pleasant land, a goodly heritage of the hosts of nations? and I said, Thou shalt call Me, My Father; and shalt not turn away from Me.'—Jeremiah iii. 19.

The thought of the verse refers not so much to the saying as to the thinking and reflection which go before the speaking. 'I thought how I would put you among the children.' The text comes to us through Jeremiah, to whom we owe so much of true, tender, and adequate teaching about God. He brings men into the secret of the Divine presence, and enables them to hear the consultation of God with Himself.

I. The problem is how to put among the children one who is not a child. The person who is not a child would be miserable and far from home among the children of God. The Bible reveals to us the way which God took to solve the problem. It is the story of the making of man, and it is the story of the Divine patience and hopefulness for man that man will yet be placed among the children. Follow the line of Divine action down through the centuries, follow it on to the greatest manifestation of Divine love in the gift of the only begotten Son, and you have the practical illustration of the answer to the question of our text. All these great doings are a revelation of the Divine thought of how to put men among the children.

The Divine thinking issued in Divine action, and the action is just the story of redemption. The Divine action is also the Divine appeal to man. Answer it by the attempt to see that your place is among the children, and you can never find rest till you take your place.

II. Follow for a little the thought of God as to the way by which a man is to be put among the children. 'I thought thou wouldst call me, My Father; and wouldst not turn away from Me.'

It is the return to the Father of children made in the image of God; it is the restoration of the power of speaking to the Father; it is the placing of a son in his right place in the family of God. With this return there is the new quality of real thought, of spiritual worth, of Divine fellowship.

To say 'My Father' is not merely to say the words, or to take them on our lips; it means experience with God, speaking to Him, hearing Him speak, being filled with the Spirit of God, and being entered into the secret of God's purpose.

III. 'I thought thou wouldst not turn away from Me.' It is enough to break the heart of any one who believes what is here said. This word of the Prophet, this picture of the living God stretching forth hands of tenderness and love to men, saying to them, 'Thou wilt not turn away from Me,' is a real and true portrait of God. It is the truest revelation of Him that man can ever know. Think of Him, finally, as Jesus Christ His Son has revealed Him to us, who

through the Son may become children.—J. IVERACH, *The Other Side of Greatness*, p. 68.

REFERENCES.—III. 19.—J. T. Forbes, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxiii. 1903, p. 257. R. J. Drummond, *Faith's Certainties*, p. 149. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xlvii. No. 2742. III. 21, 22.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—Isaiah and Jeremiah*, p. 254. III. 22, 23.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xlii. No. 2452.

PLURAL, YET SINGULAR

'Truth . . . judgment . . . righteousness.'—JEREMIAH IV. 2.

I WANT to speak about the plural that runs itself up into the singular. 'Truth, judgment, righteousness.' We cannot get rid of the three; when we sometimes think we are farthest from it we are closest upon it. It is a mystery that is to be reckoned with. Indifference, worldliness, folly, may avoid all these subjects, and thus run a downward and self-extinguishing course. There remains the idea of the three. We cannot, let us say again and again to ourselves, get away from that idea; it is in us, it is part of us, it is the mystery of our own being. We deny the three-one, but denial is no argument. We have to account for the triune.

I. You will find instances of this three-one in many places. For example, in the very words of the text. 'Truth, judgment, righteousness.' These are not three things differing from one another in quality and opposing one another in policy and in aim; the three are one, and that one is the first—'truth'. How then do the others apply themselves? Adjectivally as qualifying the great and inclusive word truth. Truth—yes, truth that stands in judgment, truth that stands in righteousness, truth that runs out in these threefold expressions and yet returns upon itself and stands forth as it were a diamond or a star.

II. In Daniel III. 7 'all the people, the nations, and the languages fell down'. Can languages fall down? Is there not something here highly rhetorical and figurative? Certainly; that is the very subject. The reading, therefore, would be, All the people—yes, even nations and languages—fell down before the image. The great noun is 'the people'; 'nations and languages' are little aspects of the great substantive, 'the people'. So we do not read, 'All the people and the nations and the languages' as if they were three different things; the great central thought is the people, the incidentals are the nations and the languages, and yet quite essential to the completeness of the figure. How easy it would be to run off on either of these nouns, 'nations,' and 'languages,' and deliver a useless ethnic discourse upon these motto words. These words must be put in their right place, and that place is subsidiary and collateral; the great outstanding noun is 'the people'.

III. Take another instance with which we are very familiar, so familiar indeed that many of us know nothing about it. Matt. VI. 13, 'Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory,'—as if they were three different things. When will we remember that there is a leading noun, and the two other nouns shade away and subside into rhetorical assistances and phases of the thought? The subject is one; the writer is not talking about three different attributes; he is talking about one thing, but he needs the rhetorical three members in order to fill out the expression of his thought. Here also we cannot get rid of the three-one.

IV. Take a wonderful instance from the lips of Christ Himself; you will find that instance in the fourteenth chapter of John and the sixth and contextual verses. 'I am the way, the truth, and the life'. Three things? No, one thing. Jesus Christ is talking about the way and about nothing else. How then does He describe it? 'I am the way, the true way'—you see how 'truth' drops into 'true,' the noun into the adjective—'and the living way'. But it is way, way, and only way that forms the subject of the Master's thought. Always get into the one thing that makes the other things possible. Do not waste your very souls on the details. Your first business is to get hold of the central truth, the one thing meant, and then to get hold of what is illustrative, external, and auxiliary.

V. You have the same thing in your own personal constitution. The Apostle describes us as 'body, soul, and spirit'. Three things? Certainly not. One thing? Yes, one thing. What is that one thing? Man; and man is a trinity, and a tri-unity, a three-one and a one-three; and as he studies himself in these aspects there will come upon him great religious moods, visions, and dreamings, and he will find that grass and flesh and air and many things have been made specially for the growth and culture of the body. Then he will ask himself, Is there anything in higher fields growing for the soul? And the answer will be a gracious Yes whispered from the secret places of eternity. There is a spirit, there is a revelation, there is a holy doctrine, there is an altar, and as he watches the fields and the rivers and the seas for the food which he needs for the body, so he will search these greater waters and greater spaces for the nurture of the soul. But is there nothing for the spirit, which seems to be, according to our poor crude thinking, a kind of higher quality, a more spiritualized and etherealized soul, even the spirit? God is a Spirit. God is not what we call a soul, a psyche; God is a pneuma, a spirit, a Spirit of the soul. The soul is but a kind of clothing for the spirit, but body, soul, spirit belong to one another, and constitute what but an ineffable unity?—JOSEPH PARKER, *City Temple Pulpit*, vol. IV. p. 214.

REFERENCES.—IV. 3.—C. Perren, *Revival Sermons in Outline*, p. 284. G. W. Herbert, *Notes of Sermons*, p. 50. J. Parker, *Studies in Texts*, vol. i. p. 180. IV. 10.—Henry Alford, *Quebec Chapel Sermons*, vol. i. p. 267. IV. 14.—H. Harris, *Short Sermons*, p. 170. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxvi. No. 1573. IV. 19.—J. Marshall Lang, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. liii. 1898, p. 356. IV. 20.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. vii. No. 349; vol. xxiii. No. 1363. IV. 30.—*Ibid* vol. xxiii. No. 1363.

A MAN

'Run ye to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem, and see now, and know, and seek in the broad places thereof, if ye can find a man, if there be any that executeth judgment, that seeketh the truth; and I will pardon it. —JEREMIAH v. 1.

To feel and to bring out the force of this verse stress must be laid upon the word *man*. The text tells us what a man is; how rare a man is; how valuable a man is.

I. The man that is to be sought out according to the direction in this verse is a person that executeth judgment, and that seeketh the truth. A man, then, is first of all one that does what is right and just from principle, uniformly, and towards all.

Further, a man is one who not only does what is right, but he has in his heart a love of truth. We are told that he 'seeketh the truth'. In doing what he believes to be equitable and just, he has a conscious desire that his views of equity and justice should be according to truth, and that of course is the truth as it is before God, which ought to reign supreme and through all the relationships and the intercourse of intelligent and responsible beings. When on the coronation of Edward VI. there were brought to be carried before him, according to custom, the sharp sword of justice, the pointless sword of mercy, and the two-handed sword of state, he called for the Bible also. 'That,' said he, 'is the sword of the Spirit, by which we all ought to be governed who use these others for the safety of the people by the law's appointment; it is from that that we obtain all our power, and goodness, and grace, and salvation, and whatever we have of Divine strength.'

II. Notice the value of a true man. God says in this verse, 'If ye can find a man,' a man of this character, 'in Jerusalem, I will pardon it,' pardon Jerusalem. What forbearance is there in God, how unwilling is He to destroy. When a man or a community violates truth and justice, he is exposed, they are exposed to the evil consequences. Each of us has an independent responsibility and must give an account of himself to God, but at the same time we are linked with others, we contribute to the general tone of society, we act along with it and as component parts, we have each a share in the aggregate responsibility, the praise or blame, the good or evil that belongs to the whole.

III. One last thing is thought of—a centre of trust, a shield of defence, before which God would lower the sword's point. What was that? What have men and women to look to for the defence and prosperity of nations? It was a man. Goethe says no greater good can happen to a town than for several educated men thinking in the same way about what is good and true living in it. But Goethe's standard is insufficient; it falls short of the Divine. The defenders and the benefactors of nations and of their fellow-men are the morally and religiously good in them; men whose lives are regulated by the teachings of God; men who seek to act as Christ did are the men that are worthy, and that are looked upon by God as blessings to the nation. Even one such is a mighty pillar, and on occasion even one such may be the Saviour and mainstay of the State.

Can we ever forget that in regard to the salvation of the world, and of our own souls, we owe everything to the ONE MAN, *Christ Jesus*, and that it is for His sake alone that we can obtain blessing, and salvation, and pardon!—R. J. DRUMMOND, *British Weekly Pulpit*, vol. II. p. 81.

REFERENCES.—V. 1.—J. Mitford Mitchell, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxxvii. 1890, p. 117. C. Jerdan, *Pastures of Tender Grass*, p. 130. W. Reading, *Sermons*, vol. ii. p. 469. J. Smith, "A Man," *Sermons*, vol. ii. p. 270. "The Courage of the True Prophet," Archdeacon Farrar in *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxiii. p. 161. "Christian Manliness," (i.) "Right Doing," Momerie's *Origin of Evil and Other Sermons*, p. 197, and (ii.) "Right Thinking," *Origin of Evil and Other Sermons*, p. 209, and (iii.) "The Value of Manliness," *Origin of Evil and Other Sermons*, p. 222. Wythe, *Pulpit Analyst*, vol. v. p. 294; and see an admirable outline, "True Manhood," by S. Conway, in *Pulpit Commentary*, "Jeremiah," vol. i. p. 128. For the history see Geikie's *Hours With the Bible*, vol. v. p. 165, etc V. 1-6 and 10-31.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xlvi. No. 2660. V. 2.—C. Kingsley, *Sermons on Natural Subjects*, p. 199.

GOD'S DEALINGS WITH MEN

'O Lord, are not Thine eyes upon the truth? thou hast stricken them, but they have not grieved.'—JEREMIAH v. 3.

IT may well be a source of comfort and strength to a man to know that God's eyes are upon the truth, upon the present reality, and not on mere appearance. Let all men know that God sees things precisely as they are. In the present instance He saw unreality, faithlessness, untruthfulness. And when He smote them, they did not really respond by sorrow for their misdeeds, whatever outward show they may have made. They forgot that, while man looketh on the outward appearance, the Lord looketh on the heart.

I. The Gracious End God ever has in View in Afflicting Men.—It is that they may return to Him by the path of grief for their sin and of amendment of life. The treading of this path is absolutely necessary for the sinner's return, and it is cast up by the fatherly chastisements of God.

II. But Man has the Power of Frustrating the Gracious End of God.—When stricken, he is not grieved. In many ways, consciously or unconsciously, he can frustrate God's gracious purpose on his behalf. For example:—

(*a*) *By tracing all his sufferings merely to secondary causes.* They bring no message from God to his soul; they merely speak of a fellow-man's injustice, or a weak constitution, or some mistake he himself has made in his plans and calculations, etc.

(*b*) *By a mere stoical endurance rather than a childlike acquiescence.* The child's feelings are acute while he says, 'Even so, Father, for so it seems good in Thy sight'. To drill and school oneself to bear pain of body or spirit without flinching is not to submit to God, but to bow to fate. This will never lead anyone to 'return' to God.

(*c*) *By simple delay in returning to God by re-*

pentance and faith. A man may feel and recognize the calls and chastenings of God; but by simple delaying to comply with the message contained in those chastenings, this feeling gets gradually dulled. 'To-day, if ye will hear His voice, harden not your heart.'

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OLD PATHS

(*Thoughts for the New Year*)

'Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls.'—Jeremiah vi. 16.

'Ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls.' Our Blessed Saviour knows that we want rest; His beautiful call comes right across the ocean of trouble, the oft-repeated call, 'Come to Me, come to Me, and I will give you rest'. It is what you most want—rest. So many people deviate from the old paths and try to get rest. Just look round about and see the number of religions there are—bypaths; and people wander along these paths and think they will get rest. They do not. What are the old paths, that you and I are to walk therein and rest?

I. The old path, first of all, is the path of blood. Do not mistake that. All along the road you can trace drops of blood. It is the Blood of the Passion of the Saviour. How could we, you and I, face the judgment seat of Christ if it were not for the Blood of the Lamb? Our only hope of redemption is in the Blood of the Blessed Saviour. It is the old path. We have no other hope, no other rest than in the Sacrifice of our Blessed Saviour. Do not let any of the modern ideas of the twentieth-century religion allure you into bypaths.

II. And then I should say walk in the old paths in the day in which we live by accepting the Word of God. The Word of God is written, of course, for your souls; your soul shall find rest therein, and, if I were you, I would learn by heart your favourite texts, so that when you cannot read, and things are beginning to get a bit dim, you may have them within your heart.

III. Then there is this: keep in the old path of service. What I mean by this is that it is so very common nowadays to divide up the secular from the religious. We Christians must not have that. St. Paul says all is to be sacred, nothing secular. You would not call it 'churchy' to eat and to drink, but we are told whether we eat or drink, or whatsoever we do, we are to do all to the glory of God. We are to make no distinction. Paul was sent by the Saviour to preach the Gospel to men; he was an Apostle, and yet he was a tent-maker. Paul used to make tents to get a little money to live by. He sold his tents and earned money and lived by it, and lived for the glory of God. To those who love God, where do the secular and the profane come in at all? You are often told that we Christians ought to give a tenth of our income to the Church. A Jew gives a tithe. Well, if you give a tenth, you do what the Jews do, but that is not the rule of the Christian religion. The Christian religion is to give all. You must not divide up your money into secular purposes and religious purposes; that is not the old path, that is not the way of salvation. Every penny you spend you should spend as best you can to the glory of God. Do not let us be unreal; let us be perfectly true. We Christians must live and act as under God's sight, and do everything for His sake, and the man who spends his money to bring up his family does right, he is acting in the sanctuary, the sanctuary of domestic life, which God Himself will bless.

IV. Another of the old paths is obedience to God's Word; submission to God's Word. 'Ask for the old paths.' 'Teach me to do the thing that pleaseth Thee, for Thou art my God.' That is the old path. Ask God to show you the way, that you may walk therein, and find rest for your soul. If you do your own will, you will never find rest, but if you do God's will, it is perfect rest.

V. Last of all the paths, I should mention the beautiful pathway, when it draws towards what seems to be the end of the way altogether, the path of communion with God. 'If Thy presence go not with us, carry us not up hence.' You do not want to go away from Him. Confide yourselves bravely to Him and be happy, and ye shall find rest for your souls. If you have listened for His command, and your ear has become attuned to His Voice, you will hear His Voice in the storm, in the wind, in the night, and in the end you will hear Him call you to come to Him across the water, and you can say, like Peter, 'Lord, teach Thou me to come to Thee across the water,' and He will say, 'Come'. Is not this really what we want, right deep down beyond everything, to rest in the Arms of God.

STEADFASTNESS IN THE OLD PATHS

'Thus saith the Lord, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for you. souls.'—Jeremiah vi. 16.

It is one great peculiarity of the Christian character to be dependent. Men of the world, indeed, in pro-

portion as they are active and enterprising, boast of their independence, and are proud of having obligations to no one. But it is the Christian's excellence to be diligent and watchful, to work and persevere, and yet to be in spirit *dependent;* to be willing to serve, and to rejoice in the permission to do so; to be content to view himself in a subordinate place; to love to sit in the dust. Though in the Church a son of God, he takes pleasure in considering himself Christ's 'servant' and 'slave'; he feels glad whenever he can put himself to shame. So it is the natural bent of his mind freely and affectionately to visit and trace the footsteps of the saints, to sound the praises of the great men of old who have wrought wonders in the Church and whose words still live; being jealous of their honour, and feeling it to be even too great a privilege for such as he is to be put in trust with the faith once delivered to them, and following them strictly in the narrow way, even as they have followed Christ. To the ears of such persons the words of the text are as sweet music: 'Thus saith the Lord, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls'.—J. H. NEWMAN.

REFERENCES.—VI. 16.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xlvii. No. 2748. H. D. M. Spence, *Voices and Silences*, p. 271. E. C. S. Gibson, *Messages from the Old Testament*, p. 238. "Plain Sermons" by contributors to the *Tracts for the Times*, vol. v. p. 157. *Ibid.* vol. x. pp. 307, 317. W. Brooke, *Sermons*, p. 50. VI. 16-19.—W. Hay M. H. Aitken, *Mission Sermons* (3rd Series), p. 163. VI. 29.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xv. No. 890. VI. 29, 30.—VII. 9, 10.—T. Teignmouth Shore, *The Life of the World to Come*, p. 107. VII. 12.—"Plain Sermons" by contributors to the *Tracts for the Times*, vol. i. 168. VII. 18.—W. Hay M. H. Aitken, *Mission Sermons* (3rd Series), p. 207. VII. 21.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxxix. No. 2301. VIII.—*Ibid.* vol. xlii. No. 2491; vol. xlix. No. 2858. VIII. 6.—*Ibid.* vol. iv. No. 169. VIII. 7.—*Ibid.* vol. xlix. No. 2858. VIII. 11.—*Ibid.* vol. xxviii. No. 1658. J. Wordsworth, *The One Religion, Bampton Lectures*, 1881, p. 217. VIII. 14.—H. W. Webb-Peploe, *Calls to Holiness*, p. 175. VIII. 19, 20.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xi. No. 608. VIII. 20.—*Ibid.* vol. xxvi. No. 1562. C. Perren, *Revival Sermons in Outline*, p. 154. S. A. Tipple, *Sunday Mornings at Norwood*, p. 39. J. Parker, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxviii. 1905, p. 177.

BALM IN GILEAD

'For the hurt of the daughter of my people,' etc.—JEREMIAH VIII. 21, 22.

THE lament of a good man over the sins of his countrymen.

I. The Nature of the Malady.

1. Hereditary.

'By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin.'

2. Universal.

'All have sinned and come short of the glory of God.'

3. Dangerous.

'The wages of sin is death.'

II. The Means of Cure.—The medicine here referred to is a resinous substance obtained from the balsam-tree, which flourished near Gilead, and was far-famed for its healing properties; often sold for twice its weight in silver. Obtained by cutting the bark with an axe when the fresh juices were most vigorous. The quantity which exuded from one tree did not exceed sixty drops a day.

The Gospel is the cure for sin-sick souls. This is:

1. An infallible remedy.
2. The *only* infallible remedy.
3. A remedy within the reach of all.

III. The Reasons Why the Cure is Not Effected.—Why does the Gospel fail? It is not Christ's fault, but ours.

1. Insensibility and indifference on the part of the sinner.

2. Apathy and neglect on the part of the disciples of Christ.—F. J. AUSTIN, *Seeds and Saplings*, p. 24.

REFERENCES.—VIII. 22.—*Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xlvi. 1894, p. 301. W. M. Punshon, *Balm in Gilead, Sermons*, p. 513; see also *Outlines of Sermons on the Old Testament*, p. 245. IX.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxxviii. No. 2274. IX. 1.—*Ibid.* vol. iii. No. 150. A. Phelps, *The Old Testament a Living Book for All Ages*, p. 7.

THE WISH TO ESCAPE

'Oh that I had in the wilderness a lodging-place of wayfaring men; that I might leave my people, and go from them!'—JEREMIAH IX. 2.

'And now, behold, I loose thee this day from the chains which were upon thine hand. If it seem good unto thee to come with me into Babylon, come; and I will look well unto thee: but if it seem ill unto thee to come with me into Babylon, forbear: behold, all the land is before thee: whither it seemeth good and convenient for thee to go, thither go. Now while he was not yet gone back, he said, Go back also to Gedaliah the son of Ahikam the son of Shaphan, whom the king of Babylon hath made governor over the cities of Judah, and dwell with him among the people: or go wheresoever it seemeth convenient unto thee to go. So the captain of the guard gave him victuals and a reward, and let him go. Then went Jeremiah unto Gedaliah the son of Ahikam to Mizpah; and dwelt with him among the people that were left in the land.'—JEREMIAH XL. 4-6.

JEREMIAH had cried wildly, 'Oh that I could escape'; but when escape was possible he turned his back on it. He went to Mizpah with Gedaliah, and though only the dregs of Judah had been left there, still—dregs or no dregs—they were his own people, and like a gallant soul he would not leave them.

I. We all feel sometimes the longing to escape. To escape from what?—in the first place from monotony.

Or again responsibility may cause it—the pressure of responsibility and care—not the weary weight of this unintelligible world, but just the burdens that lie at our own doors.

But to most of us there come hours when the great longing is to escape from ourselves.

> O that a man might arise in me,
> That the man I am might cease to be!

II. This longing betrays itself in many ways.

1. It betrays itself in day-dreams. It is one of the great offices of imagination to be a refuge when we are in rebellion against facts.

2. It betrays itself in pleasure, and especially in the craving for exciting pleasure. The very charm of excitement lies in this that it helps men for a little to forget.

3. And then does it not betray itself in theories? How easy it is to blind ourselves to facts, when we once adopt some theory about them! When I see, and I see it every day, how men turn away from the straight gaze of Christ, and when I see how they run to philosophies and theories which have no cry in them, no cross, no blood—only harmonious and flattering music—to me at least that is another betrayal of the strange yet quenchless longing to escape.

III. The duty of a Christian is to crush it. However instinctively this wish may rise, it must when it rises be sternly combated. This is our duty every day we live, because of the example of Christ Jesus. 'O my Father, if it be possible let this cup pass from me!' What is that, but the wild cry of all humanity, to flee from its Calvary and be at rest? Yet immediately, 'Not My will, but Thine be done. I am here not to do My will but Thine, O God.' And that instant recognition of the Father, and the immediate owning of His will, tells how in the very moment that the wish was formed, the wish—to escape, to flee away—was crushed.—G. H. Morrison, *The Unlighted Lustre*, p. 102.

References.—IX. 2.—A. Ramsay, *Studies in Jeremiah*, p. 47. G. A. Smith, *British Weekly Pulpit*, vol. ii. p. 309. IX. 7.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxxviii. No. 2274. IX. 23, 24.—J. P. Gledstone, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxxvii. 1890, p. 150. A. E. Tonkin, *ibid.* vol. xliv. 1893, p. 122. J. Parker, *Hidden Springs*, p. 153. X.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. i. No. 2893.

'Thus shall ye say unto them, the gods that have not made the heavens and the earth, even they shall perish from the earth, and from under these heavens.'—Jeremiah x. 11.

Dr. Stock, in his History of the Church Missionary Society, says that Claudius Buchanan, in his valedictory address to the first men sent to India, refers to this unique Chaldaic verse embedded in the Hebrew of Jeremiah's prophecy. 'Just as if,' says Buchanan, 'while you are receiving instructions in your own tongue, one sentence should be given you in the Tamil or Cinghalese language which you should deliver to the Hindus.'

Reference.—X. 16.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—Isaiah and Jeremiah*, p. 268.

THE COLLAPSES OF LIFE

'Woe is me for my hurt! my wound is grievous: but I said, truly this is my grief, and I must bear it. My tent is spoiled, and all my cords are broken: my children are gone forth of me, and they are not: there is none to stretch forth my tent any more, and to set up my curtains.'—Jeremiah x. 19, 20 (R.V.).

'For in the day of trouble He shall keep me secretly in His pavilion: in the covert of His tent shall He hide me; He shall lift me up upon a rock.'—Psalm xxvii. 5 (R.V.).

1. The Lament of the Prophet.—'Woe is me for my hurt! my wound is grievous, truly this is my grief.' It was not an irritation, inconvenience, or annoyance, a disagreeable, disappointing incident, as so many of our troubles are: it was a bitter grief, a crushing overthrow.

1. The overthrow is *total*. 'My tent is spoiled and all my cords are broken.' Many times had the land of Israel been devastated and its population subjected to loss and suffering; on this occasion the catastrophe was to be overwhelming. Thus from time to time is it with the individual. Sometimes adverse financial fortune wrecks our tent. Sometimes the calamity that surprises us is the total failure of our health.

2. The overthrow is *sudden*. A tent in the wilderness is broken without warning, and herein is the symbol of our overthrows. We speak of coming events casting their shadows before: tremendous events supervene with little warning. The most desolating bolts shoot out of a blue sky, the spectre of ruin is ambushed in broad sunshine and takes us unawares.

3. The overthrow is *irreparable*. 'There is none to stretch forth my tent any more, and to set up my curtains.' This order of calamity is repeated in private life. Usually the losses of life admit of ameliorations; but some deprivations are complete, some losses final. We must look the fact in the face that the day approaches when we shall be totally helpless, when nothing can be done, and everything must be endured.

4. The overthrow is *personal*. 'Truly this is *my* grief, and *I* must bear it.' We live in a world of misfortunes and sorrows; but, as a rule, they do not greatly affect us: they occur in distant places, they affect strangers. One day, however, the calamity comes right home, and the arrow drinks up our spirit. 'It is *my* grief.'

II. The Psalmist's Refuge.—'For in the day of trouble He shall keep me secretly in His pavilion: in the covert of His tent shall He hide me.' When your tent sinks away hopelessly there is a royal pavilion in which you may hide—this is the sublime direction and consolation of these precious words—something deeper than our grief, vaster than our sorrow.

Fly to *the living God*. Jeremiah, in the chapter whence our first text is taken, dwells upon the reality and glory of the living God. We believe in the living God—all-wise, just, loving, keeping mercy for thousands who fear Him, and we trust in His perfect government and glorious purpose.—W. L. Watkinson, *Themes for Hours of Meditation*, p. 44.

References.— X. 23.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. i. No. 2893. XI. 8.—*Ibid.* vol. xiv. No. 838. XI. 12.—W. J. Knox-Little, *Labour and Sorrow*, p. 131.

TRIVIAL TROUBLE

'If thou hast run with the footmen, and they have wearied thee, then how canst thou contend with horses? and though in a land of peace thou art secure, yet how wilt thou do in the pride of Jordan.'—Jeremiah xii. 5 (R.V.).

The proof that so many of us have little real trouble is found in the fact that we so piercingly bewail trifling losses and pains; were the distresses more acute, we should say less about them.

I. The habit of pampering ourselves shows how far we have lost sight of the seriousness of life. 'The

sacramental host of God has ever been prepared to accept great losses and sufferings for the high rewards it contemplates. 'The noble army of martyrs' is the glory of God's Church, and in a real sense representative of its spirit and power. Its members have sworn allegiance to a captain who was 'made perfect through suffering'; and in all ages they have dared the most tremendous tribulations that they might win eternal life. Our disproportionate attention to minor miseries shows how far we have lost sight of the extreme seriousness of the true idea and design of human life.

II. To brood over paltry trials reveals littleness of soul, and accentuates that littleness. We are in danger of deceiving ourselves on this point. It is not uncommon for men to believe that they are able to bear great calamities better than they can small ones. It is an illusion. He who is wearied in a sprint with the footmen will never contend successfully with horses; he who faints in the land of peace will make a poor show in the swelling of Jordan. Little physical energy is left when the grasshopper becomes a burden; little energy of soul remains when the grasshopper of trivial trouble is allowed to plague us. And as fretfulness indicates spiritual feebleness it accentuates it; it effectually precludes inward largeness, strength, and heroism.

III. The habit of repining unfits us to deal with the real troubles awaiting us farther on. We ought so to run with the footmen that we shall be able to bridle the horses; we ought so to dwell in the land of peace—careless of its gnats, contemptuous of its grasshoppers—that it shall prove a precious discipline against the day when deep calls unto deep, and when all the waves and billows go over us; but to permit the inevitable friction of everyday life to waste our power is to lay ourselves open to inglorious humiliations whenever the crisis comes.—W. L. Watkinson, *Themes for Hours of Meditation*, p. 107.

Illustration.—In *Mosses from an Old Manse* Nathaniel Hawthorne writes: 'There are so many unsubstantial sorrows which the necessity of our mortal state begets on idleness, that an observer, casting aside sentiment, is sometimes led to question whether there may be any real woe except absolute physical suffering and the loss of closest friends.—W. L. Watkinson, *Themes for Hours of Meditation*, p. 107.

References.—XII. 5.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xi. No. 635. C. Leach, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xl. 1891, p. 204. J. Pulsford, *Outlines of Sermons on the Old Testament*, p. 246. G. Dawson, *Sermons*, p. 43. A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—Isaiah and Jeremiah*, p. 272. XIII. 1-11.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxix. No. 1706. XIII. 15-17.—*Ibid.* vol. xxix. No. 1740. XIII. 16.—A. W. Potts, *School Sermons*, p. 150. XIII. 20.—"Plain Sermons" by contributors to the *Tracts for the Times*, vol. i. p. 3.

HABIT

'Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? Then may ye also do good that are accustomed to do evil.'—Jeremiah xiii. 23.

I. The Origin of Habit.—Habit may be conceived to arise in this way. When, in the revolution of time—of the day, or the week, or the month, or the year—the point comes round at which we have been thinking of anything, or have done anything, by the law of the association of ideas we think of it again, or do it again. For instance, when day dawns we awake. We get out of bed because we have done it at that time before. At a later hour we take breakfast, and go away to business, for the same reason; and so on through the day. The more frequently anything has been done, the stronger is habit, and frequency acts on habit through something else. Frequency gives ease and swiftness to the doing of anything. It is not only the mind that is involved in habit. Even the body is subdued to its service. Do we not recognize the soldier by his gait, the student by his stoop, and the merchant by his bustle? And in the parts of the body that are invisible—the muscles and nerves—there is a still greater change due to habit. Hence the counsel of the philosopher, and I think it is a very profound counsel: 'Make your nervous system your ally instead of your enemy in the battle of life'.

II. Excessive Habit.—Habit, even good habit, may be excessive. It tends to become hide-bound and tyrannical. There is a pharisaical sticking to opinions once formed, and to customs once adopted, which is the principal obstacle to human progress. Yet, on the whole, there is no possession so valuable as a few good habits, for this means that not only is the mind pledged and covenanted to good, but the muscles are supple, and even the very bones are bent to what is good.

III. Desirable Habits.

1. Self-control; that is, the power of getting yourself to do what you know you ought to do, and to avoid what you know you ought to avoid.
2. Concentration of mind.
3. Really working when you are at work.
4. Prayer.

IV. The Tyranny of Evil Habits.—Evil habits may be acquired through simply neglecting to acquire good ones. Like weeds they grow up wherever the field is uncultivated and the good seed is not sown. For example, the man who does not work becomes a dissipated loafer.

The tyranny of evil habit is proverbial. The moralists compare it to a thread, at the beginning, but as thread is twisted with thread, it becomes like a cable which can turn a ship.

V. The Problem of Christianity.—In the work of overcoming evil habits, is there available for man a power outside himself that when his own power fails, will stand him in stead, not, indeed, by pushing his own powers aside, but by entering into compact with them, and raising them to the strength necessary for the occasion? I say that is the problem of Christianity, and nobody can have any doubt what the answer is which Scripture gives to it. Is it not also the answer of experience, the experience of tens of thousands of men who have tried in vain to reform them-

selves, but have found in the Gospel the power of God unto salvation; the experience of men in whom the power of evil habit was so strong that it seemed as impossible to overcome it as to reverse the course of Acheron, and yet who, by the grace of God, were made humble and progressive Christians? There is no force of evil with which the Saviour cannot cope. —James Stalker, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xlix. 1896, p. 198.

References.—XIII. 23.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xliii. No. 2536. A. Brooke, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lii. 1897, p. 205. L. T. Dodd, *ibid.* vol. lxix. 1906, p. 88. E. B. Speirs, *A Present Advent*, p. 51. A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—Isaiah and Jeremiah*, p. 274. XIV.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xlvii. No. 2745. XIV. 3, 4, 22.—*Ibid.* vol. xxxv. No. 2115. XIV. 7-9.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—Isaiah and Jeremiah*, p. 281. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxviii. No. 1661. XIV. 8, 9.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons on the Prophets*, vol. ii. p. 1. XIV. 9.—*Ibid. Sermons on the Apocalypse*, etc., p. 9. XIV. 22.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xlvii. No. 2745. T. K. Cheyne, *The Hallowing of Criticism*, p. 83. XV. 4.—W. Lee, *University Sermons*, p. 262. XV. 12.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xvii. No. 993.

THE EATING OF GOD'S WORDS

'Thy words were found, and I did eat them.'—Jeremiah xv. 16.

The former verse contains a suggestion which bears upon the interpretation of this text. That suggestion is this, that the position which the prophet finds himself in is due to the words of God which he had found and had eaten.

I. The first word he found was, the word of *Divine ordination:* 'Then the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, before thy birth I knew thee; and at thy birth I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations'. He discovered that it was by no mere chance that he had entered into this life. On the contrary that he was sent into the world for a very definite purpose. He found he was where God intended him to be and he was fulfilling the mission for which God had given him life.

In the day of this discovery Jeremiah was delivered from the blight of a self-conscious insufficiency. 'I cannot speak, for I am a child.' That was a genuine word. While, however, he was under its spell he was utterly useless. He had no confidence in himself or in his powers. He was in consequence prostrated at the shrine of his own weakness and self-conscious insufficiency. Though a man may prostrate himself in true penitence for sin, even at the foot of the Cross, God can do nothing with him until he stands erect again, conscious no longer of his own weakness, but of a power which has become his by eating the words of the Lord.

II. The word of a *Divine ministry*—a ministry which was to be first of all destructive, and then constructive. In that Divine ministry unto the nations he discovered: (1) The word of God's *integrity*. (2) The word of God's *pleading*. What is the story of this book? Is it not the story of a prolonged pleading, throughout the centuries, of God the Father with His rebellious sons? This is surely the word of the Cross. (3) The word of God's *judgments*. This was perhaps the most difficult word which the prophet had to receive. It was certainly the most unpopular word. To its reception may be traced much of the trials, difficulties, and sorrows which had surrounded the life and ministry of this man of God. Yet he did not hesitate to receive it. He received it as complimentary to the word of pleading which had gone before it. He saw most clearly that consequent upon Israel's refusal to receive the pleadings of God came the judgments of God.

III. Notice what the eating of these words meant to the prophet himself. (1) The reception of those words for the nourishment of his own spiritual life. (2) The willing acceptance of the principles and practices involved in them. God's ordination would become the prophet's ordination. (3) By the eating of these words of God, which he had found, the prophet would become in heart and mind entirely God's. It is the mingling of the waters which make the ocean. It is the blending of the valleys and mountains and plains which make the landscape. It is the coming of God into man, and the losing of man in his God, which make the patriarch and the prophet, the Psalmist and the seer, the saint and the martyr, the disciple and the apostle, the preacher and the evangelist.—J. Gay, *Common Truths from Queer Texts*, p. 59.

References. XV. 16.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xvii. No. 980; vol. xviii. No. 1079. XVII. 1.—*Ibid.* vol. xiv. No. 812. A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—Isaiah and Jeremiah*, p. 294. XVII. 5.—R. E. Hutton, *The Crown of Christ*, vol. i. p. 217. XVII. 5-8; XVIII. 7-10.—*Selected Sermons of Schleiermacher*, p. 67. XVII. 6.—C. Perren, *Revival Sermons in Outline*, p. 341. XVII.—6, 8.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—Isaiah and Jeremiah*, p. 302.

'The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?'—Jeremiah xvii. 9.

Père Pacheu quotes the saying of the Comte de Maistre: 'Whatever the conscience of a criminal may be, I know only the heart of an honest man, and it is a wretched and a fearful thing!'

A BAD HEART

'The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it? I the Lord search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings.'—Jeremiah xvii. 9, 10.

I wish, firstly, to prove to you the truth of the words 'the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked'; secondly, to remind you that God knows what is within you—'I the Lord search the heart'; and, thirdly, the only remedy that can do you any good, if you would be saved.

I. As to the natural deceit and wickedness of every man, woman, and child that is born into the world, first and foremost what says the Scripture? You can hardly turn to a single part of Bible history in which

this doctrine does not come uppermost. Look at the men before the flood! who would have thought, with Paradise as a witness before their eyes (for until the flood Paradise was on earth), who would have thought they could have turned their backs on God, and given themselves up to all manner of lusts and sin? And yet they did so, in spite of every warning, and God was obliged to drown the whole world, excepting eight persons. Look at the history of Israel, the chosen family itself. The Lord gave them judges and kings, and priests and prophets and ministers, and preachings and warnings; and yet their history, with a few exceptions, is a history of unbelief and backsliding and transgression and crime, down to the very day when they crucified the Lord Jesus Christ Himself.

You can hardly turn to a single family, even of the best of God's servants, in which the natural corruption of our hearts does not appear more or less in some one of the branches. You can hardly turn to a single character, among the holy men described in the Bible, who did not, to his own horror and dismay, fall at one time or another. Job thought he knew his heart, but affliction came and he found he did not. David thought he knew his heart, but he learned by bitter experience how woefully he was mistaken. Peter thought he knew his heart, and in a short time he was repenting in tears.

II. We read, 'I the Lord search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings'. There are two things written here: one is that, although you do not know your own hearts, the Lord God Almighty does, and keeps a close watch over them; the other is that He will one day call you to account, and judge you accordingly. And do you not observe here what the mind of the Spirit points to? Some men might say, God will not be extreme to mark what is amiss, I shall have peace though I walk in the imagination of mine heart; but the prophet sweeps away these refuges of lies by warning us of searching and of judgment immediately after he has declared to us the deceitfulness of man's heart.

III. 'Who can be saved?' All, I answer, who give up their iniquities, and grieve over them, and put their whole trust in Jesus Christ.—J. C. Ryle, *The Christian Race*, p. 1.

Reference.—XVII. 9, 10.—C. Holland, *Gleanings from a Ministry of Fifty Years*, p. 55.

JESUS CHRIST OUR SANCTUARY (KEDESH)

'A glorious high throne from the beginning is the place of our sanctuary.'—Jeremiah xvii. 12.

The name Kedesh means set apart, a sanctuary, a holy city.

I. The first thought connected with sanctuary is that it is a sacred or consecrated place. But the word sanctuary has a wider meaning. It is a sacred asylum or refuge, a place of protection.

II. Jesus Christ is the true *Sanctuary*. He fulfils all that the city of refuge suggested. He is our Kedesh, our place of refuge, our sanctuary, our sacred place.

The altar was the meeting place between God and the transgressor, where the innocent victim was offered in the place of the guilty sinner. So Christ is the true altar, the meeting place between God and man, the one and only Priest, the one and only Sacrifice, the one and only Atonement for sin. To grasp the altar horns was to lay hold of God's strength and to rest under the shadow of His protecting love. So Christ is at once our shelter and our strength. He surrounds the believer as with a temple wall, keeps him in safety from all enemies and in peace amidst all alarms.

The temple was God's sanctuary of old. It represented God dwelling in the midst of Israel, and Israel drawing near to God in the appointed way. Christ is the true sanctuary. His Manhood, 'The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us,' is the 'tabernacle of meeting' between man and God.

Kedesh, the city of the holy place of the sanctuary, points to Jesus the holy one of God, who is our one and only Refuge, the strong tower of the Lord in which we are safe for time and for eternity.—W. J. Armitage, *The Cities of Refuge*, p. 25.

References.—XVII. 12.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—Isaiah and Jeremiah*, p. 311. XVII. 12-14.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxx. No. 1786. XVII. 13.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—Isaiah and Jeremiah*, p. 319. XVII. 14.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxviii. No. 1658.

GOD'S PITY FOR FAILURE

'When the vessel that he made of the clay was marred in the hand of the potter, he made it again.'—Jeremiah xviii. 4.

I. In every action of the potter God was speaking, and Jeremiah heard and understood. What was the message? This: God's pity for failure—'It was marred, so he made it again' Why did the potter not leave the broken and marred clay, and use a fresh and flawless piece? There was plenty of it at his disposal. Why? Because he knew that if the obstacle that marred it was removed the vessel could be perfected, and so he tried again. Jeremiah was despondent, depressed, and disappointed. Israel, whom God had chosen and moulded for His purpose, had resisted and rebelled, and such thoughts as these were passing through the prophet's mind: What was God going to do with Israel? Would He cast her aside? Would He take another people and use another people for His purpose and praise? In the potter's house that morning God answered these questions, and silenced his doubts and fears. God would not cast Israel off, for as the potter had taken the broken, marred clay and made it again, so would God gather Israel to Himself once more and try and make Israel again. God was giving Israel another chance.

II. God has an ideal for every one of us. Every revolution of the wheel and every touch of His hand has been to mould and make us according to the Divine pattern. God's ideal for each of us was that we should become like Jesus Christ.

Why have we failed? It is the fault of the clay—the clay is marred, there is something concealed in the clay which collides with the potter's will, and try as

He may, He cannot make us until that obstruction is removed. The reason of our failure is in ourselves, we have failed in God's purpose because we refused to let Him have His way with us.

III. And what will He do with us forlorn failures? Has He become so weary of our failure as to abandon all hope? He is not weary of forgiving. He is not tired of trying; His mercy endureth for ever and His patience is as enduring as His mercy. He has hope for the most hopeless. Let God have His way with you, for only by your willingness can He succeed. Full surrender to His will is the absolute essential.—H. Kenward, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxviii. 1905, p. 315.

References.—XVIII. 4.—R. Waddy Moss, *The Discipline of the Soul*, p. 89. D. D. F. MacDonald, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxix. 1906, p. 22. J. Parker, *Studies in Texts*, vol. i. p. 18. XVIII. 6.—A. Macleod, *Days of Heaven Upon Earth*, p. 23. XVIII. 11.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xliii. No. 2547. XVIII. 12.—*Ibid.* vol. xii. No. 684. XVIII. 14.—J. Parker, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. li. 1897, p. 164. XIX. 11.—F. E. Paget, *Sermons for Special Occasions*, p. 29.

THE DECEPTIONS OF GOD

'O Lord, Thou hast deceived me, and I was deceived.'—Jeremiah xx. 7.

I. There are times when we are ready to say that God deceives us. Think of the ideals of our childhood. It is one of the sweet illusions of the child that father or mother has neither fault nor flaw.

1. Think again of the deceptions of the senses. If there is one thing that seems above dispute, it is that this earth of ours is fixed and firm.

2. Think once again of how God fulfils His promises. One thing certain is that when Abraham was called from Ur, he was promised the land of Canaan for his own. The strange thing is that to his dying hour Abraham did not own one rood of Palestine. It is a signal tribute to the splendour of Abraham's faith that not in his darkest hour did he doubt God.

3. Think once again of how life deceives us. It is when men compare all that the years have brought with the glad and golden promise of the morning. It is then that they are tempted, not in bitterness, but in the melancholy which Jeremiah knew so well, to cry, 'O Lord, if *this* be life, Thou hast deceived me, and I was deceived'.

4. Then think for a moment of the Christian calling: 'Come unto Me, and I will give you rest'. And we come, for we are weary and it is rest we want, and immediately we are summoned out to war. 'Fight the good fight of faith; put on thine armour; show thyself a good soldier of Jesus Christ.'

II. There are loving purposes in this so-called deception.

1. Sometimes this is one of the ways of God for strengthening and educating character. He leaves us, not because He is false, nor because He has broken the promise of His help, but because, like a mother with her little child, He is teaching us to stand upon our feet.

2. It is one of God's ways to make us happy, and God is at infinite pains to make us happy. There are dreams so sweet that He will not rudely waken us; the time for that is coming by and by. Our hopes are not less ministers of happiness because they may never be fully realized.

3. It is one of God's ways to make us valiant, and to stir and rouse us to our best endeavour. I think, for example, of that first hope of Christendom that the second coming of the Lord was near at hand. Without that burning hope do you think they could ever have suffered and been strong? So does God strengthen us by what He hides not less divinely than by what He shows.

This so-called deception is one of the ways of God to lead us on. Do you think that we would ever have the heart to travel if we were not beset by stratagems of mercy? So does God lead us through the ideals of childhood, and the hopes of youth, and the letter of the promise, till at last the husk is broken in our grasp, and we find with a strange joy the hidden kernel.—G. H. Morrison, *The Wings of the Morning*, p. 288.

References.—XX. 7-13.—A. Ramsay, *Studies in Jeremiah*, p. 25. XX. 9.—W. Sanday, *Inspiration*, p. 124. XXI. 12.—C. Gore, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. l. 1896, p. 296.

THE WOES OF THE UNJUST

'Woe unto him that buildeth his house by unrighteousness, and his chambers by wrong; that useth his neighbour's service without wages, and giveth him not for his work.'—Jeremiah xxii. 13.

The whole law is contained in these words, 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and thy neighbour as thyself'. These two parts cannot be separated. God places us among our own kind, and our character cannot be formed and our souls saved without doing justly and loving mercy, while we walk humbly with our God. If we are servants, we are to do honest work for our masters; and if we are masters, we are to give equitable wages to our servants. The text denounces woe against those who deal unrighteously. An unjust man may, as the Psalmist complains, prosper in life, and have no bands in his death, and leave his substance to his children; still there are subtle woes which he cannot escape.

I. The Woe of Estrangement from God.—God says, 'Woe to him that buildeth his house by unrighteousness'. He is the Father of the fatherless and the shield of the widow; and it cannot be that the man who is conscious of defrauding any weak creature of his bare rights will enjoy God's blessing and communion. Many an unjust man, it is true, affects, and in a spurious way feels, devotion towards God and love to Christ. They rob widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayers. But what real communion can light have with darkness?—the God of perfect righteousness with the man whose every possession, the house in which he lives, the clothes he wears, the sumptuous fare on which he

exists, speak of oppression and wrong? 'When thou sawest a thief, then thou consentedst with him.' 'What hast thou to do to declare My statutes, or that thou shouldest take My covenant in thy mouth?' 'I hate robbery for a burnt-offering.' Must not the dishonest man strive hard in his fancied communion with God to forget many a stern feature in God's character? It is a god of his own imagining and moulding as really as the man's which is hewn by him out of the stock of a tree, whom the unjust man serves. He who lives in a house built by unrighteousness can never feel the exquisite joy of him who may, like his Saviour, have nowhere of his own to lay his head, but who can say, 'Lord, Thou hast been our dwelling-place in all generations'.

II. The Woe of the Curses of those who are Oppressed.—The man who buildeth his house by unrighteousness and his chambers by wrong, is like one who builds his house in the heart of a poisonous swamp. He is like the old Norman tyrants who built their fortresses (which were really prisons in which they immured themselves, and from which they fought often for bare existence) among the people whom they had wronged, and whom they despised. How unlike the sweet experience of Job—'When the eye saw me, then it blessed me. I was eyes to the blind, feet was I to the lame; I was a father to the poor, and I caused the widow's heart to sing for joy.'

III. The Woe of an Accusing Conscience.—The accusation may not be loud or very persistent. But surely there must be times in which the hoarse voice of the hireling defrauded of his wages mingles with the songs and merriment of the feast; in which 'the stone shall cry out of the wall, and the beam out of the timber shall answer it': 'Woe to him that buildeth a town with blood, and stablisheth a city in iniquity'. If men would but believe that 'a little that a righteous man hath is more and better than the wealth of many wicked,' what woes would be averted from the heads of their fellow-men, and from their own hearts!

IV. The Woe of a Perverted Nature and Deadened Heart.—As men's hands are dyed by the colours they work in, as the bodies of those who work daily in some constrained and unnatural position get gradually distorted, as the speech of the child reproduces that which his ear perpetually drinks in, so the heart of the man who, for the sake of gain, defrauds his neighbour and oppresses those who are under him, is gradually deteriorated and benumbed. This, it is true, may be hailed as a relief by the man whose heart is too pitiful by nature, and his conscience too tender for the work he chooses to do. But, all the same, it is the ear which is quick to hear God's voice, and the heart which is alive and which thrills at His touch, that alone can know what the joy of the Lord, which is the only true joy, means. 'The blessing of the Lord maketh rich and addeth no sorrow.'

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THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS

'This is His name whereby He shall be called, The Lord our Righteousness.'—Jeremiah xxiii. 6.

I. You must have some righteousness, or you will not be saved. The Bible says plainly, 'The unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God'; 'The righteous hath hope in his death'; 'Thy people,' says Isaiah, 'shall be all righteous'. Many often say they know they are not what they should be, but 'God is merciful'. Their religion goes no further; this is the first and last of all their Christianity. This will not stand before the Bible. God is a God of perfect holiness, and 'without holiness no man shall see the Lord'; God is a God of perfect justice, Whose laws may not be broken without punishment (Deut. xxxii. 4; St. Matt. v. 17, 18). God's mercy and justice must be reconciled. God is indeed all love: He willeth not the death of a sinner, but 'the wages of sin is death,' and God will have His demands paid in full. By some means, then, you must have righteousness or you cannot be saved. But—

II. You have no righteousness of your own of any sort, and therefore by yourself you cannot be saved. Look at the law of God, and measure its requirements. Does it not ask of every man a perfect, unsinning obedience from first to last, in thought, word, and deed; and who can say 'All this have I performed'?

(*a*) Some tell us that repentance and amendment will enable us to stand in the great day, and no doubt without them none will enter the kingdom of heaven above. But they cannot put away your sins; they cannot blot out a single page of that book in which your iniquities are written. John the Baptist preached repentance, but he never told his hearers it alone would save them.

(*b*) Some put their trust in well-spent lives: they have always done their best, and so hope they shall be accounted righteous. This is miserable trifling. Let them mention a single day in which they have not broken the spiritual law laid down in the Sermon on the Mount. What! never an unkind thought, an unchaste look, no covetous feelings?—nothing left undone which was in their power to do?

(*c*) Some say they hope sincerity will carry them through: they have always meant well. St. Paul, before his conversion, was zealous towards God; he thought he ought to do many things contrary to Jesus of Nazareth. Here was sincerity and earnestness; yet we find him, when his eyes were opened, saying, 'I was a blasphemer—the chief of sinners'.

(*d*) Some build their claim to righteousness on religious forms and ordinances alone. The Jews had ceremonies and observances in abundance. Men may

pay attention to these, and yet be abominable in the sight of God (1 Sam. xv. 22, 23).

III. 'But what are we to do?' 'You seem to have shut us up without hope.' 'You said we must have some righteousness; and now you say that we have none of our own; what are we to do?' Beloved, God can be a just God, and yet show mercy and justify the most ungodly. 'The Lord' is, and must be, 'our righteousness.' Here is a mystery of wisdom and love. The Lord Jesus has done and suffered what we ought to have done and suffered. He has taken our place, and become our Substitute, both in life and death. Is not His Name then rightly called 'The Lord our Righteousness?'

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RELIGION IN THE FAMILY

'At the same time, saith the Lord, will I be the God of all the families of Israel, and they shall be My people.'—JEREMIAH XXXI. 1.

WHAT constitutes a godly home? The acknowledgment of God in all things. Making His will the governing principle. There can be no godly household where that is not done.

I. Where the will of God is placed first *there will be order*—an inestimable blessing in a home. God is not the God of confusion in the home or the Church. A man or woman who truly walks with God will soon become ashamed of disorder and slovenliness. And where God is the God of the family, and not merely the God of the Church, there will be order. The father and mother will take their proper place at the head of the household, and govern it and administer it as a trust for God. There will be no tyranny, no caprice; but there will be firm order, and an insistence upon it, and a constant striving after it.

II. There will be *unselfishness*. Not every one doing that which is right in his own eyes, but every one asking, 'What is the will of God?' And there will be a perpetual and relentless war upon selfishness. Care for others will be supreme. Consideration of others will prevail. Kindness will be paramount, and it will be a happy service to render it.

III. Where God is the God of the family, *His will will govern the whole policy of the home*. Such matters as the education of the children, the treatment of servants, such matters as dress and evening parties, as books and games, are sadly in want of a Christian standard. They are matters about which some Christian people think, or seem to think, that there is no will of God, and they simply follow the fashion, that is, the fashion of the world, and sometimes money dominates, and sometimes your neighbour's custom. And we shall not get right in any of these matters until we recognize that there is a will of God in them, and it is not a question of what my neighbour practises, and allows or condemns. Not my narrow neighbour on the one hand, nor my broad neighbour on the other, but 'What is the Christian standard? what is the will of God?' and I must be brave enough to follow that.

IV. And there is another side to this fair and lovely picture. It is suggested by the last line in the verse. Wherever you have a number of people set on doing God's will and placing that will first, there *you have most surely God's protection and safe keeping.*—C. BROWN, *Light and Life*, p. 137.

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vol. xxxiv. No. 2006. E. Griffith-Jones, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxxii. 1907, p. 282. XXXI. 36.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture —Isaiah and Jeremiah*, p. 332. XXXI. 37.—*Ibid.* p. 336. XXXII. 1-27.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xlvi. No. 2675. XXXII. 8-10.—A. Ramsay, *Studies in Jeremiah*, p. 241.

EVIDENCES SEALED AND EVIDENCES OPEN.

'Thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel; Take these evidences, this evidence of the purchase, both which is sealed, and this evidence which is open, and put them in an earthen vessel, that they may continue many days.'—JEREMIAH XXXII. 14.

THE placing of the deeds in an earthen vessel or vase was of course peculiar to this case. It was intended to preserve them from damp and decay in their secret hiding-place during the long years of the captivity, as Jerusalem ere many months would be destroyed by the King of Babylon.

I. Consider this mode of the authentication of purchase of property as an illustration of one of the evidences of the truth of the Word of God.

One of the great features of Christianity is that it is based on facts. What Professor Rawlinson says of the historical statements of the New Testament is equally true of the Old. 'When a shallow learning and a defective knowledge of the records of the past have led men to think that they had found a slip or a mistake, and a shout of triumph has been raised, profounder research has always demonstrated the veracity and accuracy of the sacred writer, and has exposed the ignorance of the assailant.' Some years ago a Yorkshire clothier lost a bale of cloth. He suspected a neighbour who was in the same business, and whose character was 'none of the best'. He entered his neighbour's warehouse, and pointing to a bale which he immediately recognized said, 'That is mine'. The rogue said, 'Prove it'. The owner of the bale was in a difficulty and went home. He was convinced that he was right, and yet how could he prove his case? One night as he lay awake he suddenly said, 'I have it'. Next morning he took witnesses and said to his suspected neighbour, 'Will you let me take that bale to the drying croft?' The man could not well refuse. The croft is the place where the cloth, after being dyed, is stretched on long, strong needles attached to posts. In this croft no two posts were equally distant. Our friend, taking the cloth, fitted the first needle into the first hole on the edge of the cloth, the second needle exactly agreed with the second hole, and so on to the end. The distances between the holes in the cloth exactly corresponded with the distances between the needles. The case was clear—the proof was certain. There are 1000 needles, so to speak, in the Bible, and there are 1000 holes in the land in which the Book was written and in the countries to which the Book refers. Take the cloth to the croft—the Book to the lands; compare the narrative with the history of the world to which it continually refers, and in every instance the needle corresponds with the hole. The open evidence is one with the sealed. The mode of evidence which was used by the Jewish people to prove the certainty of purchase strikingly illustrates to my mind this mode of authenticating the veracity of the words of the living God.

II. My text is a striking illustration of spiritual truth. It is in redemption spiritual as it is in redemption literal; there must be two kinds of evidence, sealed and open, to make the title good; so that if either of these be deficient, the claim or title to the Divine heritage is invalid, and we have no manifested interest in the precious blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ, through which alone there is forgiveness of sin and an entrance into everlasting life.

1. *There are the evidences which are sealed or secret, which cannot be seen, and read, and known of men.* (*a*) The revelation of Christ to the heart in His person and work as adapted to our necessities is a sealed evidence. (*b*) A spirit of adoption is a sealed or secret evidence. (*c*) A secret love to God's people is an evidence that God hath 'sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts'. 'We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren.' (*d*) I can only mention one other evidence of a like character, and that is the love of truth, the loyal allegiance of the soul to all revealed truth. From the time that the entrance of the Word giveth light, the soul loves the light, and continually craves for it.

2. *Consider the open evidences.* Remember that this kind of evidence, in verification of the purchase by Jeremiah of the field of Hanameel, was open, that it might be seen, might be read, might be known. To make it manifest that we have an interest in that which Christ has purchased for us, there must not only be the secret evidence within the soul, but the open parchment of a godly and consistent life. A religion which begins and ends with emotion can give no real evidence of our title to everlasting life. We must look to it that we have open evidences as well as sealed, for both are equally needed to prove our title good.

III. 'Put them in an earthen vessel to continue many days.' I believe that the application of these words is to the final restoration of the Jewish people to the land of their fathers; but we are distinctly taught that the captivity in Babylon is a type and picture of the captivity of death and the grave. This thought runs through Psalm and prophecy. The earthen vessel seems to describe the Christian here, frail, of the earth earthy, at present unrecognized as regards his princely condition, and yet one for whom the inheritance is kept.—J. W. BARDSLEY, *Many Mansions*, p. 232.

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THE ENTHUSIASM OF GOD

'With My whole heart and with My whole soul.'—JEREMIAH XXXII. 41.

GOD is telling His people the great things He purposes to do for them, and He declares He will accomplish all with His whole heart and with His whole soul. Here we are brought face to face with the kindling fact that God is a God of enthusiasm.

I. God is Enthusiastic.

Enthusiasm is an impressive element of Bible theology. It is God's quenchless enthusiasm which is to establish in triumph the ever-increasing kingdom and peace of Emmanuel. All Christian missionary crusades have as the guarantee of their victory the enthusiasm of God.

If enthusiasm be a quality which Old Testament theology ascribes to God, it is also emphatically accredited to Him by the theology of the New Covenant. It is revealed as an outstanding feature of Him to have seen Who is the Father. 'With My whole heart and with My whole soul' was the motto of His Incarnate life.

Enthusiasm must surely be an essential of a true theology. One cannot conceive of an impassionate God. The very idea and etymology of the word 'enthusiasm' involves God. An ancient Greek finely described enthusiasm as 'a God within'. And such all grand enthusiasm is, and must be evermore.

II. God is Enthusiastic Concerning Human Character.

God's 'people' represent character. And God's enthusiasm for character is shown in His enthusiasm for His people.

The fact is, nothing in man creates such enthusiasm on God's part as the instituting and enhancing of character. Your soul is that in you in which God is most interested, and He is interested in everything about you. Christ's cross is the measure of God's enthusiasm for character.

III. God's Enthusiasm is Beneficent.

There are those whose so-called enthusiasm is self-centred. No altruism irradiates them. Nobody is anything bettered for them. God's zeal is to help, to bless, to enrich men.

IV. The Enthusiasm of God is Exemplary.

All enthusiasm is contagious. The awful peril is that we imitate evil enthusiasms. God's enthusiasm is the true ideal for man. 'Be ye imitators of God.'

V. There are things which do not excite God's enthusiasm.

God has no spark of enthusiasm for much that man burns about. This is apparent in the objects of their respective enthusiasms. God has no enthusiasm for self-centredness. God has no enthusiasm for worldliness. God has no enthusiasm for indifferency. Stoicism is not sanctity.

VI. What a Claim God has on us by Reason of His Enthusiasm.

A God who, with His whole heart and His whole soul, seeks man's highest good, is a God who constrains our devotion.

Here is ground of trustfulness. Can I fear for the morrow when this God is mine? Here is ground of hope. All shall always be well, seeing such a God is mine. Here is ground of service. Too much one cannot do for such a God. Passion is reason in the service of such a God.

VII. We may safely Reckon on God's Enthusiasm, if we be His.

The mountains may depart and the hills be removed, but God's steadfast enthusiasm abideth. Pass through the wilderness gripping that beloved hand.—DINSDALE T. YOUNG, *The Enthusiasm of God*, p. 1.

REFERENCES.—XXXII. 41.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxxiv. No. 2036. XXXIII. 3.—*Ibid.* vol. xi. No. 619; vol. xlvi. No. 2664. S. Martin, *Comfort in Trouble*, p. 161. XXXIII. 9.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—Isaiah and Jeremiah*, p. 340; see also *After the Resurrection*, p. 156. XXXIII. 9.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxvii. No. 1636. XXXIII. 11.—J. C. Hedley, *Sermons in St. Edmund's College Chapel*, p. 126. XXXIII. 15-26.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xlii. No. 2472. XXXIII. 23.—F. Lynch, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lv. 1899, p. 236. XXXV. 2.—D. T. Young, *Neglected People of the Bible*, p. 147. XXXV. 12.—A. Ramsay, *Studies in Jeremiah*, p. 137. A. N. Obbard, *Plain Sermons*, p. 71. XXXV. 16.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—Isaiah and Jeremiah*, p. 351. XXXV. 18, 19.—A. Phelps, *The Old Testament A Living Book for All Ages*, p. 201. XXXVI. 3.—C. Kingsley, *Sermons on National Subjects*, p. 316.

JEHOIAKIM'S PENKNIFE

'Now the king sat in the winter-house in the ninth month: and there was a fire on the hearth burning before him. And it came to pass, that when Jehudi had read three or four leaves, he cut it with the penknife, and cast it into the fire that was on the hearth, until all the roll was consumed in the fire that was on the hearth. Yet they were not afraid, nor rent their garments, neither the king, nor any of his servants that heard all these words. Nevertheless Elnathan and Delaiah and Gemariah had made intercession to the king that he would not burn the roll: but he would not hear them.'—JEREMIAH XXXVI. 22-25.

JEHOIAKIM sends for the roll; it is brought; he commands it to be read. But when only two or three columns have been read to him, he takes it from the reader, and deliberately cuts it into pieces with his penknife, and throws it into the fire, so that all is destroyed. And that was the answer of Jehoiakim to the Lord and His prophet.

I. This was an act of peculiar and intolerable wickedness, burdened with every aggravation possible.

1. It was committed in defiance of luminous evidence that the prophecies of Jeremiah were indeed the word of the living God.

2. The act of the king was the worse, in that the Word which he so treated was a word not only of threatened wrath and judgment, but also of tender entreaty and still proffered grace.

3. It was committed despite earnest remonstrance from some of those that stood by.

4. To make the deed as bad as possible, this was done on a public fast day, when professedly the king and people were confessing their sins, and imploring the grace and help of God in the nation's extremity!

This destruction of the roll of the book of Jeremiah was not only very wicked, but no less *foolish and useless*. The Word of the Lord could not be hindered from fulfilment because the roll on which it was written was burnt.

II. The reasons which probably moved Jehoiakim in his treatment of God's Word are undoubtedly still in operation in the case of many who, like him, reject the Word of God. Primarily, Jehoiakim's reason for his treatment of Jeremiah's prophecy was that there was in the message so much which to him, a fast young man, bent on luxury and display, and endeavouring to combine wickedness with an easy and popular form of religion, *was not pleasant*.

The true reason for the most of scepticism is not found in inability of the understanding of the intellect. It is not found in the head at all, but in the heart—in the will.

And then the young king was *proud*. He was filled, apparently, with an egregious conceit of his own importance. He was a *cultured* young man; he was a *connoisseur* in architecture—as Jeremiah tells us, he was striving to excel in fine building in the precious cedar. But Jeremiah took no account of this. He dealt with him just as with any common, uncultivated, unpolished sinner. And this made the king angry.

III. To reject God's Word is both wicked and foolish. (1) It is wicked because, as it comes to us to-day, it comes supported by the most overwhelming *evidence* of its Divine authority. (2) Because if in the Word of God is announcement of wrath and warning, there is also in it an expression and a revelation of the tenderest *love and grace*. (3) Because all who hear these words have, like Jehoiakim, again and again been warned against rejecting it. (4) Because most if not all of us are like Jehoiakim at that time in this also, that we *profess to give the Lord a certain degree of outward honour*. We profess to be, at least in a general sense, Christians.

To reject the Word of God is as foolish as it is wicked. For with us, as with Jehoiakim, that Word will go on to fulfilment.—S. H. Kellogg, *The Past a Prophecy of the Future*, p. 219.

References.—XXXVI. 22-24.—S. Wilberforce, *Sermons Preached on Various Occasions*, p. 12. XXXVI. 23.—J. Thain Davidson, *The City Youth*, p. 225. T. De Witt Talmage, *Sermons*, p. 41. A. G. Mortimer, *The Church's Lessons for the Christian Year*, part iv. p. 254. XXXVI. 23, 24.—E. Fowle, *Plain Preaching to Poor People* (1st Series), p. 15. XXXVI. 24.—"Plain Sermons" by contributors to the *Tracts for the Times*, vol. i. p. 177. Harvey Goodwin, *Parish Sermons*, p. 222. XXXVI. 26.—C. Jerdan, *Pastures of Tender Grass*, p. 161

THE WRITING ON THE ROLL

'Take thee again another roll, and write in it all the former words that were in the first roll, which Jehoiakim the King of Judah hath burned.'—Jeremiah xxxvi. 28.

Jehoiakim was one of the wickedest of the kings of Judah. God ordered Jeremiah to write words of warning in a book or roll, and send it to the king, so that even yet he and his people might repent, and the terrible calamity be averted. Jehoiakim, when he had heard a small part of the message, took the roll and cut it in strips and threw them into the fire. But God will save him and the nation, if possible, in spite of themselves; and so, in the text, we find God ordering Jeremiah to take another roll and write in it all the former words of warning and implied promise.

I. Some of the Rolls in which God Writes His Will:—

(*a*) *Nature.* 'Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night showeth knowledge.' 'Doth not nature itself teach you?' It tells of God's power and wisdom and goodness.

(*b*) *The history of the world.* Its course speaks of the justice of its Almighty Governor. It speaks of the reign of law, of the punishment of sin, of the struggle and triumph of righteousness.

(*c*) *The human conscience.* There are written in it, as in a roll, the eternal truths that God is angry at sin, that He approves and loves the good.

(*d*) *The experience of men.* Looking back upon past experience, every man knows and feels that he has been goaded by an unseen power into what was just and right and merciful, and that his kicking against the goads has pierced him with sorrows, and left him scarred with sad reminders of the conflict.

(*e*) *The Word of God.* God's law is perfect, and converts the soul. The other rolls from their very nature could only be written in a few large and general characters. They are hieroglyphs rather than words or letters, or, at best, are like some rude and simple language, capable only of expressing the very simplest thoughts. But the Bible is pre-eminently a *word*, drawing, as from a deep, exhaustless well, the very thoughts and purposes of a gracious Father.

(*f*) *The life and death of the Lord Jesus.* There we see the very heart of God revealed.

II. Many Burn the Rolls.—Every one of the ways in which the truth and will of God and His very existence have been declared has been gainsaid. The books have been thrown into the fires of criticism and satire and passionate denial. Nature and the heart of man have been pronounced confused and contradictory in their teaching, or even utterly dumb. The history of the world and the success of Christianity have been entirely accounted for by secondary causes. The Bible has been scouted as old wives' fables, and a revelation from God has been pronounced impossible. Even our Blessed Lord is rejected, or, even as now, regarded as a teacher and reformer rather than as the Saviour and Lord.

III. Yet all God's Words are Preserved.—'I will turn aside,' said Moses, 'and see this great sight, why the bush is not burned.' It is a simple fact that God's words have not failed or been destroyed. The fires have burned fiercely, but 'the Scripture cannot be broken'; and the heart and conscience of man comes out of the fire with the finger of God more clearly and solemnly traceable in it than ever

God writes again 'the former words' in the rolls of men's hearts. The crowning blessing of the Gospel is contained in the promise, 'I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts, and will be their God, and they shall be my people'.

THE FATAL BARTER

'Then took Jeremiah another roll, and gave it to Baruch the scribe, the son of Neriah; who wrote therein, from the mouth of Jeremiah, all the words of the book which Jehoiakim king of Judah had burned in the fire: and there were added besides unto them many like words.'—JEREMIAH XXXVI. 32.

A REAL parallel exists between the contemptuous rejection of the scroll by Jehoiakim and the rejection of revelation by many to-day. Far from anything being gained by such rejection, all the old problems revive in exaggerated forms. We may decline the explanations, threatenings, and hopes of these sacred pages; yet the enigmas of life are still with us, and they appear in forms deeper and darker than ever.

I. The Genesis and Design of the World.—These constitute one of the first problems pressing for solution. Revelation declares that the world in which we find ourselves, and wherein we must work out our destiny, is the creation of the living, intelligent, and omnipotent God; that in Him it lives, moves, and has its being; and that He governs it to a wise, just, and benevolent end. Many find this explanation entirely unsatisfactory, and reject it; but, having refused the interpretation of revelation, are we in any better position in relation to the question of the origin, meaning, and end of things? Can we discover any more reasonable explanation of the source of the world, of its government and design?

To conclude that this world of manifold wonder and beauty; this human race, with reason, science, love, and piety; these long ages of history, implying harmony and design—that all has arisen like a vapour out of the fires of the sun, is surely to aggravate the riddle of the universe and not to dissolve it. To assume that the orb has given birth to so many things greater than itself is to assume the impossible.

To believe in a personal God as the fountain of life and thought, beauty and joy, is, we confess, to rest in a great mystery; but such faith is far more reasonable than that of the fire-worshipper. The problem of the world may not be put aside. It is the first of the obstinate questionings; we cannot escape it, it insistently demands consideration; and, refusing the explanation of revelation, we can only fall back on irrational and incredible theories.

Denying this sublime conception of the first Cause and sovereign Upholder of the universal frame, we 'cannot choose an object more worthy of our worship than the luminary adored by our ancestors'. Surely there is more luminary than luminousness; we have not gained anything, but lost much, by consigning the sacred writing to the brazier. The enigma of the world returns, the difficulties are greater than ever; 'many like words have been added unto it'.

II. The Question of Liberty.—Revelation by many is renounced in the name of liberty. Our freedom, they hold, is arbitrarily narrowed by the sacred lawgivers. And these emancipated ones have placed on record the sense of enlargement and rapture they experienced when first they felt themselves free of the incubus of the righteous God and His commandments; yet, though we repudiate the throne, statutes, and government of God, we must still recognize the dominion of law, unrestricted liberty being simply impossible.

It may be argued, however, that if the necessity for law survives the destruction of revelation, we may create for ourselves a wider and worthier freedom. Let us, then, inquire whether this is likely. Mark three points as characteristic of the law laid down by revelation for the regulation of human conduct.

1. It assures us of our freedom. From the beginning to the end it distinguishes between us and necessitated nature. Everywhere it upholds the liberty of the human spirit, regards the power of choice as the essence of our greatness, and invests us with responsibility for our character and action. That we are no part of the mechanical world is the fundamental assumption of revelation, therein agreeing with the universal consciousness.

2. The Divine law as expressed in revelation claims obedience as the law of reason, right, and love; and all may see that in keeping such law is liberty indeed. The higher law, as laid down in God's Word, contains nothing that does not commend itself to the understanding, the conscience, and the heart. But forswearing revelation, we must perforce turn to nature; and what now is the gain? If modern science teaches one thing clearly, it is that nature does not furnish high laws of conduct. And if we turn from the material universe and seek the laws of conduct in our own ambiguous nature, we find no royal law of liberty. The book of the soul is as blotted and obscure as the page of nature.

3. Law as expressed in revelation is softened by Divine clemency; it expresses a gracious element elsewhere lacking. Mommsen writes concerning Roman law: 'It seemed as if the law found a pleasure in presenting on all sides its sharpest spikes, in drawing the most extreme consequences, in forcibly obtruding on the bluntest understanding the tyrannic nature of right'. This is not the characteristic of the legalism of revelation. The severe claims of the Old Testament are yet mellowed by the sentiment of consideration, sympathy, and tenderness.

A great love glows through all the austerity of the Mosaic dispensation. And the burden of the New Testament is God's grace to a world of sinners; it is one incomparable proclamation of pity, forgiveness, and salvation.

On the score of freedom, then, how much advantaged are we by the repudiation of the sacred canon? No better; only infinitely worse. Having before been beaten with whips, we are now chastised with scorpions. The freedom of the soul, the righteousness of law, the reality of grace, are precious doctrines

surrendered. We dethrone the just and gracious Lawgiver, and, having broken His golden sceptre, proceed to occupy His place with blind, dark, capricious shapes, or shapelessnesses, called Fate, Force, Chance, Nemesis, Necessity, Destiny. The writing comes back, and many words, many terrible and painful words, are added to it.—W. L. Watkinson, *The Fatal Barter*, pp. 1-19.

References.—XXXVI. 32.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—Isaiah and Jeremiah*, p. 353. XXXVII. 1.—*Ibid.* p. 357.

THE PUNISHMENT OF EVIL

'Thus saith the Lord: Deceive not yourselves, saying, The Chaldeans shall surely depart from us: for they shall not depart. For though ye had smitten the whole army of the Chaldeans that fight against you, and there remained but wounded men among them, yet should they rise up every man in his tent, and burn this city with fire.'—
Jeremiah xxxvii. 9, 10.

The great teaching of the text is that we must not allow appearances to mislead us respecting the fact and certainty of the law of retribution.

I. *We mark some illustrations of the law of retribution furnished by the history of the nations.* The Old Testament records many instances of the fact that God makes the law of retribution to act by unlikely instruments, in unlikely ways, and at unlikely times. Very memorable was the retribution that Israel brought on Egypt. At the other end of their national history, Israel itself furnishes a most striking illustration of the working of the law of retribution through all improbabilities. When the Christ was crucified through weakness, the people cried, 'His blood be upon us, and upon our children'. How unlikely did it seem that the Victim of Calvary could ever be avenged upon an unjust nation! And yet that 'wounded Man' rose up invested with strange powers, and burned their city with fire. Let us not think that these instances of retribution are to be placed in the category of the miraculous; they were the natural consequences of great denials of truth and justice. Men unjustly 'pierced through' are terrible avengers in all ages and nations.

II. *We note the law of retribution as exemplified in the individual life.* What is true of the mass is first true of the atom; what is true of the ocean is first true of the drop. It is easy to see the law of retribution when it is exemplified in the broad effects of national calamity, but not so easy to apprehend its action in the individual fortune. 'Deceive not yourselves.' God has wonderful ways of confounding us, and we may be sure that our sins will find us out.

1. Let us not permit ourselves to be deceived *by flattering prophets.* God is merciful, but fire does not forget to burn, teeth to tear, water to drown, and no transgression of the Law can pass without detection and punishment.

2. Let us not deceive ourselves *because appearances seem to promise immunity.* When Joseph's brethren had thrown their young brother into a pit and left him there, how utterly hopeless seemed the lad's condition! He was to all intents and purposes buried alive, and it seemed absolutely impossible that he should ever avenge himself upon the fratricides. But in due time the wounded man was on the throne of Egypt, and the strong-handed clever sinners were lamenting, 'Verily we are guilty concerning our brother'.

3. Let us not deceive ourselves *because judgment is delayed.* As the Hindoos say, 'When men are ripe for slaughter, even straws turn into thunderbolts'.

4. Let us improve *the gracious respite.* Many rebel altogether against the doctrine of grace, sternly insisting on inexorable law, justice, retribution; they utterly reprobate the ideas of repentance, forgiveness, and salvation. But mercy is a fact as much as justice is. The death of Calvary is the most solemn and tremendous sanction ever given to law, and yet it opens a door of escape to a world of sinners. There is forgiveness with Him, and plenteous redemption.—W. L. Watkinson, *The Transfigured Sackcloth*, p. 131.

References.—XXXVII. 11-21.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—Isaiah and Jeremiah*, p. 361. XXXVII. 17.—J. Paterson, *British Weekly Pulpit*, vol. ii. p. 597. XXXVIII.—T. Champness, *New Coins from Old Gold*, p. 206. XXXVIII. 3, 4; XL. 4; XL. 6.—F. W. Aveling, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lvi. 1899, p. 324. XXXVIII. 5.—A. Ramsay, *Studies in Jeremiah*, p. 221. XXXVIII. 7.—D. T. Young, *Neglected People of the Bible*, p. 165. XXXVIII. 24-26.—A. Ramsay, *Studies in Jeremiah*, p. 221. XXXIX. 1-10.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—Isaiah and Jeremiah*, p. 367. XXXIX. 18.—*Ibid.* p. 374. XL. 4-6.—A. Ramsay, *Studies in Jeremiah*, p. 47. XLIII.—13 (R.V.).—C. Jerdan, *Pastures of Tender Grass*, p. 142. XLIV. 4.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xlvi. No. 2684. A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—Isaiah and Jeremiah*, p. 377. *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxx. 1906, p. 3. W. M. Taylor, *Outlines of Sermons on the Old Testament*, p. 248. W. Michell, *Plain Preaching for a Year*, vol. i. p. 236. Hugh Black, *University Sermons*, p. 9. XLV. 1-5.—A. Ramsay, *Studies in Jeremiah*, p. 159. Stopford A. Brooke, *The Old Testament and Modern Life*, p. 319.

THE MINUTE PHILOSOPHER

'Seekest thou great things for thyself? Seek them not.'—
Jeremiah xlv. 5.

Service is perhaps life's best interpretation.

I. To rise in life, then, is never to escape from service. The nobler and better we are growing, the more entangled shall we be in a far-reaching servitude. Jesus has taught us that service is the true measurement of greatness. He is the least whose service is the poorest. He is the greatest whose service is the best. Could we forget ourselves, and serve mankind in life and death, we should be growing Christlike.

In service too, and nowhere else, lies our true liberty. True freedom is never liberty *from* service. True freedom is always liberty to serve.

II. If life be service, how all-important is it for you and me to learn the art of serving well. The best and richest service you can render is often not the service of great things but of small.

We begin to see the truth of that when we remember how largely our lives are compact of little things. Even to the greatest, the chance of doing great things rarely comes.

So then, if life be service, and if the bulk of life is made up of little things, the service that neglects these lesser elements must fail. A saint is one who sanctifies life's trifles.

Do you not think that service in the small things is often the hardest service in the world? To work on, serve on, love on, unnoticed and unpraised, is perhaps the finest heroism earth can show.

Again mark this, as telling the importance of these little acts. Only through the small services of life faithfully done can you and I be disciplined for the great services when God is pleased to send them. God measures the service that He will give us to-morrow, not from our talents so much as from the faithfulness with which we serve to-day.

And after all, how can you tell which act is small, which great? These measurements are human, not Divine. God's standard is very different from ours.

III. What the world needs above all else to-day is consecrated character, and that is just what service in small things shows. God brings the glory of the autumn hills out of a million indecipherable heather-bells. God brings the glory of the rainbow out of a million indistinguishable drops. And God can bring the glory of a consecrated character out of that countless multitude of little deeds that form our life.—G. H. Morrison, *Flood-Tide*, p. 241.

Illustration.—Great services reveal our possibilities. Small services reveal our consecration.

And in the latter, rather than in the former, lies your best hope of influencing the world. Bridge-builders build our bridges seven or eight times stronger than the ordinary traffic needs. And bridges are rarely tested to the utmost. They do their best work carrying the daily loads. Still, if the strain *should* come, the strength is there. So you and I have latent powers and slumbering capacities. And some day, perhaps, all shall be needed. But now—to-day—it is in life's common traffic, and the brave carrying of life's common loads, that we shall serve best, and glorify God in a consecrated life.—G. H. Morrison, *Flood-Tide*, p. 251.

References.—XLVII. 5.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxxiv. No. 2025. XLVII. 6, 7.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—Isaiah and Jeremiah*, p. 380. XLVIII. 11, 12.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xiii. No. 761. XLIX. 8.—*Ibid.* vol. xviii. No. 1035. L. 1.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—Isaiah and Jeremiah*, p. 385.

THE WAY OF CONTRITION.

'In those days, and in that time, saith the Lord, the children of Israel shall come, they and the children of Judah together, going and weeping: they shall go, and seek the Lord their God. They shall ask the way to Zion with their faces thitherward, saying, Come, and let us join ourselves to the Lord in a perpetual covenant that shall not be forgotten.'—Jeremiah L. 4, 5.

Our spiritual life as a life of contrition is typified for us in the return of the children of Israel to Jerusalem from their long exile in Babylon.

I. Of necessity, contrition must be the first stage of spiritual life. For what is contrition? The Bible definition of contrition is, sorrow, sorrow that is in union with God. Contrition is no passing paroxysm, it is a state of abiding spiritual sorrow; we are taken by the Spirit of God into union with God, and therefore the Spirit is ever acting upon our mind and heart and will.

In its essence, contrition is the virtue that unites the sinner's will with the Will of God. Sin, in its essence, is the variance of the will of the creature from the known Will of the Creator. As a necessary consequence, therefore, sin involves spiritual death. And equally of necessity, contrition involves the recovery of life.

II. Let us see how the Spirit leads us along this tear-stained path of penitence.

1. It is generally recognized that there are two distinct stages in the contrite life. The first is the stage of initial contrition; it is that stage into which we pass by spiritual awakening, and out of which we pass when, through the tasting of the Divine forgiveness, we enter into the peace of God. In other words, initial contrition is the contrition which precedes and leads up to a true conversion.

2. But this is a transitory stage. Does contrition then come to an end after the message of forgiveness is heard and believed in? Is the sinner set free from the guilt of sin in order that he may go forth and forget it? No, this cannot be the case, unless he is lacking in all true generosity. In every generous heart this will be the resolve: Because God forgives me so freely, I will never forgive myself; so that instead of forgiveness drying up the sorrow of contrition, it has upon it a double effect—it takes out of it every low and selfish element, and it intensifies our sorrow instead of making it cease to be.

III. So the Spirit leads us along the path of contrition, and we see that our spiritual life as lived under the guidance of the Living Jesus must be always a life of sustained contrition, a contrition not only deepened and intensified, but continuous. And this for many reasons.

1. Our sin is continuous.

2. We carry into our new life a great deal of what we contracted in our evil past.

3. When we pass into union with God we do not cancel the influence which thoughtlessly or deliberately we used against Christ in our past days of disobedience.

Surely of us, as of Israel of old, it should be true that we 'go upon our way weeping'.—George Body, *The Guided Life*, p. 29.

References.—L. 4, 5.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxix. No. 1752. H. Scott Holland, *Church Times*, vol. xlii. 1899, p. 273. L. 5.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xliv. No. 2566. W. Brooke, *ibid.* p. 194. L. 11, 12.—J. P. Gledstone, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxxvii. 1890, p. 230. L. 20.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xlviii. No. 2789.

THE UNLIKELY INSTRUMENTS OF GOD

'Babylon hath been a golden cup in the Lord's hand.'—JEREMIAH LI. 7.

BABYLON, then, for all its power and all its independence, was an instrument of God, and no one can deeply study the Word of God without coming to perceive the awful emphasis that it lays on the fact of instrumentality.

I. Now sometimes the blindest eye can see how exquisitely the instruments of God are fitted to the task God has in hand. But is not the general rule the very opposite? I think it is the reverse that strikes us most.

1. Think, for example, of the instrument which He used to keep alive the knowledge of His name. A man could not do it, it required a nation; God's name is too great for one man to hold in trust; but of all the unlikely nations in the world, I think Israel was the most unlikely. To the human eye that seems the worst of choices, and yet that nation was the chosen of God. Israel became the instrument of heaven. It was Israel that was the cradle of the Christ.

2. Whenever I think of God's unlikely instruments, I think of little Samuel in the temple. God chose a little child to be His instrument.

II. Now if Jesus of Nazareth be the Son of God, I shall expect to find Him adopting the same procedure. I surmise from His very methods that Christ was Son of God whenever I think of His choice of the disciples. Twelve men, provincial and unlettered—and all the world against them in the battle. Yet by such men, inspired by the Holy Ghost, victories were won that changed the world.

III. What, then, does that inexplicable feature of God's choice mean for you and me?

First it guards us against putting limits upon God. Who shall dare say what powers may not be used by heaven if even Babylon be a golden cup in the Lord's hand? That is the first use of God's unlikely instruments. It makes us watchful, open-hearted, very humble. We must be alive to possibilities of usefulness, or the chances are we may be missing God.

And it should make us very strong when we are called to any little service. The men who think that they are fit for anything are very seldom fit for God's work. But the men who cry, as Jeremiah cried, 'Ah, Lord God, I am a child, and cannot speak'—it is such men whose lips are touched with fire, whose hearts are emboldened, and whose way is opened. For God is not bent on glorifying *you*; God is bent on glorifying *Jesus*.—G. H. MORRISON, *Sun-Rise*, p. 240.

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LAMENTATIONS

LAMENTATIONS

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CIVIC APATHY

(A Sermon for Women)

'Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto My sorrow, which is done unto Me.'—Lamentations i. 12.

I. The Home-Side of Patriotism.—Is it not a serious matter to find such multitudes in all our large towns and cities who have little or no sense of what it means to belong to a great community, who have little or no idea of the life in common and of the responsibility and duty which all share? There are many around us who do not care anything for the problems of a great city; do not indeed realize that there are any problems at all, except how to get more money, or more amusement in and from the city. It is only the few here and everywhere who care enough to give thought and time and toil to the things on which depend the public good.

II. The Cause of Indifference.—The causes of this indifference are many. (*a*) The love of ease and personal indulgence tempts many who might be rendering noble service to the community to be content with the conditions of citizens of the lowest class. (*b*) There is now, as there ever has been, a large number of men who are kept from all public work by their eagerness for the accumulation of worldly interests. It is nothing to them that thousands and thousands around them are at a woeful disadvantage in the struggle for existence and the attainment of good. Business dominates; they are men of business and nothing more.

III. The Citizenship of Women.—Though the women of to-day in our country as compared with the women of yesterday are more awake to the ideals and duties of citizenship, have wider interests and sympathies, and are not untouched by that new sense of social responsibility which is the centre of the times; yet the common lot of women still fails to develop in them a social spirit, a public soul. The selfish pride and vanity of men has much to do with the circumscribing of the sympathies and activities of our women. Man has for long claimed exclusively for himself the capacity to carry on all the higher work of the world. Though equality does not mean identity—each sex has its peculiarity of capacity of character, and therefore of service—yet there is no reason in the nature of things why women should not share with men on more equal terms all the largest aims of life and be able in spite of different gifts to do much in common. The womanly qualities are needed not only in the home but in the community, and just as they find expression and scope will the best life of the community be nourished and strengthened.

IV. What Women can do.—It is often asked what can women do in the way of social service without losing their womanliness? There is very little I think which they cannot do. Give the women of London and England the sense that they belong to a people; give them the feeling that they owe something to their city and country, that the uplifting of the community is part of their work, and you will not degrade but ennoble them, their life will not lose one particle of its real beauty and charm, but will gain immeasurably in depth and breadth and power.

V. Sacrifice for Citizenship.—We have been hearing much in recent days about revivals. One revival we sorely need, and we need it all over the country, is a genuine revival of civic patriotism, a national awakening of home patriotism. The command to seek first the kingdom of God, translated into the language of this generation, includes as one of its first implications the subordination of all private, party, and class aims and interests to the common good, the diligent and conscientious discharge of our civic duties.—J. Hunter, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxviii. 1905, p. 273.

FOR GOOD FRIDAY

'All ye that pass by, see if any sorrow is like unto My sorrow?'—Lamentations i. 12.

I. Good Friday a melancholy day. Our attention held against Christ's suffering.

II. What can we make of all this.

(*a*) Ordinarily we are repelled by human pain.

(*b*) The emotion which contemplation of pain produces is precluded. *Pity* for the suffering of Christ is an impertinence!

(*c*) Yet men are strangely drawn by the story. It is so free from repulsiveness. Dignity of the succinct narrative. Instead of being dragged down by His agony He exalted pain.

III. Christ by His 'sorrow' let Himself into Humanity's tragic economy.

IV. He sanctified suffering. Not made evil good, but gave it a meaning.

V. Chiefly; He bore our sins.—S. D. McConnell, *Sermon Stuff*, p. 51.

IS IT NOTHING TO YOU?

'Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by?'—Lamentations i. 12.

Go back six hundred years in thought before the Crucifixion, and there you will see a city which, in

spite of warning after warning, has got slack and careless, has endured a sixteen months' siege, gone through incredible hardships, and at last has given itself over into the hands of the conqueror. And there they pass by, this triumphant host, as it enters the conquered city. They jeer at those who are sitting on the roadside, and at last, as they come to a man — we know his name, this Jeremiah who is making his great lamentation—they wring from him who has warned the city, year after year, the cry of a wounded heart: 'Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by, you who jeer at us in our defeat, you who see these men and these women so cruelly emaciated, and our little children suffering so after the siege?' Who shall tell what that wounded cry of that great patriot was as they wrung from him that pathetic appeal, 'Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by?'

The story is a parable of Passion time. Time passes, and the world is taken captive by the great arch-enemy. Warning after warning has been neglected by humanity, the great Captain is dying and nailed to the Cross, and, as the passers by go to and fro in front of Him, there come the words the Church has ever loved to put into His mouth, 'Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? You have conquered, you have gained a temporary victory, what use are you going to make of it?' And there still to-day, as we are in sight of Good Friday, that same cry rings out.

> From the throne of His Cross, the King of grief
> Cries out to a world of unbelief:
> 'Oh! men and women, afar and nigh,
> Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by?'

And what is our answer to-day to be?

If I were a great painter I would paint a picture of the Crucifixion, with a great Christ in the centre, and I would there place three different groups of passers by, as they listened to that great antiphon as it comes from the Redeemer's lips. I would place a group that was there—those to whom He was nothing; a group of those who did care; and a group of those who had learnt to care. That picture would sum up the state of humanity to-day.

I. The Appeal to Those who Care.—Look first at that large and ever-growing group that does care, when the appeal from the Cross is made—'Is it nothing to you?'—and who have seen the vision, and throw back the answer, 'Yes, it is something to us, nay it is everything to us as we pass by'. 'There stood by the cross of Jesus His mother.' She cared; it was something to that mother; and when I see the hundreds and thousands of mothers and fathers to-day who do care that their children should receive and pass on the old, old faith of Jesus and Him crucified, I am filled with hope for the state of the world. It is so easy to throw a cheap sneer or a nasty thrust at it, and never to see those thousands of men and women who, from their very hearts, like the Blessed Mother, are caring when they see the crucified Sufferer.

II. The Appeal to Those who do not Care.—There are still those, God help them! to whom it is nothing as they pass by. They will find themselves in company with those of whom it is said that they who passed by wagged their heads and reviled Him: not so many as there were, but you know, if you have ever tried for a fortnight to live the Christ life in the middle of the world, that you will come across that group of whom it can be said, 'It is nothing to them what went on for them on the first Good Friday'. And you may find yourselves standing with that group of soldiers who, sitting down, watched Him in cold, callous indifference, gambling, seizing as their perquisites the very clothes of the dear Lord as they jeer at Him in His dying moments. Do you mean to tell me that the world is no better now than it was when the soldiers, unrebuked by public opinion, could do that? Nineteen centuries of Christianity have left their mark upon the world, and though there are those to whom the appeal from the Cross is a matter of sheer indifference, I dare to say that their number is decreasing, and not increasing. There they are, just those few, and to them with all a man's pathos the Christ appeals.

III. The Appeal to Those who have Learnt to Care.—You must have something to tell them, before you can tell it, in your own hearts, and perhaps you have not got it. Then you will be standing in our third group, and be amongst those who did not care but who have learnt to care, those who find themselves in that group where there is the well-known figure of the dying thief, the one to whom it was nothing at first and then to whom it became something. As you look back upon life and know the sin that has got to be surrendered, then as you learn to care, the appeal from the Cross will get right home to you. You will say, 'I have learnt to care. I am like the centurion, like the soldier who little thought as he donned his uniform on the morning of the first Good Friday whose army he was going to belong to before Friday's evening shades were to fall. God saw humanity wandering, God at the Incarnation came down. At the Crucifixion He placed His picture, the express image of His Person, where all wanderers can see it, and there, won by His love, many and many a wanderer this week will see it, and yield themselves up to the claims of Jesus the Crucified.

IN VIEW OF THE PASSION

'Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by?'—LAMENTATIONS I. 12.

THE plain fact from the Hill of Calvary is this: that God has opened out Himself in this story of the Passion, for the regarding of them that pass by.

I. It may mean Much, or it may mean Little to You and Me.—

(*a*) *We can ignore the Passion*, the story of Calvary, if we will. It is easy to hide it under the drift of the things that we are doing day by day. It is easy to forget, it is easy to leave it out, it is easy to go our own way and to leave it unregarded.

(*b*) *Or we may belittle it.* There are those who look upon the Passion as just one of the events of ancient history that, perhaps, has had its share once in moulding men and creatures long ago, but which we may leave, noticed or unnoticed, with the dust of the forgotten past.

(*c*) *Or we may resent it.* I saw once a bitter wail of resentment against the preaching of Lent and of the Passiontide, as a false presentment of religion in the face of the growing spring, when all things bid a man renew himself and rejoice. It is a thing, this Passion of the Lord, it is a thing resented by the rich, and by the comfortable, and by the selfish, as a thing that is interfering with the enjoyment of the pleasures of the world.

II. Whatever you Think about it, it is There, it is here, immovable, confronting us. We have to do with it. No man can escape from it. It cannot be taken from you. You cannot take the Passion of the Lord out of the world's book, you cannot take the Passion of the Lord out of the world's imagination. It has coloured our imagination, it has set its mark in our literature, it has given the ideals which every one of you are pursuing, even those of you who, maybe, reject the name of Christ. It has coloured our ideals, it has set our tone, it has left its mark, it is there.

III. Nor can it be taken out of Christian Experience.—There are some of us, perhaps most of us who have come prepared to get its message, prepared to get its meaning. Long enough it may be with some of us here, long enough our consciences have been stirring blindly under the touch of God. My conscience is my spiritual faculty which is capable of perceiving the spiritual touch of God. Long enough we have been filled—have we not, or why are we here?—we have been filled with the desire for some assurance of His reality. To us, then, the Passion of the Lord is the sign, which witnesses to God's high seriousness. It is the sign of His earnest intention to stand by the man who is struggling, to stand by the girl who is afraid, to stand by the life that is daunted. It is the sign and mark of high seriousness that God Himself has come down to share in, not merely the glory of the world's achievement, but the Passion and the struggle of its people. Is it nothing, then, to you, all ye that pass by? It is a serious matter to God; it is a serious matter to you and me.

IV. What Means it to go Home and to Ignore this?—Shall I tell you what it means to go home and leave the Passion, and the Crucifixion, and the Cross, and the seriousness of God, and the sympathy of His Spirit, and the history of His Son? Shall I tell you what it means to leave all these things out of your life? It means this, that you will go home to bear and to take upon yourselves alone the burden and the judgment of your own life. This is the attempt of God to share with us, and if we will not join Him, if we will leave Him all to Himself, then, you and I, with our conscience, and our load, and our burdens, and our mixed motives, and our stained life, and our past history, and our sense of guilt, and the wrong we have done in the world, we, with all we have done, must stand the eternal judgment by ourselves; and what man will stand the judgment by himself? Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by, that the Lord desires to share judgment with us? Is it nothing to us, that God has taken a place which He opens out to every man who cares to join Him?

References.—I. 12.—J. Keble, *Sermons for the Holy Week*, p. 183. E. M. Geldert, *Faith and Freedom*, p. 80. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxvii. No. 1620. J. M. Neale, *Sermons Preached in Sackville College Chapel*, pp. 230, 288. *Ibid.—Readings for the Aged* (4th Series), pp. 71, 82. E. Blencowe, *Plain Sermons to a Country Congregation* (2nd Series), p. 205.

TRUE DEVOTION

'Pour out thine heart like water before the face of the Lord: lift up thy hands toward Him.'—Lamentations II. 19.

Where there is love there is true devotion. There is true devotion when the object of love is God.

I. False devotion. People are apt to deceive themselves and suppose themselves to be devout when they are nothing of the sort. One is given to much frequenting of church, yet her heart all the while is full of rancour against a neighbour. Another mortifies and denies himself food and sleep, but takes no little pride in his austerities, and flatters himself he is becoming a saint. Another again is liberal in charities, but is chary of forgiveness to one who has wronged him.

II. True devotion consists in an eminent degree of love, which makes us prompt, active, and diligent in the observance of God's commandments. He who loves grieves to offend the person loved. True devotion is not acquired all at once, but as it grows it exhibits the three characteristics of contrition, love of prayer, self-sacrifice.

III. True devotion may be obtained—

(*a*) By acquiring a love of God and a hatred of sin.

(*b*) By constant recollection, or abiding in the presence of God.

(*c*) By oblation of all we do and all we suffer to Him.

(*d*) By frequent and exact purification of conscience.

(*e*) By frequent communion.—S. Baring-Gould, *Sermon-Sketches*, p. 191.

References.—II. 19.—A. P. Manley, *Sermons on Special Occasions*, p. 310. S. Baring-Gould, *One Hundred Sermon-Sketches*, p. 191. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. ii. No. 59. III. 16.—T. Hooke, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxv. p. 325.

THE SHADOW OF THE CROSS

(*For Palm Sunday*)

'Remembering mine affliction and my misery, the wormwood and the gall.'—Lamentations III. 19.

We celebrate to-day an event that stands alone in the sacred life of Jesus, the solitary occasion on which He was publicly honoured and escorted into Jerusalem amid popular rejoicings the central Figure in a grand procession of triumph. Palm Sunday is a day of triumph, but still there is something sad even in the triumph, and so we take our text from Lamentations.

I. The Shadow of the Cross.—The week which opens with a triumph closes with a death and a burial; the brightness of Palm Sunday fades only too soon into the still, solemn quiet of Holy Week and the gloom of Good Friday. On Palm Sunday with the glad shouts of Hosanna ringing in our ears, the sight of the waving palms before our eyes, we are tempted to forget the life of sorrow. But even in His brief days of earthly triumph His Passion has already begun. He can read the future. Is it hard then to understand the 'affliction and misery' even in this very triumph? Think of that scene with the excited, rejoicing crowd, and in the midst the only sad face, His, to whom all this homage was being given. He knows how brief the triumph will be; what a terribly different scene will in a few short days be enacted by the walls of Jerusalem. And so as He rides along a dark shadow lies across the sunlit path before Him—the shadow of the cross—and Jesus sees it there.

II. The Attitude of the Disciples.—Look again. See His disciples full of joy and pleasure. It is a glad day for them. They think that at last He is going to assert His rights and be an earthly conqueror; that He will become King of Jerusalem and redresser of His country's wrongs. They love Him, these chosen ones. Will they ever forsake Him? Yet one of them is a traitor! He will betray his Master with a false kiss. It is that which hurts you more than anything when your best friend turns against you, one whom you have loved and trusted. Others may revile you, misjudge you, but when your bosom friend turns and curses you, that breaks the heart. Here was such an one, and Jesus knew it. And what of the other disciples? In His darkest hour, in His sorest need, they will all forsake Him and flee. When He stands before His murderers He will stand alone. And He knows it. Yet how He loves them, how He yearns over them in prayer! His 'little flock'. Ah, we may well remember His 'affliction and misery'.

III. Our Attitude.—Now shall we forsake Him in this Holy Week? Ah, we say, we could never be like Judas, or even like Peter and the others. Think again. When you are among those who serve Him, in the midst of waving palms and glad Hosannas, it is comparatively easy to be true. But when you are among those who jeer at religion, and the fear of God, and doing right, have you never felt ashamed of Him? Have you never denied Him? When He has asked you to share His cross have you ever rebelled against Him? Then let our past offences bind us closer to Him now, that we may learn through this Holy Week the lesson the cross will teach about sin and the way it may be overcome.

THE REASON OF HOPE

'. . . therefore have I hope.'—LAMENTATIONS III. 21.

We should inquire into this 'therefore'. It ought to be to us like a great gate of entrance into a king's house. If the logic fails here it fails everywhere. We must keep our eye upon the therefores of Divine and human reasoning and providence.

I. It is as if insanity suddenly emerged into sobriety, self-control, and a true spiritual realization of the meaning and purpose of things. The very memory of the gall and the wormwood makes me hope; I have had so much of them that there cannot be any more to have; it has been so terrible that now surely it is going to be summer-time and joy. This man handles life well. He is a true poet; he sees somewhat of the measure of things, and knows that at a certain time the dawn cannot be far off. I tell you I will number the hours and give you a forecast. I have been here in this prison of gloom and doubt and desolateness one hour, two hours, three hours, all the winter, all the summer, all the winter again; it must now be not far from morning. We need those great prophetic voices. Sometimes we need the very biggest soul that ever lived, and we seem to need him every whit—all his brains, all his heart, all his music. He is not too much for us because our grief is so deep and so sensitive, and the whole outlook is a horizon of blackness, and darkness has no history and no measuring points.

This is where the religious element enters into life with great copiousness, and where it should be received with unutterable welcomes. This is not as if one human being were addressing another; the words certainly come through a human medium, but they bring a Divine meaning with them. Words have an atmosphere. It is the atmosphere that is, as we say, supernatural, Divine, transcendent.

II. The vital point in the text is the word 'therefore'; and it comes upon us suddenly, unexpectedly, it is as a flaming bush at the foot of the mountain, the mountain all grim barrenness.

'Therefore.' I have never seen the stars except in the darkness, therefore the night may have something to show me as well as the day—the night of loneliness and desolation and bitter sorrow. There may be a star on purpose; one star in all the uncounted millions of stellar points was marked out as His star—as if the jewels starry were already appropriated and labelled, as if for personal acceptance and enjoyment.

III. Intellect grows, therefore character may grow. The little may become great, the weak may become strong, that which is far off may be brought nigh, and that which is barren may be fruitful. Yesterday's providence should be to-day's prophecy, hope, and poem of assurance. And, said one who wrote that bitter chapter against the day of his birth, He hath been with me in six troubles and in seven He will not forsake me. Who can draw a line at six and say the Deity ends here, or here Providence finally stops? No one. I will take the whole six as meaning the culminating seven. God Himself is an odd number; He is One or He is Three: and He will deliver me out of the odd number of my affliction and sorrow. Seven shall not frighten the Trinity.—JOSEPH PARKER, *City Temple Pulpit*, vol. IV. p. 88.

REFERENCE.—III. 21.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xi. No. 654.

IT IS OF THE LORD'S MERCIES

'It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed.'—LAMENTATIONS III. 22.

No text expresses more perfectly the old Puritan temper and faith than this: 'It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed'. The Christianity it uttered was not completely normal, but there were elements in it for lack of which our modern religion is suffering.

I. To begin with, the old Puritanism was profoundly aware of the tragical element in life, and met it fairly. That element remains with us, and science has brought it nearer. Whose heart has not fluttered at the sight of a telegram? The skies above us are charged with possibilities of tempest and destruction. We hold nothing securely. We walk continually by the edge of a precipice. We go to sleep knowing that next day may bring us news which will darken all the days to come. 'It is of the Lord's mercies' if it does not. These bolts strike us oftenest from an unclouded heaven, and make the very earth reel under our feet. So often is the lesson read that fear looks out even from innocent blue eyes of hope, and a nameless sudden chill falls on the most rapturous hours. How are we to master this? Not by the murder of nobler thought and sweeter instinct, not by the substitution of casual lusts for faithful affection, not through trampled and conquered love, but through victorious faith. There is enough in life to make us sober—to moderate moods of triumph, to teach us that there are worse things than death. The Puritans knew this; and they knew also that, strange as it seems, the Christian may realize peacefully that the things which are seen are temporal. Not by loving less, but by loving the creature in the Creator, are we fortified to take the worst that time can do, saying, 'The things which are unseen are eternal'. What came into this sphere of time may vanish from it; what we loved in God abides in God, and we go to find it. Thus after 'the wreckful siege of battering days' there often comes over the worn and furrowed face that blessed light of childhood, with its sure hope of happiness. Thus we may rise to say, 'Whom have I in heaven but Thee, and there is none on earth that I desire beside Thee,' and know the secret of loving God with heart and soul and strength and mind. Thus we may learn not merely to bless God for the stroke averted, but to bless Him in the moment of its falling; to arise at midnight and give thanks because of His righteous judgments.

II. This Puritan motto gives us the true viewpoint from which to apprehend the Cross. That form of Calvinism which sought to destroy humanism, and to treat the Church as a body whose members have no relation with the world, is dead. The doctrine that human nature was demonic, a doctrine which practically denied any lingering trace of the image of God, is no longer held anywhere. But modern teaching has largely swung to the opposite extreme. Men hear so much about God's need of them that they do not think as they should about their need of Him. People sit listlessly while the preacher tells of the Divine craving, but do not understand the terrible love of God:—

> So great that saints dread more
> To be forgiven than sinners do to die,

and they never will understand it till they cannot so much as lift up their eyes unto heaven—till they feel that it is of the Lord's mercies they are not consumed. As McLeod Campbell has said, this is a doctrine for all. 'The true protection from any limiting distinctions as to the forgiveness which we receive, and which we are to cherish and to manifest, is seeing ourselves in that light of truth in which we thankfully and with the utmost self-abasement *cease* from the hopeless task of weighing our own unworthiness by putting sins and ignorance into one scale, the ideal of good in the other, in order to raise our hope of mercy by taking from the demerit of our sin, and bless God that, taking the lowest ground, and as being the chief of sinners, we still find all our utmost need met in the forgiveness which the Gospel reveals.' The beginning and the end of Christianity is the death of pride. —W. ROBERTSON NICOLL *Ten Minute Sermons*, p. 159.

REFERENCES.—III. 22, 23.—J. Vaughan, *Sermons* (11th Series), p. 13. III. 23.—T. G. Selby, *The Imperfect Angel*, p. 64. A. Tucker, *Preacher's Magazine*, vol. xix. p. 323. III. 24.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. viii. No. 451. III. 27.—W. Brock, *Midsummer Morning Sermons*, p. 1. J. Thain Davidson, *Forewarned—Forearmed*, p. 19. III. 39.—H. Melvill, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 2216. III. 57.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxx. No. 1812. IV. 22.—*Ibid.* vol. viii. No. 480. V. 1.—A. P. Stanley, *Sermons on Special Occasions*, p. 310.

EZEKIEL

EZEKIEL

Ezekiel is Carlylean. There's a wild, rugged, and abrupt sternness in Ezekiel. He stands midway between the majestic sublimity of Isaiah and the elegiacs of Jeremiah.—Dr. John Duncan, *Colloquia Peripatetica.*

Ezekiel is the wild soothsayer: a genius of the cavern, whose thought is best expressed by a beast-like growling. But listen . . . Isaiah refuses civilization; Ezekiel accepts it, yet transforms it. Nature and humanity blend together in that softened roar which Ezekiel utters. — Victor Hugo, *William Shakespeare* (II).

'As I was among the captives by the river of Chebar, the heavens were opened, and I saw visions of God.'—Ezekiel i. 1.

He was instructed, at the very beginning of his work as a Prophet, that the glory of Him who filled the temple was surrounding him in Mesopotamia as it surrounded him when he went up to present the morning or the evening sacrifice at Jerusalem. Such a vision was given him of that glory as he had never beheld in the holy place. He found that the earth—that common, profane, Babylonian earth upon which he dwelt—was filled with it.—F. D. Maurice.

One would not object to be an exile among exiles for some years if thereby he could be prepared for such scenes as Moses, Isaiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, John, and others saw. In reading the testimony of these men concerning the opening of their spirits to the spirit-world, we wonder almost as much at the nature of man, which can be brought face to face with such scenes, as at the revelations themselves.—Dr. Pulsford in *The Supremacy of Man*, pp. 69 f.

'Many times,' says Carlyle in his essay on Richter, 'he exhibits an imagination of a singularity, nay on the whole, of a truth and grandeur, unexampled elsewhere. In his *Dreams* there is a mystic complexity, a gloom, and amid the dim-gigantic half-ghastly shadows, gleamings of a wizard splendour, which almost recall to us the visions of Ezekiel. By readers who have studied the *Dream in the New Year's Eve* we shall not be mistaken.'

References.—I. 1.—J. E. Roberts, *Studies in the Lord's Prayer*, p. 47. R. G. Colquhoun, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxx. 1906, p. 292.

'And I looked, and, behold, a whirlwind came out of the north.'—Ezekiel i. 4.

We often wonder how such a creation as that of which we form a part, with so much in it that is dark, contradictory, perplexing, striving, suffering, etc., etc., should have come from God at all. 'I looked, and behold *a whirlwind*,' Ezekiel says.—Dr. Pulsford.

The descent of the yellow, flat-nosed Mongols upon Europe is a historical cyclone which devastated and purified our thirteenth century, and broke, at the two ends of the known world, through two great Chinese walls—that which protected the ancient empire of the Centre, and that which made a barrier of ignorance and superstition round the little world of Christendom. Attila, Genghis, Tamerlane, ought to range in the memory of men with Cæsar, Charlemagne, and Napoleon. They roused whole peoples into action, and stirred the depths of human life, they powerfully affected ethnography, they let loose rivers of blood, and renewed the face of things. The Quakers will not see that there is a law of tempests in history as in nature. The revilers of war are like the revilers of thunder, storms, and volcanoes; they know not what they do.—Amiel.

It hath seldome or never been seene that the farre Southern People have invaded the Northern, but contrariwise. Whereby it is manifest that the *Northern Tract* of the World is in nature the more Martiall Region; Be it, in respect of the Stars of that Hemisphere; or of the great continents that are upon the *North*, whereas the *South Part*, for ought that is knowne, is almost all Sea; or (which is most apparent) of the cold of the *Northern* Parts, which is that which, without aid of Discipline, doth make the Bodies hardest and the Courages warmest. —Bacon, *Of the Vicissitude of Things.*

Reference.—I. 4.—J. B. Lightfoot, *Outlines of Sermons on the Old Testament*, p. 250.

'And they had the hands of a man under their wings.'—Ezekiel i. 8.

'In such writers,' says Miss Dora Greenwell, speaking of many devotional authors, 'we trace but little communion with the joy and sorrow and beauty of this earth "glad, sad, and sweet," so that we sometimes wonder if they have known any enjoyments, pangs, or conflicts, but such as belong to the life that is in God. To be assured that they had joyed and sorrowed, and loved as men and women, and *as such* had felt Christ's unspeakable consolations, would be a touch of nature making them our kin. But it seldom comes. St. Thomas à Kempis, for instance, dismisses a whole world of feeling in two lines, "Love no woman in particular, but commend all good women in general to God". In Madame Guyon and Edwards we long, and long in vain, to see the hand of a man under the wings of the cherubim, and to feel its pressure.'

'They four had the face of a man, and the face of a lion . . . the face of an ox . . . also the face of an eagle.'—Ezekiel i. 10.

All that most truly lives is here by representation. The ox is the emblem of toil and of sacrifice; of patient, suffering, bleeding life. The lion is strong, royal, victorious. The eagle soars upward in spires, rising and falling with no apparent effort; gliding over the highest mountains and lost in the azure distances, apparently in the heaven itself. And above these three highest specimens of forms of animal life man comes, who blends in one, and carries into a higher sphere all those endowments which they possess in some measure in fact, perfectly in the conception of gifted souls. Man alone is capable of sacrifice in its one true form—self-sacrifice; man alone is capable of the only conquests that are noble, of the only ideas which elevate to heaven. The great conceptions of three of the cherubic symbols—the ox, the lion, the eagle—suffering, action, thought, find their perfection in the truly human life and nature which is symbolized by the Man.—Archbishop Alexander.

'And the four living creatures ran and returned as the appearance of a flash of lightning.'—Ezekiel i. 14.

'The oracles of God,' says Miss Greenwell in *A Covenant of Life*, 'when they speak to us of our deliverance from the power of darkness and our translation into the kingdom of God's dear Son, set before us a state of being in which . . . the human will, like the angelic, attains to such a measure of conformity with the Divine Law, that it follows as the direction of God's spirit in the unforced obedience which, as the Prophet Ezekiel witnesses, runs and returns as the appearance of a flash of lightning. Whatever God tells us to do, He also helps us to do. Our Saviour, who knows whereof we are made, sends us on no vain errands, sets us on no unprofitable tasks.'

'As it were a wheel in the middle of a wheel.'—Ezekiel i. 16.

The Rev. H. Davidson, in a letter of sympathy to Thomas Boston, writes: 'Now that His way is in the sea, and His path in the deep waters, and His footsteps are not known, we must believe loving-kindness in all the mysterious passages of Providence; we shall in due time see a wheel in the wheel, and be taught how to decipher the dark characters; we shall, with an agreeable surprise, perceive an all-wise Providence in all its intricate, oblique, and seemingly-contrary motions, to have been a faithful servant to the Divine promise'.

References.—I. 16.—J. W. Mills, *After-Glow*, p. 93. I. 16.—S. Horton, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxviii. 1905, p. 204.

After describing the unfortunate marriage of Hooker, Walton moralizes: 'This choice of Mr. Hooker's—if it were his choice—may be wondered at; but let us consider that the Prophet Ezekiel says, "There is a wheel within a wheel"; a secret, sacred wheel of Providence—most visible in marriages—guided by His hand, that allows not the race to the swift, nor the bread to the wise, nor good wives to good men'.

'As for their rings, they were so high that they were dreadful; and their rings were full of eyes.'—Ezekiel i. 18.

How beautiful are beautiful eyes! Not from one aspect only, as a picture is; where the light falls rightly on it—the painter's point of view—they vary to every and any aspect. The orb rolls to meet the changing circumstance, and is adjusted to all. But a little inquiry into the mechanism of the eyes will indicate how wondrously they are formed. Science has dispelled many illusions, broken many dreams; but here, in the investigation of the eye, it has added to our marvelling interest. The eye is still like the work of a magician: it is physically Divine. Perhaps of all physical things, the eye is most beautiful, most Divine.—Richard Jefferies, *The Field Play*.

'Whithersoever the spirit was to go, they went, thither was their spirit to go; for the spirit of the living creature was in the wheels.'—Ezekiel i. 20.

Compare, besides Ruskin's famous use of this verse in *Modern Painters* (vol. iii. chap. viii.), the remark of Coleridge upon words, in the preface to his *Aids to Reflection*. 'Wheels of the intellect I admit them to be; but such as Ezekiel beheld in the vision of God, as he sate among the captives by the river of Chebar. *Whithersoever the spirit was to go, the wheels went, and thither was their spirit to go; for the spirit of the living creature was in the wheels also.*'

Reference.—I. 26.—F. D. Maurice, *The Prayer Book and the Lord's Prayer*, p. 161.

'As the appearance of the bow that is in the cloud in the day of rain, so was the appearance of the brightness round about.'—Ezekiel i. 28.

We may gather up the significance of the rainbow for Israel, together with the deepest meaning of all its history, if we remember the striking fact that the only two Prophets who allude to it are the two who were least likely to be familiar with it—the two who spent their lives in the sultry plains of Babylonia—Ezekiel and his greater brother, the anonymous Prophet whom we have confused with Isaiah. It is a wonderfully instructive thought that it was in the darkest hour of Hebrew history, when the promise of God seemed to have been tried and found wanting, that this bright pledge of His promise was remembered. We cannot imagine anything happening to an Englishman which could have the utterly desolating influence of the deportation to Babylon. If we suppose that England had been conquered by Russia and that Tennyson had written his poems in Siberia, we shall have a very faint picture of what it was to the Prophets of the captivity to look back to their home on the Hill of Zion. The sense of a triumph in a power opposed to what we should call civilization was far greater with them than it would be with the English exile in Siberia; they were tempted to feel that the hope for the world was gone, as much as it

was when the waters of the Deluge closed over the inhabitants of all the world. And see how out of that despair the bow in the cloud seems to gleam on the eyes of both; 'as the appearance of the bow that is in the cloud in the day of rain,' so was the appearance of the glory that dawned on Ezekiel when he was 'among the captives by the river Chebar,' and 'the heavens were opened and he saw visions of God'. The evanescent gleam symbolized the Divine nearness; what was most transient spoke to him of what was eternal.—Miss Wedgwood, *Message of Israel*, pp. 275, 276.

'And when I saw it, I fell upon my face.'—Ezekiel i. 28.

'Martineau,' said Dr. John Duncan once, 'is a deeply religious man. Once at a meeting of ministers, they were discussing the Ulster Revivals, and the "strikings-down," which most of them derided. Martineau said, "I wonder not, when the reality of Divine things first bursts upon a man, that he should be laid prostrate; the wonder rather is that there should be so little of it".'

References.—I. 28.—R. G. Colquhoun, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxx. 1906, p. 292.

'And he said unto me, Son of man.'—Ezekiel ii. 1.

Lord, I find that Ezekiel in his prophecies is styled ninety times and more by his appellation, *Son of Man*, and surely not once oftener than there was need for. . . . Amongst other revelations it was needful to reveal him to himself, *Son of Man*, lest seeing many visions might have made him blind with spiritual pride. Lord as thou increasest Thy graces in me, and favours on me, so with them daily increase in my soul the monitors and remembrances of my mortality.—Thomas Fuller.

References.—II. 1.—J. Millar, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xli. 1892, p. 326. S. A. Tipple, *Sunday Mornings at Norwood*, p. 78. J. Coats Shanks, *God Within Us*, p. 109. II. 1, 2.—W. W. Battershall, *Interpretations of Life and Religion*, p. 113. II. 2.—G. Matheson, *Voices of the Spirit*, p. 71.

'Thus saith the Lord.'—Ezekiel ii. 4.

As I understand the Prophets, a theological revelation is the alpha and omega of their power. 'Thus saith the Lord' is not only the formula under which they speak, but the keynote of their convictions. It is because they believe, and only because they believe, that they can announce the true will of God, that they hope to be able to elevate the true nature of man. The ceremonialism and formalism which the Prophets assailed were rooted in the oblivion of theology, in the loss of that very revelation of himself by God of which from the earliest times we have a continuous series of records in the Old Testament.—R. H. Hutton in *The Spectator* (1886).

'And they, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear . . . thou shalt speak My words unto them.'—Ezekiel ii. 5, 7.

The visible constitution and course of nature, the moral law written in our hearts, the positive institution of religion, and even any memorial of it . . . are all *witnesses*, for the most part unregarded witnesses, in behalf of God to mankind. They inform us of His being and providence, and of the particular dispensation of religion which we are under; and continually remind us of them. And they are equally witnesses of these things, whether we regard them or not. Then after a declaration that Ezekiel should be sent with a Divine message to the children of Israel, it is added, *and they, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear, yet shall know that there hath been a Prophet among them.*—Butler.

The highest truth the wise man sees he will fearlessly utter, knowing that, let what may come of it, he is thus playing his right part in the world—knowing that if he can effect the change he aims at, well—if not, then well also, though not so well.—Herbert Spencer.

The proper time to speak truth is just so soon as we know it, for it always appears at its own appointed hour, and we have not the power of speaking premature truths.—Vinet.

'Whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear.'—Ezekiel ii. 5.

No river would be navigable were its velocity not checked by friction; and the friction increases as the stream proceeds, until the flow is thus made the easy thoroughfare of exchange. One man may be sure of a truth, but before all men can accept it as truth from his *ipse dixit*, many men must resist and oppose it.—E. B. Lytton, *Caxtoniana* (XIII.).

'Be not afraid of their words, nor be dismayed at their looks, though they be a rebellious house.'—Ezekiel ii. 6.

Compare the saying of Hobbes that he and terror were born twins.

It is an everlasting duty, valid in our day as in that, the duty of being brave. *Valour* is still *value*. The first duty for a man is still that of subduing *Fear*. We must get rid of Fear: we cannot act at all till then. . . . A man shall and must be valiant; he must march forward, and quit himself like a man—trusting imperturbably in the appointment and *choice* of the upper Powers; and on the whole, not fear at all. Now and always, the completeness of his victory over Fear will determine how much of a man he is.—Carlyle, *Heroes*, i.

Hazlitt, in defining the true partisan, observes that 'his anxiety for truth and justice leaves him in no fear for himself, and the sincerity of his motives makes him regardless of censure or obloquy. His profession of hearty devotion to freedom was not an ebullition called forth by the sunshine of prosperity, a lure for popularity and public favour; and when these desert it, he still maintains his post with his integrity.'

What have I gained that I no longer immolate a bull to Jove, or to Neptune, or a mouse to Hecate; that I do not tremble as before the Eumenides, or the Catholic Purgatory, or the Calvinistic Judgment-Day

—if I quake at opinion, the public opinion, as we call it; or at the threat of assault, or contumely, or bad neighbours, or poverty, or mutilation, or at the rumour of revolution, or of murder? If I quake, what matters it what I quake at?—EMERSON.

SEEKE the goode of other Men, but be not in bondage to their Faces and Fancies; for that is but Facilitie or Softnesse; which taketh an honest minde Prisoner. —BACON.

WHEN the master of the horse rides abroad, many dogs in the village bark; but he pursues his journey all the same.—CARLYLE, *Latter-day Pamphlets*, IV.

REFERENCES.—II. 6.—"Plain Sermons" by contributors to the *Tracts for the Times*, vol. v. p. 259.

'Thou shalt speak My words unto them, whether they will hear or whether they will forbear.'—EZEKIEL II. 7.

'To stir the blood I have no cunning art,' says Wordsworth. '*Ach die zärtlichen Herzen! ein Pfuscher vermag sie zu rühren!*' says Goethe. Nor do such authors make it their study to say what the public will like to hear. '*Ihr sollt was lernen*—I meant to teach you something,' says Goethe again. They deal not in popular falsehoods, but in unpopular truths. They are attracted by topics which the popular writer instinctively avoids, saying, Oh! the public will never attend to that! and indeed the public often receive their gifts but sullenly. . . . To sustain such writers in their arduous course they must have religion . . . Religion alone;—some absorbing contemplation, some spiritual object more necessary than livelihood, more precious than fame—preserves originality and thus feeds literature. It alone can give an author that happy arrogance of Wordsworth. —PROFESSOR J. R. SEELEY.

'For they are most rebellious.'—EZEKIEL II. 7.

'WHOEVER,' said Proudhon, 'puts his hand upon me, in order to govern me, is a usurper, a tyrant, and I declare myself his enemy.'

REFERENCE.—II. 8-10.—A. Whyte, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xliii. 1893, p. 403.

'And to a roll of a book . . . written within and without: and there was written therein lamentations, and mourning, and woe.'—EZEKIEL II. 9, 10.

'I AM fully persuaded,' wrote Samuel Rutherford in 1636, 'that Scotland shall eat Ezekiel's book, that is written within and without, *lamentations, and mourning, and woe.* But the saints shall get a drink of the well that goeth through the streets of the New Jerusalem, to put it down.'

REFERENCE.—II. 9, 10.—G. F. De Teissier, *Plain Preaching to Poor People* (10th Series), p. 95.

'And it was written within and without: and there was written therein lamentations, and mourning, and woe.'—EZEKIEL II. 10.

IN the fifth chapter of the *Apologia* Newman uses this verse as follows:—

'If I looked into a mirror, and did not see my face, I should have the sort of feeling which actually comes upon me when I look into this living busy world, and see no reflection of its Creator. This is, to me, one of those great difficulties of this absolute primary truth, to which I have referred just now. Were it not for this voice, speaking so clearly in my conscience and my heart, I should be an atheist, or a pantheist, or a polytheist when I looked into the world. I am speaking for myself only: and I am far from denying the real force of the arguments in proof of a God, drawn from the general facts of human society and the course of history, but these do not warm me or enlighten me; they do not take away the winter of my desolation, or make the buds unfold and the leaves grow within me, and my moral being rejoice. The sight of the world is nothing else than the Prophet's scroll, full of "lamentations, and mourning, and woe".'

IN *Rob Roy* Sir Walter Scott uses this of the cathedral churchyard in Glasgow. 'The broad flat monumental stones are placed so close to each other, that the precincts appear to be flagged with them, and, though roofed only by the heavens, resemble the floor of one of our old English churches, where the pavement is covered with sepulchral inscriptions. The contents of these sad records of mortality, the vain sorrows which they preserve, the stern lesson which they teach of the nothingness of humanity, the extent of ground which they so closely cover, and their uniform and melancholy tenor reminded me of the roll of the Prophet, which was "written within and without, and there was written therein lamentations, and mourning, and woe".'

THE ASSIMILATION OF DOCTRINE

'Take this scroll and eat it.'—EZEKIEL III. 1.

I. THE mere swallowing of food is not enough unless it be assimilated and digested; yet it is a necessary condition of digestion. So with our beliefs; we swallow them wholesale by an act of extrinsic faith based on the word of others; and such faith is like the prop that supports a plant till it strikes root downwards and becomes self-supporting. They are not ours fully save in the measure that we have worked them into the fabric of our life and thought.

II. So too with Divine revelation whose mysteries are obscure, not because God wants to hide truth from us, but because we are not educated sufficiently, either mentally or morally, to apprehend them aright. Its purpose is to enlighten us, not to puzzle us; to improve our mind, not to stultify it. Our intelligence should, so to say, eat its way gradually into the meaning of what at first we hold to be merely by obedient assent. Yet there is ever a Beyond of mystery; for the more we know, the more we wonder. It needs understanding to understand the extent of our ignorance. It is precisely as being beyond us that revelation provokes the growth of our mind. We strain upwards and find the outlook ever widening around us; and from each question answered, a new brood of doubt is born.

III. Let us not then imagine that we have finished our duty by swallowing revelation wholesale in submission to external authority; we swallow that we may digest, and we digest that we may live the eternal

life of the mind and heart by an intelligent sympathy with the mind and heart of God.—G. Tyrrell, *Oil and Wine*, p. 69.

'Behold, I have made thy face strong against their faces.'—Ezekiel iii. 8.

He who has a faith, we know well, is twice himself. The world, the conventional or temporary order of things, goes down before the weapons of faith, before the energy of those who have a glimpse, or only think they have a glimpse, of the eternal or normal order of things.—Professor J. R. Seeley.

'As an adamant harder than flint have I made thy forehead: fear them not.'—Ezekiel iii. 9.

Pain, danger, difficulty, steady slaving toil, and other highly disagreeable behests of destiny, shall in no wise be shirked by any brightest mortal that will approve himself loyal to his mission in this world; nay, precisely the higher he is, the deeper will be the disagreeableness, and the detestability to flesh and blood, of the tasks laid on him; and the heavier too, and more tragic, his penalties if he neglect them.—Carlyle.

'The man rises before us,' says Carlyle of Fichte, 'amid contradiction and debate, like a granite mountain amid cloud and wind. Ridicule, of the best that could be commanded, has been already tried against him; but it could not avail. What was the wit of a thousand wits to him? The cry of a thousand choughs assaulting that old cliff of granite; seen from the summit, these, as they winged the midway air, showed scarce so gross as beetles, and their cry was seldom ever audible.

References.—III. 12.—W. C. Magee, *Growth in Grace*, p. 237. G. Matheson, *Voices of the Spirit*, p. 80.

'And I went in bitterness, in the heat of my spirit; but the hand of the Lord was strong upon me.'—Ezekiel iii. 14.

In the campaign of 1886, Mr. Gladstone wrote as follows in his journal, on the morning of the closing day at Liverpool: 'Worked up the Irish question once more for my last function. Seven or eight hours of processional uproar, and a speech of an hour and forty minutes to fire at six thousand people in Hengler's Circus. Few buildings give so noble a presentation of an audience. Once more my voice held out in a marvellous manner. I went in bitterness, in the heat of my spirit, but the hand of the Lord was strong upon me.'

King Charilaus of Sparta was of a gentle nature, as is proved by the words of his colleague, King Archelaus, who, when some were praising the youth, said, 'How can Charilaus be a good man, if he is not harsh even to wicked men?'—Plutarch.

'The fire in his soul burnt to the end,' says Froude of Carlyle, 'and sparks flew from it, which fell hot on those about him, not always pleasant, not always hitting the right spot or the right person; but it was pure fire notwithstanding, fire of genuine and noble passion, of genuine love for all that was good, and genuine indignation at what was mean or base or contemptible.'

References.—III. 14.—G. Matheson, *Voices of the Spirit*, p. 80. III. 15.—W. Matthews, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxxiii. 1908, p. 52.

'Son of Man, I have made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel.'—Ezekiel iii. 17.

Upon a cliff . . . is a clay-built lighthouse-like watch-tower. The watchman (who must be clear-sighted) is paid by a common contribution: his duty is to look forth, in the spring months, from the day-rising till the going-down of the sun; for this is the season when the villagers who have called in their few milch-goats send them forth to pasture without the oasis. We saw the man standing unquietly in his gallery, at the towerhead, in the flame of the sun; and turning himself to every part, he watched, under the shadow of his hand, all the fiery waste of sand before him.—Doughty, *Arabia Deserta*, II. p. 311.

Writing from the island of Ischia in 1827, Erskine of Linlathen observes: 'La Sentinella is the name of my inn; and it received its name from its being the post of an outlook who gave notice of the approach of Saracen corsairs, who used to ravage this country some centuries ago, and carry off the inhabitants as slaves. It commands the whole view of the Neapolitan coast.'

Public life is a situation of power and energy; he trespasses against his duty who sleeps upon his watch, as well as he that goes over to the enemy.—Burke, *On the Present Discontents*.

References.—III. 17.—W. J. Kennedy, *The English Clergyman and the Present Times*, p. 1. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxiv. No. 1431.

'When I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die; and thou givest him not warning . . . the same wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand.'—Ezekiel iii. 18.

I know that the world offended (by Goddes permission) may kill the bodie, but Goddes maiestie offended hath power to punishe bodie and soule for ever. His maiestie is offended, when that his preceptes are contemned, and his threateninges estemed to be of none effect, and amongest his manifold preceptes geven to his prophetes, and amongest his threateninges, none is more vehement then is that which is pronounced to Ezechiel in these wordes: Sonne of man, I have appointed thee a watchman to the house of Israel, that thou shouldest heare from my mouthe the worde, and that thou maist admonishe them plainlie, when I shall say to the wicked man: O wicked, thou shalt assuredlie die. . . . This precept, I say, with the threatning annexed, together with the rest, that is spoken in the same chapter, not to Ezechiel onlie but to euerie one whom God placeth whatchman over his people and flocke, compelleth me to utter my conscience in this matter, notwithstanding that the whole world should be offended with me for so doing.—John Knox, from the *Preface to the First Blast*.

'Yet if thou warn the wicked, and he turn not from his wickedness, nor from his wicked way, he shall die in his iniquity; but thou hast delivered thy soul.'—EZEKIEL III. 19.

COMPARE the close of Baxter's preface to his *Call to the Unconverted*. 'Reader, I have done with thee when thou hast perused this book; but sin hath not done with thee, even those that thou thoughtest had been forgotten long ago; and Satan hath not done with thee, though he be now out of sight; and God hath not yet done with thee, because thou wilt not be persuaded to have done with the deadly reigning sin. . . . I beseech thee, I charge thee to hear and obey the call of God, and resolvedly to turn, that thou mayest live. But if thou wilt not, even when thou hast no true reason for it, but because thou wilt not, I summon thee to answer it before the Lord, and require thee there to bear me witness that I gave thee warning, and that thou wast not condemned for want of a call to turn and live, but because thou wouldst not believe it and obey it.'

DIVINE APPOINTMENTS

'Go forth into the plain, and I will there talk with thee.'—EZEKIEL III. 22.

THE Bible is full of private conversations, or individual and strictly confidential interviews.

Why not talk with the Prophet in the city? Is the city without Divine messages? Are the countless throngs upon the city streets very far from God? Not necessarily. God speaks as surely in the city as in the desert. By unexpected events, by labour and strife, by the various fortunes of vice, and the amazing struggles of virtue, God speaks to men with distinctness and solemnity. The point is that busy men may hear God in solitude, and solitary men may hear Him in the city. Change of mere position may have moral advantages. In the great temple of the sea we may offer peculiar worship; in the quiet sanctuary of the wilderness we may hear the softest tones of heaven. This should be insisted upon so as to destroy the fallacy that in the absence of any one set of outward circumstances worship is impossible.

In the text there are three points of deep interest: I. The speciality of God's appointments. He appoints places, times, methods. He appoints, in this case, the plain. 'Where two or three are gathered together,' etc.; 'Wheresoever My name is recorded,' etc. Where the appointment is special, the obedience should be instantaneous, cordial, punctual.

II. The personality of God's communication: 'I will talk with thee'. We should know more of God if we held closer intercourse with Him. We may go to God directly. Every devout meditation brings us into the Divine presence. Expect this; believe it; realize it. In the sanctuary we are not hearing the voice of man, but of God. In nature we hear the Divine voice. God talks with man in the garden in the cool of the day.

III. The familiarity of God's condescension: 'I will talk with thee'. It is a friend's appointment. It is not, 'I will lighten and thunder,' or 'I will overpower thee with My strength,' but, 'I will talk with thee,' as a father might talk to his only son. Though the Prophet was at first thrown down, yet the Spirit entered into him, and set him upon his feet.

Application.—(1) God has ever something to say to man. Must have—(*a*) as a Ruler; (*b*) as a Father. His word is ever new. (2) In seeking solitude, man should seek God. Solitude without God leads to madness.—JOSEPH PARKER, *City Temple Pulpit*, vol. I. p. 235.

REFERENCES.—III. 22.—P. Morrison, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xl. 1891, p. 70. III. 22, 23.—R. G. Colquhoun, *ibid.* vol. lxx. 1906, p. 292. III. 24.—G. Matheson, *Voices of the Spirit*, p. 84. IV. 1.—S. Baring-Gould, *Village Preaching for a Year*, vol. ii. p. 236.

'Ye shall know that I am the Lord.'—EZEKIEL VI. 7.

THIS sentence recurs again and again in the prophecies of Ezekiel. It is the thought of his mind, the one which gives all the sublimity and all the practical worth to his discourses—that the knowledge of God is the supreme good of man.—F. D. MAURICE.

SPIRITUAL EXPERIENCES AT HOME

'As I sat in mine house . . . the hand of the Lord God fell there upon me.'—EZEKIEL VIII. 1.

I. IN the house Ezekiel has spiritual experiences akin to those he had elsewhere.

Ezekiel could not have felt the hand of the Lord upon him in his house had he not beheld by faith God's gaze fixed in faithful *love* upon that privileged house. If we are to have rich spiritual experiences at home we must realize the love of God as centred on that home.

Ezekiel also felt the *sacredness* of home. When home is seen to be a sacred place there need be no limit to our expectation of spiritual blessings there.

Ezekiel knew his *responsibility* for his home life. A home is a trust and must be given account for at last.

The Prophet was in a state of *preparedness* to receive blessing at home. Read his history and this will be at once apparent. They who have Ezekiel's preparedness have also his spiritual felicity.

II. In his house Ezekiel saw the Divine Being.

'The hand of the Lord' is his power in exercise. First the Prophet felt the touch of power, then he saw God. Do not presume to despair of His coming to your house, for spiritual despair is spiritual presumption. God is ready to visit your home. Be you ready to receive Him there.

III. God's influence was upon Ezekiel when visitors were in the house.

Ezekiel showed that God's influence rested upon him by the spirit he manifested amid his friends. He was the Lord's servant: as abroad so at home. If God's hand be upon us in our house, those who visit us will perceive it by the spirit we shed forth.

And yet more by our conduct. Can we doubt that Ezekiel's deportment and his actions would show his friends that God's influence crowned him in his home.

IV. Sudden blessing came upon Ezekiel in his house.

Observe how he says, 'the hand of the Lord *fell* there upon me'. Often spiritual blessings are sudden. Seldom can we foresee God's visitations and benedictions.

Ezekiel had a sudden enduement of Divine power. His personality was in no degree superseded, but it was enhanced.

Ezekiel had a sudden sense of Divine support. The touch of God revived and strengthened him.

V. Ezekiel was qualified for his ministry by spiritual blessing received in his house.

God's hand fell upon the Prophet in his house that he might be the more equipped for the work he had to do among men. The word of the Lord was to be proclaimed. Righteous judgments were to be executed. Without strength received in private such public ministry could never be discharged.

VI. Ezekiel kept a record of the spiritual experiences he realized in his house.

What he experienced is historified for the generations. Spiritual experiences in their homes have been a feature of the diaries of good men in all the Christian years.—Dinsdale T. Young, *Messages for Home and Life*, p. 263.

Reference.—VIII. 3, 4.—R. G. Colquhoun, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxx. 1906, p. 292.

'So I lifted up mine eyes.'—Ezekiel viii. 5.

Leigh Hunt, in describing the keen eyes of Wordsworth, calls them 'fires half-burning, half-smouldering, with a sort of acrid fixture of regard. One might imagine Ezekiel or Isaiah to have had such eyes.'

'And behold this image of jealousy.'—Ezekiel viii. 5.

Orchan at once turned Nicæa into a Moslem city, as his father had done with the Black Castle on the Thymbres. In Nicæa was still seen and still used for Christian worship the memorable church in which the 318 bishops had met to settle the faith of Christendom for the ages to come. The Church of the Council was turned by Orchan into a mosque; for the mosaic images on its walls was substituted the symbol of Islam.—Dean Church, *Miscellaneous Essays*, p. 312.

Compare Carlyle's words in a letter to his mother, from Marburg: 'The Landgraf's high old castle, where we loitered a couple of hours, is now a correction-house filled with criminals and soldiers. The chamber of conference between Luther, Zwingli, etc., is used for keeping hay.

References.—VIII. 8, 9.—S. Baring-Gould, *Sermon-Sketches*, p. 61. VIII. 10-12.—G. Matheson, *Endeavours After the Christian Life* (2nd Series), p. 8.

'Son of man, hast thou seen what the ancients of the house of Israel do in the dark, every man in the chambers of his imagery.'—Ezekiel viii. 12.

In his Reform Speech at Glasgow, in 1858, John Bright observed: 'I have often compared in my own mind, the people of England with the people of ancient Egypt, and the Foreign Office of this country with the temples of the Egyptians. We are told by those who pass up and down the Nile, that on its banks are grand temples with stately statues and massive and lofty columns—statues each one of which would have appeared almost to have exhausted a quarry in its production. You have, further, vast chambers, and gloomy passages; and some innermost recess, some holy of holies, in which, when you arrive at it, you find some loathsome reptile which a nation reverenced and revered and bowed itself down to worship. In our Foreign Office we have no massive columns: we have no statues; but we have a mystery as profound; and in the innermost recesses of it we find some miserable intrigue, in defence of which your fleets are traversing every ocean, your armies are perishing in every clime, and the precious blood of our country's children is squandered as though it had no price.'

There is truth with those who say we want more faith and devout obedience; but if the temple of our life be denied the light of Thought, then, though every man stands, saint-like, with his censer in his hand, he will just repeat 'what the elders of Israel did in the dark'—send up his foolish cloud of incense before 'creeping things and abominable beasts'.—Martineau.

Keep the imagination sane—that is one of the truest conditions of communion with heaven.—Hawthorne.

References.—VIII. 12.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—Ezekiel*, etc., p. 1. J. Stalker, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xlix. 1896, p. 34. W. Redfern, *The Gospel of Redemption*, p. 65.

'Thou shalt see greater abominations that they do . . . and behold, there sat women weeping for Tammuz.'—Ezekiel viii. 13, 14.

Thammuz came next behind,
Whose annual wound in Lebanon allured
The Syrian damsels to lament his fate
In amorous ditties all a summer's day,
While smooth Adonis, from his native rock
Ran purple to the sea, supposed with blood
Of Thammuz yearly wounded: the love-tale
Infected Sion's daughters with like heat,
Whose wanton passions in the sacred porch
Ezekiel saw, when, by the vision led,
His eye surveyed the dark idolatries
Of alienated Judah.
—Milton, *Paradise Lost* (book i.).

In the second part of *Past and Present*, after expounding the silent reverence of man for the God he cannot know or name, Carlyle breaks out: 'Thou if thou know not this, what are all rituals, liturgies, mythologies, mass-chantings, turnings of the rotatory calabash? They are as nothing; in a good many respects they are as *less*. Divorced from this, getting half-divorced from this, they are a thing to fill one with a kind of horror; with a sacred inexpressible pity and fear. The most tragical thing a human eye can look on. It was said to the Prophet, "Behold,

I will show thee worse things than these; women weeping to Thammuz". That was the acme of the Prophet's vision—then as now.'

'Cause them that have charge over the city to draw near, even every man with his destroying weapon in his hand. And, behold, six men came.'—EZEKIEL IX. 1, 2.

'THAT which has made me publish this book,' says Bunyan in his preface to *The Life and Death of Mr. Badman*, 'is for that wickedness like a flood is like to drown our English world; it begins already to be above the tops of the mountains. . . . Oh that I could mourn for England, and for the sins that are committed therein, even while I see that, without repentance, the men of God's wrath are about to deal with us, each having his slaughtering weapon in his hand.'

'Set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof.' —EZEKIEL IX. 4.

I think there is not in any one duty more spiritual wisdom required of believers than how to deport themselves with a suitable frame of heart, in reference to the sins of other men. Some are ready to be contented that they should sin, sometimes ready to make sport at their sins; and for the most part it is indifferent to us at what rate men sin in the world, so it go well with us or the Church of Christ. . . . There are times when this is our especial and eminent duty, which God doth highly approve of. Such are they wherein the visible Church is greatly corrupted, and open abominations are found amongst men of all sorts; even as it is at this day. Then doth the Lord declare how much He values the performance of this duty—as He testifies they alone shall be under His especial care in a day of public distress and calamity—a duty wherein it is to be feared that we are most of us very defective.—JOHN OWEN.

IN every sphere, a unified life, a faultless honesty, compel, even from the worst of people, some degree of respect. In Paris, an unimpeachable virtue has the success of a large diamond. It is so rare.—BALZAC.

REFERENCES.—IX. 4.—J. H. Jowett, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxviii. 1908, p. 353. IX. 8.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xlviii. No. 2807. IX. 9.—*Ibid.* vol. iv. No. 223.

'And their whole body, and their backs, and their hands, and their wings, and the wheels, were full of eyes round about, even the wheels that they four had.'—EZEKIEL X. 12.

IN chapter XLVII. of *Alec Forbes*, George Macdonald makes a young girl ask an old blind woman whether God might not cure her of her blindness if she asked Him. 'Ay micht He, and ay will He,' answered Tibbie, 'I'm only jist bidin' His time. But I'm thinkin' He'll cure me better yet nor He cured that blin' man. He'll jist tak' the body aff o' me a'thegither, and syne I'll see, no wi' een like yours, but wi' my haill speeritual body. Ye min' that verse i' the Prophecees o' Ezakiel: I ken't weel by hert. It says: "And their whole boady, and their backs, and their han's, and their wings, and their wheels, were full o' eyes roon aboot, even the wheels that they four had." Isna that a gran' text? . . . The wheels'll be stopping at my door or lang.'

REFERENCES.—X. 13.—J. Pulsford, *Our Deathless Hope*, p. 278. X. 14.—T. T. Munger, *Character Through Inspiration*, p. 73.

'And when the cherubims went, the wheels went by them . . . for the spirit of the living creature was in them.'—EZEKIEL X. 16, 17.

WE have more than enough of systems, of machinery, which, whether more or less perfect, will not go of itself. We may have done all that of ourselves we can do, and the moving spirit may yet be wanting. *The spirit of the living creature is in the wheels.*—DORA GREENWELL.

'Then the glory of the Lord departed from off the threshold of the house.'—EZEKIEL X. 18.

The thought that there are crises in a nation's history, where the voice of an invisible Lord is heard from its inmost sanctuary, pronouncing the awful words, 'Let us depart hence,' comes to us overloaded with symbolism and muffled in its imagery. Yet the imagery is itself full of meaning, forcing us to realize the way in which the civilization of Babylon had already impressed the imagination of the Prophet, and as it were stolen into the background of the distant temple so soon to be laid in ruins. This gorgeous heathen civilization has no attraction for his heart, yet it colours his imagination.—MISS WEDGWOOD, *Message of Israel*, p. 229.

REFERENCES.—X. 21.—G. Gilfillan, *The Dundee Pulpit*, 1872, p. 161.

'These are the men that devise iniquity, and that give wicked counsel in the city; which say, This city is the caldron, and we be the flesh.'—EZEKIEL XI. 2, 3.

THE plans of the conspirators did not mature all at once. Ezekiel on the Chebar had time to hear of them, and direct a prophecy against the 'men that devise mischief'. These revolutionary spirits were not unaware of the risks they ran: 'This city is the caldron, and we be the flesh'. With a certain grimness of humour they acknowledge that it will be hot for them, but the strong city will protect them as the pot protects the flesh from the fire. Ezekiel tells them that the only flesh left in the pot will be the dead lying in the streets; the living will be pulled out and judged far away on the borders of Israel.—PROF. A. B. DAVIDSON, *The Exile and the Restoration*, pp. 31, 32.

REFERENCES.—XI. 5.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. x. No. 591. XI. 16.—*Ibid.* vol. xxxiv. No. 2001.

Thou dwellest in the midst of a rebellious house, which have eyes to see, and see not; they have ears to hear and hear not.'—EZEKIEL XII. 2.

IT is as easy to close the eyes of the mind as those of the body; and the former is more frequently done with wilfulness, and yet not attended to, than the latter; the actions of the mind being more quick and transient than those of the senses.—BUTLER.

THE one Enemy we have in this Universe is Stupidity, Darkness of Mind; of which darkness, again there are

many sources, every *sin* a source, and probably self-conceit the chief source. Darkness of mind, in every kind and variety, does to a really tragic extent abound; but of all the kinds of Darkness, surely the Pedant Darkness, which asserts and believes itself to be *light*, is the most formidable to mankind! For empires or for individuals there is but one class of men to be trembled at; and that is the Stupid Class, the class that cannot see, who alas! are they mainly that will not see.—CARLYLE, *Latter-day Pamphlets*, III.

REFERENCES.—XII. 27.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xx. No. 1164; see also *Twelve Sermons to Young Men*, p. 169. A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—Ezekiel*, p. 10.

'Woe unto the foolish prophets, that follow their own spirit, and have seen nothing!'—EZEKIEL XIII. 3.

THERE was a man once—a poet. He went wandering through the streets of the city, and he met a disciple. 'Come out with me,' said the poet, 'for a walk in the sand-dunes,' and they went. But ere they had progressed many stages, said the disciple: 'There is nothing here but sand'. 'To what did I invite you?' asked the poet. 'To a walk in the sand-dunes.' 'Then do not complain,' said the poet. 'Yet even so your words are untrue. There is Heaven above. Do you not see it? The fault is not Heaven's. Nor the sands.'—MAARTEN MAARTENS.

'O Israel, thy prophets are like the foxes in the deserts.'—EZEKIEL XIII. 4.

THE decisive sign of the elevation of a nation's life is to be sought among those who lead or ought to lead. The test of the health of a people is to be found in the utterances of those who are its spokesmen, and in the action of those whom it accepts or chooses to be its chiefs. We have to look to the magnitude of the issues and the height of the interests which engage its foremost spirits. What are the best men in a country striving for?—JOHN MORLEY.

'Ye have not gone up into the gaps, neither made up the hedge for the house of Israel, to stand in the battle in the day of the Lord.'—EZEKIEL XIII. 5.

RELIGION, whatever destinies may be in store for it, is at least for the present hardly any longer an organic power. It is not that supreme, penetrating, controlling, decisive part of a man's life, which it has been and will be again.—JOHN MORLEY, *Compromise*, p. 36.

'They have seduced my people, saying, Peace; and there was no peace.'—EZEKIEL XIII. 10.

IF the gods of this lower world will sit on their glittering thrones, indolent as Epicurus' gods, with the living Chaos of Ignorance and Hunger weltering uncared for at their feet, and smooth parasites preaching Peace, peace, when there is no peace, then the dark Chaos, it would seem, will rise.—CARLYLE, *French Revolution*, vol. III. book vii. chap. vii.

REFERENCES.—XIII. 10.—H. J. Wilmot-Buxton, *Holy-Tide Teaching*, p. 84. XIII. 10, 11.—J. Baines, *Sermons*, p. 201. C. J. Thompson, *Penny Pulpit*, vol. xiv. No. 675, p. 65. XIII. 10-12.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xiv. No. 816. XIII. 18.—J. Baldwin Brown, *The Soul's Exodus and Pilgrimage*, p. 58. J. Thomson, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xlvii. 1895, p. 164.

MAKING THE RIGHTEOUS SAD

'Ye have made the heart of the righteous sad, whom I have not made sad.'—EZEKIEL XIII. 22.

I. Sadness is not Necessarily from God.—When sadness is God's gift, we do well to accept the unwelcome gift, for who can tell what far-off interest it may yield?

Sadness, however, as our text reminds us, must not always be fathered on God. Sadness often originates in temperament. Do not blame God if you are melancholic; blame your yielding to your temperament. Grace can enable a man to rise above his temperament. The worry of these worrying days frequently issues in sadness. Sadness is wrought, all too often, by our fellow-men. Satan often seeks to ruin us by sadness. Quite as often as by pleasure he seeks to spoil us by grief.

II. Some Impose Sadness Upon the Righteous in God's Name.—What awful things have been done in God's name! Men have stolen the livery of heaven to serve the devil in. Religion and seriousness are essentially allied, but not so religion and sadness. The work of righteousness is not sadness, but peace and assurance. God never discourages the righteous. He is 'the God of all encouragement'. Gloomy, depressing prophets and prophetesses are condemned by the canon of my text.

III. False Teaching Often Makes the Righteous Sad.—Truth sometimes makes God's people sad, but it is not intended to do so. Union with Christ is the antidote to sadness.

A false theology makes the heart of the righteous sad. It is a sure sign that religious teaching is fallacious if it sadden the soul which is set on righteousness.

IV. There is Divine Retribution for Such as Give Sadness to the Righteous.—All who effect this saddening of the saints shall suffer for their deed. This principle has world-wide application. None can afford to ignore it. Masters and mistresses need to watch their ways in this regard. Friends and acquaintances should be alert to prevent this evil. Parents may grieve right-doing children. And how specially pertinent is this admonition to children in relation to their parents.

V. We do a Godly Deed When we Cheer the Righteous.—Do you ask how you can accomplish this grateful ministry? We can hearten the righteous by kindly acts. Our very deportment may accomplish the service of God upon sad souls. There is a Gospel in some men's smile.

VI. Righteousness is the Ultimate Cure of Sadness.—Character is the final secret of gladness. The word 'sad' is often used as synonymous with 'bad'. 'He is a sad scoundrel,' we say. And in such a usage we hint the great truth that in the last issue sadness and badness are identical.

The righteous have a right to gladness. This is especially true in the Christian dispensation. Chris-

tian righteousness is realized by faith in the risen and crucified Lord.—Dinsdale T. Young, *The Enthusiasm of God*, p. 16.

References.—XIV. 1.—R. W. Hiley, *A Year's Sermons*, vol. ii. p. 185. XIV. 2, 3.—W. A. Whitworth, *The Sanctuary of God*, p. 31.

'Son of man, these men have set up their idols in their heart: should I be enquired of at all by them.'—Ezekiel xiv. 3.

'Sin,' says Baxter (*Saints' Rest*, chap. viii.), 'obscures that which it destroys not; for it bears such sway, that grace is not in action. It puts out or dims the eye of the soul, and stupefies it, that it can neither see nor feel its own condition. But especially it provokes God to withdraw Himself, His comforts, and the assistance of His spirit. As long as thou dost cherish thy pride, thy love of the world, the desires of the flesh, or any unchristian practice, thou expectest comfort in vain.'

References.—XIV. 4.—E. Browne, *Some Moral Proofs of the Resurrection*, p. 93. XIV. 4, 5.—C. W. Furse, *Sermons at Richmond*, p. 12. XIV. 6.—H. J. Wilmot-Buxton, *Common Life Religion*, p. 45.

For every one which setteth up idols in his heart, and cometh to a prophet to enquire of him concerning me; I the Lord will answer him by Myself: and I will set My face against that man.'—Ezekiel xiv. 7, 8.

It is but vaine to implore His power in a bad cause. Man must have an unpolluted soul when he praiseth (at least in that moment he addresseth himselfe to praye) and absolutely free from all vicious passions; otherwise we ourselves present Him the rods to scourge us withal. In lieu of redressing our fault, we redouble the same by presenting Him with an affection fraught with irreverence, sinne, and hatred, to whom only we should sue for grace and forgivenesse. . . . And the state of a man that commixeth devotion unto an excessible life, seemeth in some sort to be more condemnable than that of one that is conformable unto himselfe, and every way dissolute. —Montaigne (Florio), *Essays*, chap. lvi.

References.—XIV. 7, 8.—J. Warschauer, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxii. 1902, p. 29. XIV. 8.—Henry Alford, *Quebec Chapel Sermons*, vol. ii. p. 120.

Though these three men, Noah, Daniel, and Job were in it, they should deliver but their own souls by their righteousness.'—Ezekiel xiv. 14.

'Justus Jonas asked Luther,' it is related in the latter's Table-Talk, 'if these sentences in Scripture did not contradict one another; where God says to Abraham, *If I find ten in Sodom, I will not destroy it*; and where Ezekiel says, *Though these three men, Noah, Daniel, and Job were in it, yet would not I hear, etc.*; and where Jeremiah says, *Therefore pray not thou for this people*. Luther answered: No, they are not against one another; for in Ezekiel it was forbidden them to pray, but it was not so with Abraham. Therefore we must have regard to the word: when God says, thou shalt not pray, then we may well cease.'

References.—XIV. 14.—G. A. Denison, Third Sermon on "Lux Mundi," *Sermons*, 1828-93. XIV. 19, 20.—E. W. Attwood, *Sermons for Clergy and Laity*, p. 474. XIV. 20.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxviii. No. 1651. A. G. Mortimer, *The Church's Lessons for the Christian Year*, part iv. p. 265. XV. 1, 2.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. iii. No. 125. XV. 22, 23.—J. B. Brown, *The Soul's Exodus and Pilgrimage*, p. 81. XV. 27.—*Ibid.* p. 104. XVI. 1, 2.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. vi. No. 323. XVI. 1-3.—*Ibid.* vol. xli. No. 2438. XVI. 5, 6.—*Ibid.* vol. viii. No. 468.

'When I passed by thee, and saw thee polluted in thine own blood, I said unto thee when thou wast in thy blood, Live.'—Ezekiel xvi. 6.

Weakness can speak and cry when we have not a tongue. *And when I passed by thee, and saw thee polluted in thine own blood, I said to thee, Live.* The kirk could not speak one word to Christ then; but blood and guiltiness out of measure spake, and drew out of Christ pity, and a word of life and love. —Samuel Rutherford.

'And thy renown went forth among the nations for thy beauty: for it was perfect, through My majesty which I had put upon thee, saith the Lord God. But thou didst trust in thy beauty.'—Ezekiel xvi. 14, 15.

When one is in bed and really ill, one would gladly sacrifice one's complexion or one's bright eyes to regain health and enjoy the sunshine. And besides, a small degree of piety in the heart, a little love of God, is enough to make one speedily renounce such idolatries; for a pretty woman adores herself. When I was a child, I thought nothing equal to beauty; because I said to myself it would have made mamma love me better. Thank God, this childishness has passed away, and the beauty of the soul is the only one I covet.—Eugénie de Guérin, *Journal*.

References.—XVI. 8.—S. Baring-Gould, *Plain Preaching to Poor People* (8th Series), p. 89. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xli. No. 2438. J. M. Neale, *Sermons on the Prophets*, vol. ii. p. 25. XVI. 9-14.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xiv. No. 813.

'As is the mother, so is the daughter.'—Ezekiel xvi. 44.

Looking at the mother, you might hope that the daughter would become like her, which is a prospective advantage equal to a dowry—the mother too often standing behind the daughter like a malignant prophecy—'Such as I am, she will shortly be'.—George Eliot in *Middlemarch*.

'Behold, this was the iniquity of thy sister Sodom, pride, fulness of bread, and abundance of idleness.'—Ezekiel xvi. 49.

'Year after year,' writes Ruskin in the third volume of *The Stones of Venice*, 'the nation drank with deeper thirst from the fountains of forbidden pleasure, and dug for springs, hitherto unknown, in the dark places of the earth. In the ingenuity of indulgence, in the varieties of vanity, Venice surpassed the cities of Christendom, as of old she had surpassed them in fortitude and devotion; and as once the powers of Europe stood before her judgment-seat, to receive the decisions of her justice, so now the youth of Europe assembled in the halls of her luxury, to learn from her the arts of delight. It is needless as well as painful to trace the steps of her final ruin. That ancient curse was upon her, the curse of the Cities of the Plain,

"pride, fulness of bread, and abundance of idleness". By the inner burning of her own passions, as fatal as the fiery rain of Gomorrah, she was consumed from her place among the nations; and her ashes are choking the channels of the dead, salt sea.'

One monster there is in the world: the idle man. What is his 'religion'? That Nature is a Phantasm, where cunning beggary or thievery may sometimes find good victual. That God is a lie, and that Man and his life are a lie.—Carlyle, *Past and Present*, (part II. chap. xii.).

Quite apart from Christianity, there exists a social virtue, *πολιτικὴ ἀρετή*, consisting in regard for others, their rights, their likings, their sensibilities; in love of law and order, in appreciation of articles of value, your own and other people's, as things to be preserved in the hands that have them; in being polite and well-dressed; in saying on some occasions much less than you think, on other occasions a great deal more. This virtue the comfortable classes teach to their children; it is their class interest to teach it and learn it and maintain it. Too frequently, on the other hand, the children of the very poor are not taught social virtue. From infancy they are treated roughly and behave rudely. They see no beauty in the established order of things. They would not be so very much worse off if anarchy and civil war were to ensue. The struggle for the necessities of life and for coarse enjoyments leaves no leisure nor aptitude for processes of refinement. They grow up 'a rough lot'; and where no priest instructs them, nor policeman intimidates them, they commit such crime as comes in their way. Girls, they go out upon the streets, for hunger, to begin with, then for evil passion and habit; but the well-fed sons of luxury are their pay-masters. Some sin is born of *fullness of bread*, other sin of emptiness of stomach. The latter sort of sin the poor commit, and of the two it is the more likely to appear in the police court and earn lodgings in jail. But of the two it is not the more likely to be the more odious in the sight of God.—Father Rickaby, *Oxford and Cambridge Conferences*, II. pp. 7, 8.

References.—XVI. 49.—H. Hensley Henson, *Christ and the Nation*, p. 147. XVI. 54.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. v. No. 264. Elmitt Browne, *Some Moral Proofs of the Resurrection*, p. 130.

'And I will establish My covenant with thee, . . . that thou mayest remember, and be confounded, and never open thy mouth any more because of thy shame, when I am pacified toward thee for all that thou hast done, saith the Lord.'—Ezekiel xvi. 62, 63.

A man shal remembre him of his sinnes. But loke that that remembrance he be to him no delit, by no way, but grete shame and sorroe for his sinnes, and therefore saith Ezechiel; I wot remembre me all the yeres of my lif, in the bitterness of my heart. And God sayeth in the Apocalipse; remembre you fro whens that ye hev fallen, for before the time that ye sinned, ye weren the children of God; but for your sinne ye ben waxen thral and foule; membres of the fende; hate of angels; sclaunder of holy chirche, and fode of the false serpent. . . . Suiche manere thoughtes meke a man to have shame of his sinne, and no delit; as God saith, by the Prophet Ezechiel; ye should remembre you of your wages, and they should displese you.—Chaucer, *The Persone's Tale*.

'My chief burden,' wrote Erskine of Linlathen towards the close of his life, 'is the remembrance of past sins. Although I believe them forgiven, yet they often come between me and the face of my heavenly Father.' In his reminiscences of Erskine, Principal Sharp observes that 'one thing very remarkable during these last years must have struck all who conversed intimately with him—his ever-deepening sense of the evil of sin, and the personal way in which he took this home to himself. Small things done or said years ago would come back upon him, and lie on his conscience, often painfully. Things which few other men would have ever thought of again, and which when told to others would seem trifling or harmless, were grievous to him in remembrance. 'I know that God has forgiven me for these things,' he would say, 'but I cannot forgive myself.'

Let a man but once come really under a sense of God's unchangeable complacency, and he will then soon mourn bitterly enough for his sins, and profitably to himself. 'Thou shalt be loathsome in thine own eyes, *when I am pacified with thee* for all that thou hast done.'—F. W. Newman, *The Soul*, p. 78.

References.—XVI. 62, 63.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxii. No. 1289. XVII. 3, 5, 8.—G. Body, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xliii. 1893, p. 193. XVII. 4.—W. J. Knox-Little, *Manchester Sermons*, p. 22. XVII. 23.—T. De Witt Talmage, *Sermons*, p. 34.

'And all the trees of the field shall know that I the Lord have brought down the high tree, have dried up the green tree, and have made the dry tree to flourish: I the Lord have spoken and done it.'—Ezekiel xvii. 24.

Light is good, and a pleasant thing it is to behold the sun. Yet far dearer than outward peace, far sweeter than inward consolation, is that, the ever-during stay, the solace of the Christian's heart, the imperishable root of which all else that gladdens it is but the bloom and odour; the dry tree that shall flourish when every green tree of delight and of desire fails. It is to the Cross that the heart must turn for that which will reconcile it to all conflicts, all privations.—Dora Greenwell.

References.—XVIII. 1, 2.—G. Jackson, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. liv. 1898, p. 401.

The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge.'—Ezekiel xviii. 2.

There is no doubt about the sins of the fathers falling upon the generation in the case of an illegitimate child. No book has ever been written, no law has ever been made—there is not one dissentient voice in the chorus of rebuke, not one hand to help, or one lamp to lead the way, when a love-child is cast into the world. There must be thousands of these nameless ocean-tramps cast away on the broad sea of ex-

istence; overloaded, until their water-line has vanished, with their cargoes of the world's contempt and their own shame. No port is home to them; no roadstead, but which is too deep for them to use their fragile anchors of hope. They must ride the seas till they sink, and the waters close over them—forgotten, disregarded—but at rest.—E. T. Thurston in *Traffic*, p. 29.

You know there is a kind of tree not dreamed of in botany, that lets fall its fruit every day in the year—you know? We call it—with reverence—'our dead fathers' mistakes'. I have had to eat much of that fruit.—G. W. Cable, *The Grandissimes*, chap. xxxvii.

The popular view was that guilt was inherited, that is, that the children are punished for their fathers' sins. The view of Æschylus and of Sophocles also (so far as he touches the problem on his side) was that a tendency towards guilt is inherited, but this tendency does not annihilate man's free will. If, therefore, the children are punished, they are punished for their own sins. . . . The purification of this special doctrine of the popular religion, which was effected in Greece by the poets, was effected among the Jews by the prophets. The phrase, 'visiting the sins of the fathers upon the children' was open to a double interpretation—either that the children were punished judicially for their fathers' sins, or that the children suffered in the course of nature for their fathers' sins. The Jews for a long time interpreted the words of the second commandment in the first sense, just as the Greeks so interpreted the idea of a curse in the home. But Ezekiel, in clearer tones even than the Greek poets, rejected the first interpretation, and freed the notion of moral responsibility from all ties of blood relationship. . . . The same truth had occurred early to the mind of India. In the *Ramayana* these striking words occur: 'A father, a mother, a son, whether in this world or the next, eats only the fruit of his own works; a father is not recompensed or punished for his son, neither a son for his father. Each of them by his own actions gives birth to good or evil.'—Prof. Butcher, *Aspects of the Greek Genius*, pp. 121, 122.

In discussing the Irish problem, in *Chartism* (chap. iv.), Carlyle notes how 'we English pay even now, the bitter smart of long centuries of injustice to our neighbour Ireland. . . . England is guilty towards Ireland; and reaps at last, in full measure, the fruit of fifteen centuries of wrong-doing.' For, as he adds, 'the Irish population must get itself redressed and saved, for the sake of the English if for nothing else. Alas, that it should on both sides, be poor toiling men that pay the smart for unruly Striguls, Henrys, Macdermotts, and O'Donoghues! The strong have eaten sour grapes, and the teeth of the weak are set on edge. "Curses," says the proverb, "are like chickens, they return always home".'

References.—XVIII. 2.—E. C. S. Gibson, *Messages from the Old Testament*, p. 205. M. G. Glazebrook, *Prospice*, p. 191. G. Jackson, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xlviii. 1895, p. 22. P. H. Hall, *The Brotherhood of Man*, p. 127. S. D. McConnell, *A Year's Sermons*, p. 273. XVIII. 2-4.—J. M. E. Ross, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lx. 1901, p. 347.

'As I live, saith the Lord God, ye shall not have occasion any more to use this proverb in Israel.'—Ezekiel xviii. 3.

The God who stands in a purely ethical relation to His worshippers is of necessity the one and only God, and the men to whom he stands in that relation are necessarily men of any and every race or people. Further, as such an ethical relation is one which involves inward conditions, it must be a relation of the individual as such to God, and not one in which the individual is lost in the family or nation. Hence the later prophets, Jeremiah and Ezekiel, set themselves against the idea of a collective responsibility for good or evil; and they take their stand on the principle of ethical individualism, that each moral agent must answer for his own doings.—Caird, *Evolution of Religion*, I. pp. 392, 393.

No doubt, they have designs on us for our benefit, in making the life of a civilized people an *institution*, in which the life of the individual is to a great extent absorbed, in order to preserve and perfect that of the race. But I wish to show at what a sacrifice this advantage is at present obtained, and to suggest that we may possibly so live as to secure all the advantage without suffering any of the disadvantage. What mean ye by saying that the poor ye have always with you, or that the fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge? 'As I live, saith the Lord God, ye shall not have occasion any more to use this proverb in Israel. Behold all souls are mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine: the soul that sinneth, it shall die'.—Thoreau, *Walden*.

Reference.—XVIII. 3.—E. Tremayne Dunstan, *Christ in the Common-Place*, p. 57.

SIN AS THE TRANSGRESSION OF LAW

'The soul that sinneth, it shall die.'—Ezekiel xviii. 4.

I. Sin is not only an offence against God, a disease or wound of human nature; it is also *a transgression of an eternal law of right.*

And it is the consciousness of an eternal moral law which man has transgressed which lies at the root of the idea of *propitiation.* Man is conscious in himself that he has violated the law of justice; he knows that the violation of that law is death. No forensic fiction, borrowed from human law-courts, no interchange of properties between the sinless and the sinful, can satisfy the conscience. That theory which unbelievers ridicule, conscience and revelation alike reject. When I say, in humble faith, with my eye fixed upon the Cross of Jesus, 'I believe in the remission of sins,' I mean by forgiveness more, infinitely more, than the passing over of my sin. I believe that my sin is *done away;* that, thanks be to God, I *am righteous* in the sight of God; that He, the All-Holy and the All-Pure, is looking down upon me in love. 'Beloved, *now* are we the sons of God.'

Reconciliation with God is separation from evil. To be reclaimed from evil is to be made free to approach God. This is Christ's work. In relation to evil, and the bondage of death, it is called *Redemption* or *Deliverance;* in relation to God, it is *Reconciliation.*

II. 'But how should man be just with God?' This is the question, the tormenting question, of the conscience, and it has everywhere been answered by a belief in sacrifice and propitiation.

'The soul that sinneth, it shall die;' and Christ, the Perfect Man, and man in Him, admits the justice of that law. So is the eternal law vindicated; so is the Father once more well pleased as He looks on man in His well-beloved Son; so to men and angels God shows Himself 'just, and the Justifier of him that believeth in Jesus'.

But there is nothing of *substitution,* or imputed righteousness, in all this. Christ died as our Sponsor, our Representative, the Head of the human race, the Second Adam, the First-born of redeemed humanity that we in heart and will might be one with Him in Death and Resurrection.

III. But if the Sacrifice of Christ be external to us, it will avail us nothing. If it is only a fact in the world's history, but not a fact in the history of our own lives, His Death and Resurrection will *for us* have been in vain. We must be crucified with Him, buried with Him in Baptism, that we may rise in Him to newness of life. Suffering in His sufferings, that we may also be glorified together. He did not suffer for us, that we, with a few meaningless words about 'faith only,' might live a life of ease, perhaps of sin; but that we, being reconciled to God by the Blood of Christ, might live the life of faith, the life of union with the Son of God.—AUBREY L. MOORE, *Some Aspects of Sin,* p. 78.

ORIGINAL SIN

'The soul that sinneth, it shall die.'—EZEKIEL XVIII. 4.

I. SIN, in one and that perhaps the most important of its aspects, is conscious disobedience to a law whose authority we recognize as binding us. Such disobedience will weaken, not only the will of the sinner himself, but the will of his descendants when their turn comes to combat the forces of evil. And this weakness and waywardness of the will in its warfare with the passions is what has been called by theologians, though the phrase has no Scriptural authority, *original sin.* It may perhaps be said that the phrase is not a very happy one; it is likely to mislead the unwary. For sin is essentially a personal, conscious act.

Ezekiel declared to the Jews with no uncertain voice the sublime principle by which the world is judged: *All souls are Mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is Mine: the soul that sinneth, it shall die.* To God is each soul responsible at last.

II. But the taint of sin is present. Whence comes it? Are we to regard it as a Divine punishment? Nay; it is the consequence of the unity of mankind. *Through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners.* Could we explain it better? Not that we are punished for Adam's sin; there is no such statement in Scripture. No; but we suffer through Adam's sin, inasmuch as we are bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh. We suffer doubly, alike in our bodies and in our souls.

We suffer in our bodies. Is it not obscurely hinted by St. Paul that physical disorder is the offspring of moral disorder? *death came through sin,* he says. The true significance of pain may be that it is the symbol and the token of sin; the suffering in the world may be the consequence, though not the chastisement, of Adam's transgression.

The infection of sin is with us, for as members of the great human family we have shared in Adam's sin. We have inherited the taint, although we are not responsible for it; it has never been in our power to refuse the inheritance. And so we see that the really practical question for us all is as to the source and the measure of our power of resisting this deadly tendency.

III. Can it be resisted, and how?

Ezekiel urges upon the Hebrews that the pollution of sin is not hopeless. The burden of his exhortation is that the wicked man may turn away from his wickedness and live, that repentance and recovery are within man's power. Here is man; what is his inheritance? The nature of Adam? True; but behind and beyond that he has inherited the image of God. With the tendency to do wrong, man has also received the power to do right. He is not the son of Adam only, but the son of God; and in the power of that Divine inheritance he may overcome.—J. H. BERNARD, *Via Domini,* p. 103.

DIVINE OWNERSHIP

'Behold, all souls are Mine.'—EZEKIEL XVIII. 4.

AT first sight these words express only a general truth. But in a far deeper sense God says it of souls.

I. There are Reasons why God Should Claim a Property in souls more than in any other living thing.

(*a*) *The creation of the soul* is spoken of separately from the creation of every other thing. And observe the consequence—the necessary result—the soul of man is the breath of God. Therefore there is a sense in which it is an emanation of the great and eternal Spirit; it is God's.

(*b*) *When the soul by sin became alienated from God, God purchased it back,* and, oh, at what a price!—at the price of the blood and death of His own dear son. And may He not on that account say the more, 'All souls are mine'?

(*c*) *The Holy Ghost dwells in a man's soul.* 'Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?' And for this purpose: 'As Thou Father art in Me and I in Thee'; 'Thou art one in us, and we are one in Thee through that indwelling of the Holy Ghost.

So by the very nature of its being, by the time and mode of its creation, by the purchase price paid for its redemption when lost, and by its actually mingling with the Holy Ghost and the great Triune, the soul is God's, and, in a sense that belongs to nothing else in all creation, God says, 'Behold, all souls are mine'.

II. If the Soul be thus Allied to God, what must 'a Soul' be in God's Sight, and what ought it to be in our Sight?—The very name 'soul' should never be used lightly. 'Upon my honour,' 'Upon my word'—they are foolish and useless expressions. No reverent man will ever say 'Upon my soul'.

III. But let us Look at it as regards our Relation to other People's Souls; our Fellow-creatures; those with whom, directly or indirectly, we have to do.—And here observe that God says 'All souls, *all souls* are Mine'. Not the souls of religious people only; not the souls of the baptized only, but all—those of every nation and every country of the world. '*All souls* are Mine.' If 'the soul' is in its very nature and essence an emanation of God, it follows as a necessary consequence every living man and every living woman has a soul. 'All souls are Mine.' Therefore I ought to deal with every fellow-creature with the feeling—'I am dealing with the being of God'. No one can be outside that 'all'. Thou hast said it, Lord, 'all souls are Thine'. That poor creature's soul is Thine. God has said it. We bow to God's election; too deep for man to fathom. We can only prostrate ourselves before Him and say: 'Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?' This is a truth, and the infinity of the one may well balance and outweigh the mystery of the other. 'All souls are Mine.'

'Behold, all souls are Mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is Mine; the soul that sinneth, it shall die.'—EZEKIEL XVIII. 4.

THE doctrine of heritable guilt, with its mechanical consequences, has done for our moral nature what the doctrine of demoniac possession has done in barbarous times and still does among barbarous tribes for disease. Out of that black cloud came the lightning which struck the compass of humanity. Conscience, which from the dawn of moral being had pointed to the poles of right and wrong only as the great current of will flowed through the soul, was demagnetized, paralysed, and knew no fixed meridian, but stayed where the priest or council placed it. There is nothing to be done but to polarize the needle over again.—O. W. HOLMES, *The Poet at the Breakfast Table*, x.

'He that hath walked in My statutes.'—EZEKIEL XVIII. 9.

THE way to salvation a man must *walk* in: that is the point. The history of the discovery and levelling of the way is good in its place, but does not help us to walk in it.—FICHTE.

REFERENCES.—XVIII. 4.—B. J. Snell, *The Cross and the Dice-Box*, p. 165. W. H. Hutchings, *Sermon-Sketches* (2nd Series), p. 289. C. Silvester Horne, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xliv. 1893, p. 262. W. Boyd Carpenter, *ibid.* vol. li. 1897, p. 289. Henry Alford, *Sermons on Christian Doctrine*, p. 28. T. Sadler, *Sunday Thoughts*, p. 225. J. Tulloch *Sundays at Balmoral*, p. 148. 'Plain Sermons' by contributors to the *Tracts for the Times*, vol. vii. pp. 153, 163. C. J. Thompson, *Penny Pulpit*, vol. xiv. No. 838, p. 381.

THE SINS OF THE FATHERS AND THE CHILDREN

(*Trinity*)

'The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son.'—EZEKIEL XVIII. 20.

I. THE murmuring Jews said, 'The *father's* soul sinneth and the *son's* soul shall die'. God's Prophet declares that death is the portion of the sinner himself, of him and not another. 'The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son: the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him.' Here was a law of the plainest and simplest justice.

II. Here then God's present justice was fully established, and it was at the same time shown that we have no right to make any single words of His an excuse for darkening His whole character, which is declared to us in the length and breadth of His revelation. But the second commandment still remains: and we may naturally ask whether the doctrine of Ezekiel contradicts or sets it aside. Most surely not: both truths work into each other. God's curse upon idolatry falls upon the idolater's children as well as on himself. This is a plain matter of fact. Evil does go on breeding itself afresh from father to son. But, though there is this terrible mark to show how closely we are joined to each other for good or evil, the law stands everlastingly true that each man has to answer for his own sin.

III. Too often we go blindly through life, with nothing more than a dim sense that there is anything wrong about us at all, except that we cannot get everything we wish. And when we do partly awake to our misdoings, we are most willing to lay the guilt of them upon our fathers; we think how much of our character has come from them. If it is true, what a terrible warning it is to us not to act so that those who come after *us* may be able to say such things of *us!* for it is most true that we by our doings or our not-doings may make it harder for them to return to heaven and God. But yet we are not mere slaves to what our fathers have laid upon us. We may still turn from all our sins that they and we have committed, and then we shall surely live: we shall not die, for God Himself hath spoken it. Nay, it is He that is striving to win us back to our true inheritance as *His* children, *His* heirs, united to *Him* still more closely than to our parents, made partakers of *His* righteousness.—F. J. A. HORT, *Village Sermons* (2nd Series), p. 186.

REFERENCES.—XVIII. 20.—J. H. Jellett, *The Elder Son*, p. 103. S. G. Maclennan, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxxi. 1907, p. 148.

'If the wicked will turn from all his sins that he hath committed, and keep all My statutes, and do that which is lawful and right, he shall surely live, he shall not die. All his transgressions that he hath committed, they shall not be mentioned unto him: in his righteousness that he hath done he shall live.'—EZEKIEL XVIII. 21, 22.

THE place which was taken, when Ezekiel wrote, by the customary habits, traditions, and principles of Hebrew religion is taken to-day by the characteristic teaching of modern science. The old words of the Covenant, of God's punishment of men to the third and fourth generation, have given place to the new words of heredity and environment, but the principle remains the same. Science has been teaching us wonderfully, beautifully, terribly, with what a subtlety, a closeness of tie, we are bound by our brains and bodies to the ancestors from whom we sprang, the conditions from which we sprang, the progeny we leave behind us. And we accept the truth. But is it the last and only word? Is man nothing but the product of his circumstances, the creature of environment and forefathers? If it be so, then before long we may come to that feeling of despair which lay upon the breasts of these exiles of Jerusalem. We must balance that truth which Ezekiel recovered for his contemporaries—the truth that man's nature, though it is invested in the influences of blood and surroundings, yet has within it a personal self, higher than, apart from, that nature. I ask you to consider the basis which Ezekiel is teaching in reference to our lives as members of a community and as personal beings.

I. First of all, there is a message to us as members of a community. Sometimes the Hebrew took joy in the thought that he was bound, with his fathers and his children, in the bonds of the Covenant of the Will of God; and sometimes we take joy in the thought that we are bound together by these subtle and intricate ties to the nature which surrounds us, and to our fellow-beings in the long distance of the past and of the future. But when the Hebrew realized God's punishment in the wasting of Jerusalem he was filled with a chill despair, and when we, with all this wonderful teaching of science, turn, let us say, to the poor parts of our crowded cities, do we not find there that this teaching is somewhat grim? The one inevitable, indispensable factor of social reform is the individual freedom and responsibility of the man. Even when you change his circumstances it will be hollow unless you have changed the man's will so that he co-operates with the change of his circumstances. And every scheme of charity which belittles this factor of the man's individual freedom and power and responsibility is a real danger.

II. Secondly, the Prophet's message is to the personal life. There were men who heard Ezekiel speak who felt the burden upon them of the load, not of their fathers' sin, but of their own. It may be that among those to whom I speak to-day there are some who are conscious of that same difficulty of remorse. You can think of some mistake you made which has spoiled your life. You remember the liberty you have lost and squandered, you feel that your chance is gone, and that you are tied up in the doom of your destiny; or perhaps there are others who have not gone so far, but when there comes to them the prompting of some better impulse they meet it with some reply, expressed or unexpressed, in terms such as these: 'It is no good; it is too late. My nature is made; I cannot change. These heights are for others; I cannot attain them. Like Sir Lancelot, the quest is not for me. I am what my life has made me, and it is too late to change.' So when these better impulses come they are avoided until they gradually die out. In all this there is truth which cannot be gainsaid; but it is not the whole truth. There remains the hidden self, the inner man, and it is free. It has always the power of rising from its past and going forth to a new future. You say it is impossible. With man, perhaps, it is impossible; with God all things are possible.

REFERENCES.—XVIII. 21, 22, 23.—Archbishop Lang, *Church Times*, vol. lii. 1904, p. 529. XVIII. 23, 32.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxx. No. 1795.

'When the wicked man turneth away from his wickedness that he hath committed, and doeth that which is lawful and right, he shall save his soul alive.'—EZEKIEL XVIII. 27.

THE main matter which terrifies and torments most that are troubled in mind, is the enormity of their offences, the intolerable burthen of their sins, God's heavy wrath and displeasure so deeply apprehended, that they account themselves reprobates, quite forsaken of God, already damned, past all hope of grace, incapable of mercy, slaves of sin, and their offences so great that they cannot be forgiven. But these men must know there is no sin so heinous which is not pardonable in itself, no crime so great but by God's mercy it may be forgiven. 'At what time soever a sinner shall repent him of his sins from the bottom of his heart, I will blot out all his wickedness out of My remembrance, saith the Lord.'—BURTON'S *Anatomy of Melancholy*.

THE familiar words, 'when the wicked man turneth away from his wickedness, and doeth that which is lawful and right, he shall save his soul alive,' are the theme of a great part of this wonderful book. Other Prophets have more of poetical beauty, a deeper sense of Divine things, a tenderer feeling of the mercies of God to His people; none teach so simply this great moral lesson, to us the first of all lessons. On the eve of the captivity, and in the midst of it, when the hour of mercy is past, and no image is too loathsome to describe the iniquities of Israel, still the Prophet does not forget that the Lord will not destroy the righteous with the wicked. — JOWETT, *St. Paul's Epistles*, II. pp. 149, 150.

REFERENCE.—XVIII. 27.—R. D. B. Rawnsley, *Village Sermons* (1st Series), p. 66.

'O house of Israel, are not My ways equal.'—
EZEKIEL XVIII. 29.

THIS was the text chosen by R. W. Dale for his first sermon, which was preached in the spring of 1845, in

a room at Providence Cottage, Lower Clatford, Andover. 'The sermon,' says Dr. Dale's biographer, 'was a defence of Calvinism, coupled, however, with an assertion of universal redemption.'

REFERENCES.—XVIII. 30.—Bishop J. Percival, *Sermons at Rugby*, p. 138. XVIII. 30, 31.—N. D. Hillis, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lvii. 1900, p. 328. XVIII. 30, 32.—G. Body, *ibid.* vol. lxi. 1902, pp. 129, 152. XVIII. 31.—'Plain Sermons' by contributors to the *Tracts for the Times*, vol. viii. p. 193.

'I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord God: wherefore turn yourselves and live ye.'—EZEKIEL XVIII. 32.

THE command itself 'Turn' hath love engraved on it, the *Lord's* so earnest seeking of it, His large offers to gain this.—FRASER OF BREA, *Memoirs*, p. 84.

DEVOURERS AND ENDEAVOURERS

'It devoured men.'—EZEKIEL XIX. 3.

IT was a beast, and yet it devoured men—men that were intended in the Divine purpose and love to be sons of God. It was no ordinary quality of men that this beast learned to devour; the message is delivered to 'the princes of Israel'. 'What is thy mother?' A woman—degraded, bestialized. 'A lioness . . . and she brought up one of her whelps; it became a young lion, and it learned'—a word to be specially noted—'to catch the prey; it devoured men.' The whole lamentation is allegorical. Never omit the ideal from your criticism. We may unduly exalt the ideal or parabolical, or we may unduly repress it, and, shutting it out of our purview, we may starve our highest faculties and get nothing out of the Bible but letters, syllables, written and printed in iron and in ink.

I. 'It devoured men.' That is an allegorical lion, a beast that lived long ago, a beast that is dead. There you mistake the whole case. This ravenous lion is not only a lion now, but the beast is alive in every one of us.

There are two classes in the world at this moment—Endeavourers and Devourers. There they are, and you can follow which band you please—endeavourers, devourers—and you cannot belong to the betwixt-and-between party. Perhaps you would not like to belong to the endeavourers, because that name may have to your perverted taste somewhat of cant and infatuation about it, and you want to see how the idea goes on before you join it, and you will join it most lovingly when it does not need you. There are many persons waiting to applaud me as soon as I become a very great man. Then they are my friends, they always were my friends; they had not said much about it perhaps, but they always had a warm side to me, and if ever I became a millionaire twice over and were the prime favourite of the throne, why, of course they knew me.

II. What remark occurs to you when thinking about the devourers? A very commonplace remark, but only commonplace because it is profoundly true. The devourer always takes the easy course. That is why I contemn him. God never takes easy courses. Jesus never took an easy course. That is one of the reasons why I from a merely literary point of view delight in the conception of the Jesus of the New Testament. From the very first He would do hard work; He said He would save the world. There are some propositions that glorify themselves by their very boldness. Audacity may be an element and a seal of subdued and holy ambition.

We have in the first instance a devourer of men; in the second instance we have a Saviour of men. Which are we going to follow? which will really do us good? which will talk to us upon the greatest subjects? Let us listen to the conversation of both, and determine by the tone of the conversation which is the devourer and which is the endeavourer or saviour.—JOSEPH PARKER, *City Temple Pulpit*, vol. III. p. 214.

REFERENCES.—XX. 2.—J. Baldwin Brown, *The Soul's Exodus and Pilgrimage*, pp. 1 and 154. XX. 6.—G. Davidson, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lii. 1897, p. 72.

'Their heart went after their idols.'—EZEKIEL XX. 16.

HERE enters the fatal circumstance of Idolatry, that, in the era of the Prophets, no man's mind *is* any longer honestly filled with his Idol or Symbol. Before the Prophet can arise who, seeing through it, knows it to be mere wood, many men must have begun dimly to doubt that it was little more. Condemnable Idolatry is *insincere* idolatry. . . . It is equivalent to what we call Formalism, and Worship of Formulas, in these days of ours. No more immoral act can be done by a human creature; for it is the beginning of all immorality, or rather it is the impossibility henceforth of any morality whatsoever; the innermost moral soul is paralyzed thereby, cast into fatal magnetic sleep!—CARLYLE, *Heroes*, IV.

'And that which cometh into your mind shall not be at all, that ye say, We will be as the heathen.'—EZEKIEL XX. 32.

WHOSO would be a man must be a nonconformist.—EMERSON on *Self-Reliance*.

WE have been, in spite of momentary declensions, on a flood-tide of high profits and a roaring trade, and there is nothing like a roaring trade for engendering latitudinarians.—MORLEY, *Compromise*, pp. 34, 35.

REFERENCES.—XX. 32.—H. Montagu Butler, *Harrow School Sermons* (2nd Series), p. 275. XX. 32, 38.—C. Kingsley, *Sermons on National Subjects*, p. 184. XX.—34-38.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxxi. No. 1840.

'And I will bring you into the wilderness of the people, and there will I plead with you face to face; like as I pleaded with your fathers in the wilderness of the land of Egypt, so will I plead with you, saith the Lord God.'—EZEKIEL XX. 35, 36.

IT is good for any man to be alone with nature and himself, or with a friend who knows when silence is more sociable than talk.

In the wilderness alone,
There where nature worships God.

It is well to be in places where man is little and God is great—where what he sees all around him has the

same look as it had a thousand years ago, and will have the same, in all likelihood, when he has been a thousand years in his grave. It abates and rectifies a man, if he is worth the process. It is not favourable to religious feeling to hear only of the actions and interference of man, and to behold nothing but what human ingenuity has completed. There is an image of God's greatness impressed upon the outward face of nature fitted to make us all pious, and to breathe into our hearts a purifying and salutary fear. In cities everything is man, and man alone. He seems to move and govern all, and be the Providence of cities . . . all is human policy, human foresight, human power; nothing reminds us of *invisible dominion and concealed omnipotence*—it is all earth and no heaven. One cure of this is prayer and the solitary place. As the body, harassed with the noxious air of cities, seeks relief in the freedom and the purity of the fields and hills, so the mind, wearied by commerce with man, resumes its vigour in solitude, and repairs its dignity.—SYDNEY SMITH.

REFERENCES.—XX. 38.—Henry Alford, *Quebec Chapel Sermons*, vol. ii. p. 120. XX. 41.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xii. No. 688.

'And ye shall loath yourselves in your own sight for all your evils that ye have committed.'—EZEKIEL XX. 43.

SORROW for loss brought in her train sorrow for wrong—a sister more solemn still, and with a deeper blessing in the voice of her loving farewell. It is a great mistake to suppose that sorrow is a part of repentance. It is far too good a grace to come so easily. A man may *repent*, that is, *think better of it and change his way*, and be very much of a Pharisee—I do not say a hypocrite—for a long time after: it needs a saint to be sorrowful. Yet repentance is generally the road to this sorrow.—GEORGE MACDONALD, *David Elginbrod*, part II. chap. XXIII.

REFERENCE.—XX. 44.—C. Kingsley, *Sermons on National Subjects*, p. 463.

'Ah Lord God! they say of me, Doth he not speak parables?' —EZEKIEL XX. 49.

THE inferior nature (in Jewish belief) of all such forms of inspiration is curiously illustrated by the complaint of Ezekiel, so difficult for one with Christian associations to appreciate, 'Ah Lord, they say of me, Doth he not speak parables?' as though this were a reproach. It is difficult for those who have been brought up with Christian associations to accept a scale which relegates to a lower level the method of the Parables; yet a distrust of metaphor in dealing with spiritual realities is a feeling justified by all but its highest exercise, and even there exhibited at times as a concession to human weakness and infirmity.—MISS WEDGWOOD.

REFERENCES.—XX. 49.—Hugh Black, *University Sermons*, p. 99. J. Fraser, *Parochial and Other Sermons*, p. 239. W. C. Magee, *The Gospel and the Age*, p. 139. H. Montagu Butler, *Harrow School Sermons*, p. 377. Thomas Chalmers, *Sermons Preached in the Tron Church, Glasgow*, p. 55. E. W. Attwood, *Sermons for Clergy and Laity*, p. 14.

EZEKIEL XXI. 9, 10.

THE roaring of lions, the howling of wolves, the raging of the stormy sea, and the destructive sword, are portions of eternity too great for the eye of reason.—BLAKE.

REFERENCE.—XXI. 9, 10.—R. A. Suckling, *Sermons Plain and Practical*, p. 215.

'Thus saith the Lord God; Remove the diadem, and take off the crown; . . . I will overturn, overturn, overturn it: and it shall be no more, until he come whose right it is; and I will give it him.'—EZEKIEL XXI. 26, 27.

AFTER quoting these words, John Owen adds: 'One dissolution shall come upon the neck of another, until it all issue in Jesus Christ. "I will overturn it," saith God. "But men will set it up again." "I will overturn it again," saith God, "perfectly overturn it." All men's endeavours shall but turn things from one destructive issue to another, till "all issue in one whose right it is".'

CROMWELL used this verse in his second speech to the First Parliament in 1654. 'Whilst these things were in the midst of us; and whilst the nation was rent and torn in spirit and principle from one end to the other, after this sort and manner I have now told you; family against family, husband against wife, parents against children; and nothing in the hearts and minds of men but "overturn, overturn, overturn!" (a Scripture phrase very much abused, and applied to justify unpeaceable practices by all men of discontented spirits)—the common enemy sleeps not'.

EASY WORK

'Skilful to destroy.'—EZEKIEL XXI. 31.

I. NOTHING is so easy as to destroy. This is a truth which is often forgotten. A man is not a genius simply because he can destroy something.

1. We are entranced and fascinated by men who have immense destructive power. This is peculiarly easy work, this work of destruction in religious subjects and religious spheres. Let me tell you why. The heart wants to get rid of God. The enemy has an infinite advantage in the preparedness of the heart.

2. The very greatness of religion is a temptation towards denial. It makes denial easy, invites destructive criticism: there is so much of it; it begins with the unbeginning; it endures to the endless end; it takes a higher range than the high firmament. Nothing is so easy as contradiction. A child can contradict a father.

II. We must be a little clearer and plainer about this genius of contradiction, and this skill of destructiveness. Suppose I say, 'You have no mind; now prove the contrary, where is your mind?' You never thought of that. 'Have you ever seen it?' Never. 'Touched it?' No. 'Where do you keep it?' You don't know. You see the preacher can contradict as well as the critic and the hearer. Do not suppose that all the intellectual vigour and mental freshness and mighty transcendental genius is on the

side of contradiction; it is on the side of constructiveness, elevation, moral fruition; it is on the side of practical, beneficent holiness.

III. There is no mystery in religion that has not its counterpart in human nature. The mischief is that so many people imagine that mystery begins with the Bible. If you close the Bible you will have greater mystery without it than you have with it; you would be a greater mystery to yourself. What little knowledge you have of yourself you owe directly or indirectly to such influences as constitute the Bible. It is because man is made in God's image that he represents a thousand religious mysteries, that he is often a supreme mystery to himself.

IV. Christianity has a destructive mission as well as infidelity. Christianity wields tremendous weapons. Christianity does not come to destroy the sinner, but sin. Nothing would be so easy as to destroy the sinner, but that would have no effect upon the sin; the spirit of sin would still be the unconquered spirit of the universe. Jesus Christ therefore undertakes this work—to bear away the sin of the world; not to crush the sinner, but to bear away, away—a word without an end—the sin of the world.—J. Parker, *The Gospel of Jesus Christ*, p. 42.

'Can thine heart endure, or can thine hands be strong, in the days that I shall deal with thee.'—Ezekiel xxii. 14.

What wisdom and philosophy, and perpetual experience, and revelation, and promises, and blessings cannot do, a mighty fear can; it can allay the confidences of bold lust and imperious sin, and soften our spirit into the lowness of a child, our revenge into charity of prayers, our impudence into the blushings of a chidden girl; and therefore God hath taken a cause proportionable.—Jeremy Taylor.

Bunyan twice uses this verse; once in *The Pilgrim's Progress*, opposite the following passage: 'I looked then, and saw a man named Evangelist coming to him, and asked *wherefore didst thou cry?* He answered, Sir, I perceive by the Book in my hand, that I am condemned to die, and after that to come to Judgment, and I find that I am not willing to do the first, nor able to do the second.' The other reference is in *The Holy War*, where Captain Judgment uses it to warn the 'woeful town of Mansoul' against impenitence.

'Her priests have violated My law, and have profaned My holy things: they have put no difference between the holy and the profane.'—Ezekiel xxii. 26.

The greater part of literature in the Middle Ages, at least from the twelfth century, may be considered as artillery levelled against the clergy—I do not say against the Church, which might imply a doctrinal opposition by no means universal. But if there is one theme upon which the most serious as well as the lightest, the most orthodox as the most heretical writers are united, it is ecclesiastical corruption.—Hallam, *Introduction to the Literature of Europe*, part i. chap. ii.

'Her prophets have daubed them with untempered mortar, seeing vanity, and divining lies unto them, saying, Thus saith the Lord God, when the Lord hath not spoken. The people of the land have used oppression, and exercised robbery, and have vexed the poor and needy.'—Ezekiel xxii. 28, 29.

Compare Mr. Morley's famous description of modern Britain: 'A community where the great aim of all classes and orders with power, is by dint of rigorous silence, fast shutting of the eyes, and stern stopping of the ears, to keep the social pyramid on its apex, with the fatal result of preserving for England its glorious fame as a paradise for the well-to-do, a purgatory for the able, and a hell for the poor'.

Ezekiel xxii. 30.

The repeated political humiliations paralysed the national spirit, and the paralysis extended itself to the people's religion and even to its morals. The nationality was exhausted; it could no more put forth out of itself a saviour to retrieve its fortunes. . . . And the national exhaustion was accompanied by religious decay, for in all the history of Israel a full tide of national life and a high faith in Jehovah were always the counterparts of one another.—Prof. A. B. Davidson, *The Exile and the Restoration*, pp. 13, 14.

'The word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Son of man, behold, I take away from thee the desire of thine eyes with a stroke.'—Ezekiel xxiv. 15, 16.

The enunciation of laws or principles seems more especially to belong to Ezekiel, as the experience of personal evil and the sympathy with national sorrow belong more to the tender and womanly nature of Jeremiah. Nevertheless, Ezekiel was to be a priest in this sense also, as well as in that higher sense of beholding the glory of God and proclaiming His name. Suffering was not the destination of one prophet; it was the badge of all the tribe.—F. D. Maurice.

To love, is to know the sacrifices which eternity exacts from life.—John Oliver Hobbes, *The School for Saints*, chap. xxv.

'At even my wife died.'—Ezekiel xxiv. 18.

Mr. R. H. Hutton quotes this passage (vv. 15-27) in his essay on the poetry of the Old Testament, to show how 'this sublime characteristic of the Hebrew prophets, that they seem almost to forget their human centre of life in their effort to delineate Divine truth, is strikingly illustrated in the frequent surrender of their private lives and affections, for the purpose of sculpturing, in a living symbol, upon the mind of the nation, the lesson that no mere words could have taught. How far can any human being now, even distantly, comprehend the state of mind in which Ezekiel must have lived when he acted thus under the Divine inspiration?

References.—XXIV. 18.—J. H. Jowett, *Meditations for Quiet Moments*, p. 106. XXIV. 19.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxxviii. No. 2286.

'Ye shall pine away in your iniquities and mourn one towards another.'—Ezekiel xxiv. 23.

'Sin will cease,' said Herbert Spencer, 'when men shall have discovered that sin is essentially fatal to happiness.'

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF EZEKIEL

'Ezekiel is unto you a sign.'—Ezekiel xxiv. 24.

Is not every man a sign? Each man is significant of much. Each man points to something beyond himself, something either beautiful or base. Every man is a living sermon. It would evangelize our lives did we realize this. How circumspectly would we walk were this always in our recollection!

All great and good men are signs. The Bible declares that the Lord Christ was and is a sign. And of Ezekiel Jehovah attests, 'Thus shall Ezekiel be unto you a sign' (R.V.).

I believe the idea to be that Ezekiel is a sign in a very special degree. Bishop Wordsworth translates my text: 'Ezekiel is unto you a *wonderful portent*'. No common sign, but a portent—flaming with supernatural significance. This is a strong claim to be instituted for Ezekiel. Can it be substantiated?

I. Ezekiel is a sign of the brave bearing of the ills of life.

II. Ezekiel is a sign of individuality.

III. Ezekiel is a sign of fidelity in proclaiming a message.

IV. Ezekiel is a sign of self-renouncing obedience.

V. Ezekiel is a sign of intensity.—Dinsdale T. Young, *The Gospel of the Left Hand*, p. 167.

'Moab and Seir do say, Behold, the house of Judah is like unto all the heathen.'—Ezekiel xxv. 8.

All the heathens spake evil of Israel, and the Prophet did the same, yet the Israelites were so far from having the right to say to him, 'You speak as the heathen,' that he made it his strongest point that the heathens said the same as he.—Pascal.

Reference.—XXV. 21.—J. Baldwin Brown, *The Soul's Exodus and Pilgrimage*, p. 228.

'Thus saith the Lord God to Tyre; Shall not the isles shake at the sound of thy fall.'—Ezekiel xxvi. 15.

'Conquerors,' says Carlyle in his essay on Burns, 'are a class of men with whom, for most part, the world could well dispense; nor can the hard intellect, the unsympathizing loftiness, and high but selfish enthusiasm of such persons inspire us in general with any affection; at best it may excite amazement; and their fall, like that of a pyramid, will be beheld with a certain sadness and awe.'

'Judah, and the land of Israel, they were thy merchants: they traded in thy market wheat of Minnith, and Pannag, and honey, and oil, and balm.'—Ezekiel xxvii. 17.

'That is a remarkable verse, which I once met on a remarkable occasion, that I would also refer you to—Ezekiel xxvii. 17. Tyrus may buy Judah's finest wheat; yea, her balm, and oil, and honey. What is the meaning of this? You would know what part of the parcel properly belonged to yourself.' So Erskine of Linlathen once wrote to Lady Elgin, cautioning her against hastily crediting supernatural visions and voices which appeared to possess Divine authority and insight, on the ground that even the best things of God may be appropriated sometimes by false agencies. 'I believe,' he has just said, 'that an evil spirit, or the flesh even, may speak of the deep things of God, although in a way that the true light and life in us might detect, or at least guard us from suffering by it.'

'Thy rowers have brought thee into great waters: the east wind hath broken thee in the midst of the seas.'—Ezekiel xxvii. 26.

So rapid was the fall of Spain, that in only three reigns after the death of Philip II., the most powerful monarchy existing in the world was depressed to the lowest point of debasement, was insulted with impunity by foreign nations, was reduced more than once to bankruptcy, was stripped of her fairest possessions, was held up to public opprobrium. . . . Then, truly, did she drink to the dregs the cup of her own shame. Her glory had departed from her, she was smitten down and humbled. Well might a Spaniard of that time who compared the present with the past, mourn over his country, the chosen abode of chivalry and romance, of valour and of loyalty. The mistress of the world, the queen of the ocean, the terror of nations was gone; her power was gone, no more to return.—Buckle, *History of Civilization*, book ii. chap. viii.

Reference.—XXVII. 26.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxxii. No. 1933.

'By thy great wisdom and by thy traffic hast thou increased thy riches, and thine heart is lifted up because of thy riches.'—Ezekiel xxviii. 5.

Riches in a cultured community are the strongest of things; a power all-moving, yet which only the most powerless and skilless can *put* in motion; they are the *readiest* of possibilities; the readiest to become a great blessing or a great curse. 'Beneath gold thrones and mountains,' says Jean Paul, 'who knows how many giant spirits lie entombed?'—Carlyle, *Essay on Goethe's Works*.

Reference.—XXVIII. 13, 14.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons for Some Feast Days in the Christian Year*, p. 258. XXIX. 6.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons on the Prophets*, vol. ii. p. 35.

'In that day will I cause the horn of the house of Israel to bud forth.'—Ezekiel xxix. 21.

Because the pulse seems to intermit, we must not presume that it will cease instantly to beat. The public must never be regarded as incurable.—Burke, *First Letter on a Regicide Peace*.

'The pride of her power shall come down.'—Ezekiel xxx. 6.

The last historian of the Jesuit Order, the one who brought down their own history of themselves to about 1652, since when it has not been continued—lived to see the suppression of the order in 1773. He has left us his opinion as to why they were put down, why the Almighty allowed so useful a society to be extinguished; and he comes to the conclusion that it is on account of their pride. 'We have been inordinately proud,' he confesses; 'we have set ourselves above everything, every institution and every office. We have assumed our own superiority, and have treated all other orders and societies with contempt. Pride has been the cause of our fall.'—Döllinger.

'Behold, the Assyrian was a cedar in Lebanon with fair branches.' —Ezekiel xxxi. 3.

In *Proserpina*, after quoting this passage, Ruskin proceeds: 'Now hear what follows. "The cedars in *the Garden of God* could not hide *Him*. The fir-trees were not like His boughs, and the chestnut-trees were not like His branches; nor any tree in the Garden of God was like unto Him in beauty." So that you see, whenever a nation rises into consistent, vital, and, through many generations, enduring power, *there* is still the Garden of God; still it is the water of life which feeds the roots of it; and still the succession of its people is imaged by the perennial leafage of the trees of Paradise. Could this be said of Assyria, and shall it not be said of England? How much more, of lives such as ours should be;—just, laborious, united in aim, beneficent in fulfilment, may the image be used of the leaves of the tree of Eden!'

'And it came to pass in the twelfth year . . . that the word of the Lord came unto me.'—Ezekiel xxxii. 1, 17.

Calling to mind my ordination this day eleven years ago, I spent some hours in the afternoon in the wood, reviewing the past, confessing sin, seeking mercy through the blood of the Lamb, who has a fold of righteousness to spread over a minister's sins. Some brokenness of heart and some power to cry for future blessing. I see Ezekiel got some of his messages in his twelfth year! May the Lord God of Ezekiel remember me!—Dr. A. A. Bonar's *Diary*, p. 143.

References.—XXXII. 1.—J. Baldwin Brown, *The Soul's Exodus and Pilgrimage*, p. 178.

'All the bright lights of heaven will I make dark over thee, and set darkness upon thy land, saith the Lord God.'—Ezekiel xxxii. 8.

'This in good measure,' said Newman, quoting the verse in a sermon preached in 1841, 'has fallen upon us. The Church of God is under eclipse among us. Where is our unity, for which Christ prayed? Where our charity, which He enjoined? Where the faith once delivered, when each has his own doctrine? Where our visibility, which was to be a light to the world? Where that awful worship, which struck fear into every soul? And as the Jews shortly before their own rejection had two dark tokens—the one, a bitter contempt of the whole world, and the other, multiplied divisions and furious quarrels at home—so we English, as if some abomination of desolation were coming on us also, scorn almost all Christianity but our own; and yet have, not one, but a hundred gospels among ourselves, and each of them with its own hot defenders.'

'There is Elam and all her multitude round about her grave, all of them slain, fallen by the sword, which caused their terror in the land of the living.'—Ezekiel xxxii. 24.

The Duke of Weimar told his friends always, 'To be of courage: this Napoleonism was *unjust*, a falsehood, and could not last. It is true doctrine. The heavier this Napoleon trampled on the world, holding it tyrannously down, the fiercer would the world's recoil against him be, one day. Injustice pays itself with frightful compound interest.—Carlyle, *Heroes*, vi.

References.—XXXIII. 1-20, 30, 33.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxxviii. No. 2286. XXXIII. 5.—*Ibid.* vol. iv. No. 165. XXXIII. 7.—A. Rowland, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxv. 1904, p. 324.

'If thou dost not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand.'—Ezekiel xxxiii. 8.

'My own notion is,' said Keble once, 'that clergymen generally have more to blame themselves for as to neglect in the way of example and the way of intercession than in the way of direct warning.'

'As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?'—Ezekiel xxxiii. 11.

This is the motto and text of Richard Baxter's *Appeal to the Unconverted*, at one part of which he breaks out thus:—

'*Turn ye.* . . . It is the voice of every affliction to call thee to make haste and turn. Sickness and pain cry, Turn; and poverty, and loss of friends, and every twig of the chastizing rod cry, Turn; and yet wilt thou not hearken to the call? These have come near thee and made thee feel; they have made thee groan, and can they not make thee turn?

'The very frame and nature of thy being itself beseaketh thy return. Why hast thou reason, but to rule thy flesh and serve thy Lord? Why hast thou an understanding soul, but to learn and know His will, and do it? Why hast thou a heart within thee, that can love, and fear, and desire, but that thou shouldst fear Him, and love Him, and desire after Him'?

References.—XXXIII. 11.—Bishop E. C. S. Gibson, *Messages from the Old Testament*, p. 194. J. Oswald Dykes, *Outlines of Sermons on the Old Testament*, p. 253. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxx. No. 1795. XXXIII. 14.—J. Baldwin Brown, *The Soul's Exodus and Pilgrimage*, p. 255. XXXIII. 30-33.—W. M. Punshon, *Outlines of Sermons on the Old Testament*, p. 259.

'Their heart goeth after their covetousness.'—Ezekiel xxxiii. 31.

It is almost incredible how the soul of these Semites is bound up with the prey of pennies.—C. M. Doughty, *Arabia Deserta*, i. p. 55.

'And, lo, Thou art unto them as a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument: for they hear Thy words, but they do them not.'—Ezekiel xxxiii. 32.

To seek no more than a present delight, that evanisheth with the sound of the words that die in the air, is not to desire the word as meat but as music, as God tells the Prophet Ezekiel. *And, lo, Thou art unto them as a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well upon an instrument: for they hear Thy words and they do them not.* . . . If anyone's head or tongue should grow apace, and all the rest stand at a stay, it would certainly make him a monster; and they are

no other, who are knowing and discoursing Christians, and grow daily in that respect, but not at all in holiness of heart and life, which is the proper growth of the children of God.—From COLERIDGE'S *Aids to Reflection.*

'DR. DOVE preach'd before the King,' is an entry in Evelyn's Diary for the reign of Charles II., immediately followed by the further comment: 'I saw this evening such a scene of profuse gaming, and the King in the midst of his three concubines, as I had never before seen. Luxurious dallying and profaneness.'

REFERENCES.—XXXIII. 32.—J. H. Thom, *Laws of Life* (2nd Series), p. 196. XXXIII. 32, 33.—R. Winterbotham, *Sermons and Expositions*, p. 87.

'When this cometh to pass (behold, it cometh), then shall they know that a prophet hath been among them.'—EZEKIEL XXXIII. 33.

IT seems hard to be generous, not easy even to be just to the times upon which our lot is cast. The very expression 'our present day' conveys with it something of disparagement, implying a contrast with other ages in whose very silence we find an eloquence rebuking the clamour that surrounds us. Yet much that we now look on as prosaic, and perhaps decry as unreal, if read as history would enchain our imaginations; if spoken as prophecy would stir our very souls. Future chroniclers will make it their wisdom to decipher the Runes we are now dinting, and will understand their import better than we who leave them on the rocks.—DORA GREENWELL.

As a rule, people discover a man to be worth listening to only after he is gone; their *hear, hear!* resounds when the orator has left the platform.—SCHOPENHAUER.

THE voice comes deepest from the sepulchre, and a great name hath its root in the dead body. If you invited a company to a feast, you might as well place round the table live sheep and oxen and vases of fish and cages of quails, as you would invite a company of friendly hearers to the philosopher who is yet living. One would imagine that the iris of our intellectual eye were lessened by the glory of his presence, and that, like eastern kings, he could be looked at near only when his limbs are stiff, by wax-light, in close curtains.—LANDOR.

'Thus saith the Lord God: Woe unto the shepherds of Israel that do feed themselves! should not the shepherds feed the sheep?'—EZEKIEL XXXIV. 12.

THE keen sarcasms of Erasmus, the insolent buffoonery of Hutton, were lavished on the 'lovers of darkness' and of the cloister. In England Colet and More echoed with greater reserve the scorn and invective of their friends. As an outlet for religious enthusiasm, indeed, monasticism was practically dead. The friar, now that his fervour of devotion and his intellectual energy had passed away, had sunk into the mere beggar. The monks had become mere landowners. Most of their houses were anxious only to enlarge their revenues and to diminish the number of those who shared them. . . . It was acknowledged that about a third of the religious houses, including the bulk of the large abbeys, were fairly and decently conducted. The rest were charged with drunkenness, with simony, and with the foulest and most revolting crimes.'—J. R. GREEN, *Short History of the English People*, chap. VI.

'Ye clothe you with the wool . . . but ye feed not the flock.'—EZEKIEL XXXIV. 3.

'IN the eyes of the living generation,' wrote Mrs. Browning in the preface to her poems, 'the poet is at once a richer and poorer man than he used to be; he wears better hood cloth, but speaks no more oracles.'

REFERENCE.—XXXIV. 3.—Jesse Butt, *The Soul's Escape*, p. 158.

'The diseased have ye not strengthened, neither have ye healed that which was sick, neither have ye bound up that which was broken, neither have ye brought again that which was driven away, neither have ye sought that which was lost.'—EZEKIEL XXXIV. 4.

'WE had a chaplain at the bagne,' says Jean Valjean the ex-convict in *Les Misérables* (chap. I.), 'and one day I saw a bishop, Monseigneur, as they call him. He is the curé over the curés. He said mass in the middle of the bagne at an altar, and had a pointed gold thing on his head, which glistened in the bright sunshine; we were drawn up on three sides of a square, with guns and lighted matches facing us. He spoke, but was too far off, and we did not hear him. That is what a bishop is.'

THE RESPONSIBILITY OF OFFICE

'Thus saith the Lord God; Behold, I am against the shepherds; and I will require My flock at their hand, and cause them to cease from feeding the flock; neither shall the shepherds feed themselves any more; for I will deliver My flock from their mouth, that they may not be meat for them.'—EZEKIEL XXXIV. 10.

IN ancient times, as we find in Homer, it was customary to liken the people of a nation to sheep, and their rulers and leaders to shepherds. The title in its primary sense refers to kings and great leaders, yet by implication it may be taken for all who hold office, whether secular or ecclesiastical.

I. In considering the responsibilities of office, we must have in mind the source from which all authority flows. From every point of view that source is God Himself; for when St. Paul makes the statement, 'The powers that be are ordained of God,' he deduces it from the primary truth, 'There is no power but of God'.

1. This is true because God's providence so orders the circumstances of individuals in this world as practically to determine who shall be in positions of authority.

2. The gifts of mind and advantages of circumstance which enable us to hold positions of authority are bestowed upon us by God.

We are reminded by the Prophet that God can at any time remove the unfaithful servant, and that He will do so if it seem good to Him.

There is the account to be given, 'I will require My flock at their hand'.

II. The duties of an ideal ruler are described in the latter part of the chapter, where God assumes the title of 'Shepherd' for Himself, and afterwards foretells the setting up of the kingdom of the Good Shepherd, our Lord Jesus Christ. Notice three of them:—

1. *The seeking out of the sheep who are scattered.*

2. *Feed the flock.* This does not only mean feeding of the body, but of the mind and of the soul.

3. *Protecting those under our care.*

III. Our attention is drawn to some of the sins of a bad ruler:—

1. His principal sin is generally selfishness. He rules for his own benefit, not for the benefit of those who are entrusted to his care.

2. Neglect of the flock.

3. Positive oppression and cruelty.—A. G. Mortimer, *The Church's Lessons for the Christian Year*, part iv. p. 276.

References.—XXXIV. 11, 12, 16.—R. E. Hutton, *The Crown of Christ*, vol. ii. p. 93.

FEEDING HIS FLOCK

'I will feed My Flock.'—Ezekiel xxxiv. 15.

The Lord's feeding of His children is tenderly discriminating, and to bring us to maturity He uses very varied breads. Glance at two or three of the breads which are mentioned in the Sacred Word.

I. '*I will feed thee in a good pasture*,' saith the Lord. There are sweet and beautiful seasons, when life ceases to be a noisy tumultuous river, when it settles down into 'still waters,' and we are blessed with quiet visions which come as Heaven's bread. The Lord is feeding us in a 'fat pasture,' giving us meat in due season.

II. '*I will feed thee with the bread of tears.*' Tears as bread: I do not think it means the tears that we shed because of our own griefs, but tears shed because of the griefs of others. These tears constitute bread, and enlarge our souls. Sympathy is feeding. It has sometimes happened that a whole family has been fed by the presence of an invalid child. 'When Jesus therefore saw her weeping, He groaned in the spirit, and was troubled.' Our Saviour was being fed with 'the bread of tears!'

III. '*I will feed thee with the bread of adversity*'; not only with sympathy for the griefs of others, but with personal grief of thine own. The bread of hardness! Do we not all know the experience in common life? How often we say to one another, in describing some personal experience: 'Yes, I felt it very hard'. We were eating the bread of hardness. 'We have toiled all night, and taken nothing!' 'Endure hardness as good soldiers of Jesus Christ;' endure hardness, and so become still better soldiers of Jesus Christ.

'I will feed My flock.' The good Lord has many breads. 'Give us this day our daily bread.'—J. H. Jowett, *Meditations for Quiet Moments*, p. 14.

'I will seek that which was lost, and will bring again that which was driven away, and will bind up that which was broken, and will strengthen that which was sick.'—Ezekiel xxxiv. 16.

By the River Side in the Meadow there were Cotes and Folds for sheep, an House built for the nourishing and bringing up of those Lambs, the Babes of those Women that go on Pilgrimage. Also there was here one intrusted with them who could have Compassion, and that could gather these Lambs with his Arm and carry them in his Bosom, and that could gently lead those that were with young. Now to the care of this Man Christiana admonished her four Daughters to commit their little ones, that by these waters they might be housed, harboured, suckered, and nourished, and that none of them might be lacking in time to come. This Man, if any of them go astray or be lost, he will bring them again; he will also bind up that which is broken, and will strengthen them that are sick. Here they will never want Meat and Drink and Cloathing, here they will be kept from Thieves and Robbers, for this Man will die before one of those committed to his trust shall be lost.—Bunyan, *Pilgrim's Progress*, part ii.

'Seemeth it a small thing unto you . . . to have drunk of the clear waters, but ye must foul the residue with your feet?'—Ezekiel xxxiv. 18.

Thus they went on, till they came at the foot of the Hill Difficulty, when again their good friend Mr. Greatheart took an occasion to tell them of what happened there when Christian himself went by. So he led them first to the Spring. Lo, saith he, this is the Spring that Christian drank of before he went up this Hill, and then 'twas clear and good, but now 'tis dirty with the feet of some that are not desirous that Pilgrims here should quench their thirst.—Bunyan, *Pilgrim's Progress*, part ii.

'Ye thrust with side and with shoulder, and pushed all the diseased with your horns.'—Ezekiel xxxiv. 21.

Bunyan once more recurs to this chapter in the second part of *The Pilgrim's Progress*, when he is describing the reception of the pilgrims by the Shepherds of the Delectable Mountains. 'Then said the Shepherds, you are welcome to us, for we have comfort for the feeble as for the strong. Our prince has an eye to what is done to the least of these, therefore Infirmity must not be a block to our Entertainment. So they had them to the Palace-Door, and then said unto them, come in Mr. Feeble-Mind, come in Mr. Ready-to-Halt, come in Mr. Despondency, and Mrs. Much Afraid his daughter. These, Mr. Greatheart, said the Shepherds to the Guide, we call in by name, for that they are most subject to draw back, but as for you and the rest that are strong, we leave you to your wonted liberty. Then said Mr. Greatheart, This day I see that Grace doth shine in your Faces, and that you are my Lord's Shepherds indeed; for that you have not pushed these diseased neither with side nor shoulder, but have rather strewed their way into the Palace with Flowers, as you should.'

Reference.—XXXIV. 23.—R. E. Hutton, *The Crown of Christ*, vol. ii. p. 295.

'There shall be showers of blessing.'—Ezekiel xxxiv. 26.

When the one Shepherd is set over them, even He who shall stand (oh how much do we lie!) and feed in the strength of the Lord, the isles (and this the greatest of them), which wait for His law, are to look for that: and I will make them and the places round about My hill a blessing; and I will cause the shower to come down in his season; there shall *be showers of blessing*. How desirable must every drop of such a shower be! . . . But *when* this shall be in Scotland (and it must be) is better to believe than prophecy; and quietly to hope and sit still (for that is yet our strength) than to quarrel with Him, that the wheels of His chariot move leisurely.—Samuel Rutherford.

SHOWERS OF BLESSING

'There shall be showers of blessing.'—Ezekiel xxxiv. 26.

This word 'blessing' is one which belongs strictly to the vocabulary of religion. Irreligious people do not speak about blessing.

I. The copiousness of the blessing. If the will and love of God could have free course, there would be showers of blessing. The obstacle which hinders is in ourselves. Have you never, when enjoying any of the simple pleasures of nature, reflected with surprise on how little they are taken advantage of? It is so with the blessing of God, so near and yet so far on account of our negligence. How few cultivate sources of blessings—prayer, study of Bible, a whiter holiness, more spiritual power.

II. Its timeliness—'to come down in its season'. This refers to the temporal blessing of the early and the latter rain, but it has a wider scope. Blessing of every kind comes in its season—in the time of need when the hearts of men are sighing for it. This is God's season for which He waits. In ordinary life it is the little extra which makes all the difference between the weak and the strong man—health, capital, art. May Christians heed this little more. It is near at hand; one act of surrender and it is yours.

III. The diffusiveness of God's blessing—'the places round about'. To be a Christian is to be so filled with the life of God that the vessel runs over, and all round about get the benefit. This is a severe test. Can you stand it?—James Stalker, *The Sermon Year Book*, 1891, p. 317.

References.—XXXIV. 26.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. i. No. 28. J. Monro Gibson, *A Strong City*, p. 243. XXXIV. 27.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxv. No. 1462. XXXIV. 30, 31.—*Ibid.* xxx. No. 1807.

'Because thou hast had a perpetual enmity, and hast given over the children of Israel to the power of the sword in the time of their calamity, therefore, as I live, saith the Lord, I will prepare thee unto blood.'—Ezekiel xxxv. 5, 6.

See Dickens's description of France, in the first chapter of *The Tale of Two Cities:* 'Under the guidance of her Christian pastors, she entertained herself with such humane achievements as sentencing a youth to have his hands cut off, his tongue torn out with pincers, and his body burned alive, because he had not kneeled down in the rain to do honour to a dirty procession of monks which passed within his view, at a distance of some fifty or sixty yards. It is likely enough that, rooted in the woods of France and Norway, there were growing trees, when that sufferer was put to death, already marked by the Woodman, Fate, to come down and be sawn into boards, to make a certain movable framework with a sack and a knife in it, terrible in history. It is likely enough that in the rough outhouses of some tillers of the heavy lands adjacent to Paris, there were sheltered from the weather that very day, rude carts, bespattered with rustic mire, snuffed about by pigs, and roosted in by poultry, which the Farmer, Death, had already set apart to be his tumbrils of the Revolution. But that Woodman and that Farmer, though they work unceasingly, work silently.'

For me there was but one sin, and that was cruelty, because I hated it; though Nature, for some inscrutable purpose of her own, almost teaches it as a virtue. All sins that did not include cruelty were merely sins against health or taste or common-sense or public expediency.—George du Maurier in *Peter Ibbetson*.

References.—XXXV. 10.—Spurgeon *Sermons*, vol. ix. No. 536. XXXVI. 9.—*Ibid.* vol. lii. No. 3001.

THE OUTLOOK OF THE OPTIMIST

'I will do better unto you than at your beginnings.'—Ezekiel xxxvi. 11.

To this doctrine which our text embodies might be given the name of prophetic optimism. There is an optimism that is temperamental. And then there is a very shallow optimism that is happy because it is half blind. I need hardly tell you that prophetic optimism is never based upon deliberate ignorance. It is based on the fact that underneath all change are the arms of the everlasting God.

I. This same feature—this strong and virile optimism—is found in the teaching of the Lord Jesus Christ, but the changes He wrought in it, and the new application He gave it, are a striking example of how He fulfilled the prophets. To Ezekiel, the basis of optimism is God's sovereignty; but to Jesus, the basis of optimism is God's love. To Ezekiel, the brighter future is for Israel, but in the teaching of Christ it is for one wandering child. It is because God is our Father and we are His children, that He will do better unto us than at the beginning.

II. I am quite aware that in actual experience the message of our text seems often contradicted. If our text had said, I shall make thee *happier* than at thy beginnings, there might have been some ground for quarrelling with Scripture; but our text says, I shall do *better* for thee, and that is a very different thing.

Think of the life of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is a signal instance of the fulfilment of this promise in the teeth of much that seems to contradict it. We recognize that the straight road to kingship was through the misery and woe of Calvary.

III. Notice too that here, in the sharpest manner, the leadership of evil differs from that of God. It is one strange mark of everything that is evil, that its to-morrow leaves us worse than yesterday. The truth is that sin would have no power save for the fact that its beginnings are very sweet. Had it been harsh or repulsive at the outset, the world would never have needed a Redeemer.

IV. I like to think, too, that our text holds good of all the social relationships of life when these are based on God. It is not only to us as individuals but to us in the tender comradeships of earth, that God says, I will do better unto you than at your beginnings.

Let us never forget that our whole life is really a beginning. To me life is inexplicable and meaningless—unfair, unequal, unbalanced, and unjust—unless we are to carry on elsewhere the task which here with such toil and tears we have begun.—G. H. Morrison, *The Unlighted Lustre*, p. 244.

References. — XXXVI. 11. — Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxxvi. No. 2125. XXXVI. 16, 17.—T. Guthrie, *The Gospel in Ezekiel*, p. 1. XXXVI. 17.—*Ibid.* pp. 24, 44. XXXVI. 18, 19.—*Ibid.* pp. 63, 83. XXXVI. 23, 24.—T. Guthrie, *The Gospel in Ezekiel*, pp. 141, 155, 171. XXXVI. 24.—*Ibid.* p. 190. XXXVI. 25.—*Ibid.* pp. 211, 231. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxxii. No. 1921. XXXVI. 25, 26, 27.—T. De Witt Talmage, *Sermons*, p. 138. XXXVI. 25-31.—S. Baring-Gould, *Sermon-Sketches*, p. 70. XXXVI. 25-38.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture*, *Ezekiel*, p. 19.

A NEW HEART

'A new heart also will I give you.'—Ezekiel xxxvi. 26.

I. **The Great Gift.**—The heart is the nature in the sacred terminology of this text. God promises a new inner nature to His people.

1. This is *a needed gift.* The heart is the root and fount of all things. With what finality and power our Lord described the fundamentality of the heart! 'out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, railings'. And the Bible is equally thorough in all its teachings. Always its deep solicitude is concerning the heart. Hence all manner and types of heart are described in Scripture: a 'wicked heart,' a 'pure heart,' a 'true heart,' a 'broken heart,' a 'clean heart,' a 'perfect heart'.

We see, too, the deep necessity of this gift when we realize our sinfulness. In this very verse, God delineates our heart as it now is. He describes it as a 'stony' heart. Bishop Lightfoot in pathetic apostrophe speaks of 'my sullied heart,' and he speaks for us all.

2. A new heart can only come as *a Divine gift.* 'I' will give you it, saith Jehovah.

And what *a precious gift* this is! In a new heart lies the secret of a wealthy inner life. All generous impulses, all sublime ideals, all lofty and strenuous purposes depend upon a new heart.

The secret of a noble outer life lies here also. All outflowing of goodness is from this fountain alone.

3. It is *an assured gift.* God speaks without reservation. He says He '*will*' give it, and He will give it '*you*'. It is assured to all who desire it.

II. **The Great Giver's Mode of Bestowing this Gift.**

1. God delights to give *by promise.* Faith is God's stern and imperative and constant demand. To faith and faith alone His riches come. And yet faith itself is His gift—so entirely do we live under grace.

2. God gives this glorious gift *instrumentally.* He gives a new heart by means of *prayer.*

God gives this gift by *the Holy Spirit.* He says in the following verse, 'And I will put My spirit within you'. When we are 'born again' we are born of the Holy Spirit.

God gives this gift by means of *His Word.* But God also uses His Word as preached as an agency for the imparting of this gift. This is the supreme purpose of preaching.

Devout reading is often used of God for the giving of a new heart.

All the means of grace are sanctified of God to the same noble purpose.

By *very varied means* God fulfils His Word and gives His people a new heart. Do not limit the Holy One of Israel to what are accustomedly called the means of grace.—Dinsdale T. Young, *The Travels of the Heart*, p. 253.

References.—XXXVI. 26.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. iv. No. 212; vol. viii. No. 456; vol. xix. No. 1129. Bishop J. Percival, *Sermons at Rugby*, p. 169. Canon Fleming, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xli. 1892, p. 219. T. Guthrie, *The Gospel in Ezekiel*, pp. 255, 276, 295. XXXVI. 26, 27.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xviii. No. 1046. R. E. Hutton, *The Crown of Christ*, vol. ii. p. 75. XXXVI. 27.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. v. No. 251; vol. xxxvii. No. 2200; vol. liii. No. 3048. T. Guthrie, *The Gospel in Ezekiel*, pp. 322, 339. XXXVI. 28, 29, 30.—*Ibid.* p. 381.

'Then shall ye remember your own evil ways, and shall loathe yourselves in your own sight.'—Ezekiel xxxvi. 31.

This I found my Soul's desire, even to cast itself at the foot of Grace, by Prayer and Supplication. But, oh! 'twas hard for me now to bare the Face, to pray to this Christ for mercy, against whom I had thus most vilely sinned. 'Twas hard work, I say, to offer to look Him in the face against whom I had so vilely sinned; and, indeed, I have found it as difficult to come to God by prayer, after back-sliding from Him, as to do any other thing.—Bunyan, *Grace Abounding*, p. 175.

For we endure the tender pain of pardon.—Mrs. Meynell.

References.—XXXVI. 31.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xlvii. No. 2743. W. L. Watkinson, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxix. 1906, p. 342. XXXVI. 32.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. v. No. 233. XXXVI. 36.—T. Guthrie, *The Gospel in Ezekiel*, p. 397.

'Thus saith the Lord God; For this moreover will I be enquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them.'—Ezekiel xxxvi. 37.

In the second part of *The Pilgrim's Progress*, Reliever encourages the women to proceed: 'To go

back again you need not; for in all places where you shall come, you will find no want at all, for in every of my Lord's Lodgings which He has prepared for the reception of His Pilgrims, there is sufficient to furnish them against all attempts whatsoever. But as I said, He will be enquired of by them to do it for them; and 'tis a poor thing that is not worth asking for.'

REFERENCES.—XXXVI. 37.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. iii. No. 138. T. Guthrie, *The Gospel in Ezekiel*, p. 419. XXXVI. 37, 38.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxii. No. 1307. C. Perren, *Revival Sermons in Outline*, p. 171. XXXVII. 1.—C. Brown, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxxi. 1907, p. 280. XXXVII. 1-10.—J. Laidlaw, *Studies in the Parables*, p. 205. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. x. No. 582. XXXVII. 1-14.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—Ezekiel*, p. 26. J. McNeill, *Regent Square Pulpit*, vol. iii. p. 97.

'And behold, there were very many in the open valley; and, lo, they were very dry.'—EZEKIEL XXXVII. 2.

DEAN STANLEY, in the introduction to his *Eastern Church*, observes: 'It is sometimes said, that of all historical studies that of Ecclesiastical History is the most repulsive. We seem to be set down in the valley of the Prophet's vision—strewn with bones, and behold they are very many and very dry: skeletons of creeds, of churches, of institutions; trodden and traversed by the feet of travellers again and again; craters of extinct volcanoes, which once filled the world with their noise, and are now dead and cold.'

'And he said to me, Son of man, can these bones live? And I answered, O Lord God, Thou knowest.'—EZEKIEL XXXVII. 3.

THAT vision of the dry bones . . . perhaps is the best-known passage of the Old Testament. 'Son of man, can these dry bones live?' must have often been the self-questioning of Ezekiel, and when he thought on the shattered nation he could give no answer more confident than the conviction, 'O Lord God, Thou knowest'.—MISS WEDGWOOD.

THINK of the sublimity, I should rather say the profundity, of that passage in Ezekiel, *Son of man, can these bones live? and I answered, O Lord God, Thou knowest.* I know nothing like it.—COLERIDGE, *Table-Talk.*

DESCRIBING Dr. Donne's preaching in London during his last illness, Izaak Walton remarks that 'when, to the amazement of some beholders, he appeared in the pulpit, many of them thought he presented himself not to preach mortification by a living voice, but mortality by a dying body. And doubtless many did ask that question in Ezekiel, 'Do these bones live? or, can that soul organize that tongue, to speak so long time as the sand in that glass will move toward its centre, and measure out an hour of this dying man's unspent life? Doubtless it cannot.' And yet after some pauses in his zealous prayer, his strong desires enabled his weak body to discharge his memory of his preconceived meditations, which were of dying; the text being, 'To God the Lord belong the issues from death.'"

REFERENCES.—XXXVII. 3.—W. Lee, *University Sermons*, p. 187. G. S. Barrett, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xliii. 1893, p. 267. P. T. Forsyth, *ibid.* vol. lxi. 1902, p. 312. H. P. Liddon, *Outlines of Sermons on the Old Testament*, p. 260. J. Mitchinson, *Can the Dry Bones Live, Sermons*, 1881-88.

'Behold a shaking, and the bones came together, bone to bone.'—EZEKIEL XXXVII. 7.

EVERY shaking among the bones, everything which seems at first a sign of terror—men leaving the churches in which they have been born, forsaking all the affections and sympathies and traditions of their childhood—infidel questionings, doubts whether the world is left to itself or whether it is governed by an evil spirit—are themselves not indeed signs of life, but at least movements in the midst of death which are better than the silence of the charnel-house, which foretell the approach of that which they cannot produce.—F. D. MAURICE.

SPEAKING, in the tenth chapter of *Chartism*, of the vice and misery in country districts of England, Carlyle cries: 'Ah, it is bitter jesting on such a subject. One's heart is sick to look at the dreary chaos and valley of Jehoshaphat, scattered with the limbs and souls of one's fellow-men; and no Divine voice, only croaking of hungry vultures, inarticulate, bodeful ravens, horn-eyed parrots, that do articulate, proclaiming, Let these bones live!'

REFERENCE.—XXXVII. 7.—C. Perren, *Revival Sermons in Outline*, p. 341.

Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live.'—EZEKIEL XXXVII. 9.

WHAT precise meaning we ought to attach to expressions such as that of the prophecy to the four winds that the dry bones might be breathed upon, and might live, or why the presence of the vital power should be dependent on the chemical action of the air, and its awful passing away materially signified by the rendering up of that breath or ghost, we cannot at present know, and need not at any time dispute. What we assuredly know is that the states of life and death are different, and the first more desirable than the other, and by effort attainable, whether we understand 'born of the spirit' to signify having the breath of heaven in our flesh, or its power in our hearts.—RUSKIN in *The Queen of the Air*, § 55.

'ABOUT noon, Friday 5th, I called on William Row, in Breage, on my way to Newlyn. "Twelve years ago," he said, "I was going over Gulval Downs, and I saw many people together; and I asked what was the matter; and they told me a man was going to preach: and I said, To be sure it is some mazed man, but when I saw you I said, Nay, this is no mazed man: and you preached on God's raising the dry bones; and from that time I could never rest till God was pleased to breathe on me and raise my dead soul."'—WESLEY'S *Journal* for 1755.

REFERENCES.—XXXVII. 9.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxxviii. No. 2246. H. Scott Holland, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxi. 1902, p. 33. W. H. Hutchings, *Sermon-Sketches*

(2nd Series), p. 296. XXXVII. 9, 10.—R. C. Trench, *Sermons New and Old*, p. 219. W. Howell Evans, *Sermons for the Church's Year*, p. 146.

'And the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood up on their feet, an exceeding great army.'—EZEKIEL XXXVII. 10.

WE seem to have in some degree lost a principle of cohesion between the work done and the work doing; and thus the events with which the Gospel narrative makes us acquainted, instead of being, every one of them, 'very nigh' to us, bound up and interleaved within the volume of our personal experience, have to be fetched, as we want them, from the remote distance where they lie, like the bones in the valley of prophetic vision, dry and sapless, detached from each other, and from all connexion with the life that we are now living upon earth. When we receive along with each of these facts the sign that was given to Moses, and learn that it is I AM which hath sent it to us, a breath of life is infused within all that has been formal and historical; across the statements of the letter, of which, taken singly and apart, we may have said that 'they are very dry,' a spirit passes, they *come together*, and behold they live, and stand up on their feet an exceeding great army, fighting for and with us in the battle.—DORA GREENWELL, *A Present Heaven*, pp. 53, 54.

'Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel: behold, they say, our bones are dried up, and our hope is lost: we are clean cut off. Therefore prophesy, and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God; Behold, I will open your graves, and cause you to come up out of your graves, O my people.'—EZEKIEL XXXVII. 11, 12.

No right and no power to disbelieve in the arm of Hercules or the voice of Jesus can rationally remain with those who have seen Garibaldi take a kingdom into the hollow of his hand, and not one man but a whole nation rise from the dead at the sound of the word of Mazzini.—SWINBURNE, *A Study of Victor Hugo*, p. 113.

REFERENCE.—XXXVII. 11, 12, 13.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxviii. No. 1676.

'Behold, I will take the stick of Joseph, which is in the hand of Ephraim, and the tribes of Israel his fellows, and will put them with him, even with the stick of Judah, and make them one stick.'—EZEKIEL XXXVII. 19.

COMPARE the closing sentences of Tolstoy's *What is Art?* 'Universal art, by uniting the most different people in one common feeling, by destroying separation, will educate people to union, will show them, not by reason but by life itself, the joy of universal union reaching beyond the bounds set by life. The destiny of art in our time is to transmit from the realm of reason to the realm of feeling the truth that well-being for man consists in being united together, and to set up, in place of the existing reign of force, that kingdom of God, i.e. of love, which we all recognize to be the highest aim of human life. Possibly, in the future, science may reveal to art yet new and higher ideals, which art may realize; but, in our time, the destiny of art is clear and definite. The task for Christian art is to establish brotherly union among men.'

'Behold, I will take the children of Israel from among the heathen, whither they be gone . . . and I will make them one nation, in the land upon the mountains of Israel; and one king shall be king to them all . . . and David My servant shall be king over them . . . My tabernacle also shall be with them: yea, I will be their God, and they shall be My people.'—EZEKIEL XXXVII. 21-27.

AFTER quoting this passage, Miss Wedgwood, in *The Message of Israel* (pp. 231 f.) observes: 'The words belong to that region of vast soothing hope which seems akin to the influence of music. All that is pathetic, all that is tragic in history, seems gathered up in the mere existence of such aspirations, and the consciousness that they were futile as far as human eye can see. But national aspirations soar into the region where they become as it were luminous, and cast their glow even on the fate they have not had the strength to mould. "Desire of heaven itself is heaven," says a poet of our own day, and the vision of a united Israel seems almost to justify the exaggeration, if exaggeration it be. The glowing hopes expressed in this passage are evidently as the bow in the cloud—a gleam upon a gloomy background.'

VICTOR HUGO also, in his *Shakespeare* (chap. II.), after quoting from the prophecy of the Wind and the Bones, cites this twenty-seventh verse loosely, and then asks: 'Is not everything there? Search for a higher formula, you will not find it: a free man under a sovereign God. This visionary eater of filth is a resuscitator. Ezekiel has offal on his lips, and the sun in his eyes.'

THE first act of theft, falsehood, or other immorality, is an event in the life of the perpetrator which he never forgets. It may often happen that no account can be given of it; that there is nothing in the education, nor in the antecedents of the person, that would lead us, or even himself, to suspect it. In the weaker sort of natures, especially, suggestions of evil spring up we cannot tell how.—JOWETT.

REFERENCE.—XXXVIII. 11, 12.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons on the Prophets*, vol. ii. p. 44.

'Because they trespassed against Me, therefore hid I My face from them.'—EZEKIEL XXXIX. 23.

A THOROUGHLY immoral *man* could not know anything at all! To know a thing, what we can call knowing, a man must first *love* the thing, sympathize with it; that is, be *virtuously* related to it. If he have not the justice to put down his own selfishness at every turn, the courage to stand by the dangerous line at every turn, how shall he know? His virtues, all of them, will lie recorded in his knowledge. Nature, with her truth, remains to the bad, to the selfish, and the pusillanimous person a sealed book: what such can know of Nature is mean, superficial, small; for the use of the day merely.—CARLYLE, *Heroes*, III.

EVERY duty we omit obscures some truth we should have known.—RUSKIN.

REFERENCES.—XXXIX. 25.—C. A. Marshall, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xlii. 1892, p. 394. XL. 2, 3.—W. W. Battershall, *Interpretations of Life and Religion*, p. 127.

'A man with a line of flax in his hand, and a measuring reed.'
—EZEKIEL XL. 3.

SPEAKING, in *Frondes Agrestes* (§ 57), of humility and love as associated with the symbolism of the reed in Scripture, Ruskin invites his readers to 'observe the confirmation of these last two images in, I suppose, the most important prophecy, relating to the future state of the Christian Church, which occurs in the Old Testament, namely, that contained in the closing chapters of Ezekiel. The measures of the Temple of God are to be taken; and because it is only by charity and humility that those measures ever can be taken, the angel has "a line of *flax* in his hand, and a measuring reed". The use of the line was to measure the land, and of the reed to take the dimensions of the buildings; so the buildings of the Church, or its labours, are to be measured by humility; and its territory, or land, by love.'

'To the intent that I might shew them unto thee art thou brought hither: declare all that thou seest to the house of Israel.'—EZEKIEL XL. 4.

NONE can move this world unless he stands upon another.—COVENTRY PATMORE.

THE objective element has its place, and a very large place, too, in Christian preaching; the minister of the Gospel, announces the Gospel; he has to relate not his own private history, but the wonders of God; only, he relates these with his own soul; it is on that soul, as on a living focus, that the rays of truth fall, to strike thence on other souls; and these truths, which ought to have become a part of himself, reach his hearers as an emanation of his being, real and personal at the same time, objective and subjective. —VINET.

ALL important truths have been the result of solitary effort. None have been discovered by masses of people—it is fair to suppose they never will.—BECKFORD.

REFERENCE.—XL. 4.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxvii. No. 1578.

'Afterward he brought me to the temple.'—EZEKIEL XLI. 1.

NEITHER Jesus Christ, nor Luther and Knox, when they proclaimed the downfall of a corrupt hierarchy, thought of establishing society, by way of reform, upon a secular basis. All alike treated the system they attacked as the perversion of something good and sacred, all alike substituted another Church for that which they destroyed. Our modern reformers who wish to hand over what they take from the Church to the State are of a different type. They are of those who do not understand that there must always be a Church, organized or not, where there is a human society. These are like children, who confound air, the most necessary of realities, with vacuum or nothing at all.—PROF. SEELEY.

Do not be misled so as to suppose that science and the intellect are or can be the sources of social progress or change. It is the moral births and outgrowths that originate; science and the intellect only give form to these. It is a common notion, and one apparently gaining ground, that science may, as it were, take society by the hand, and become its high priest, and guide to a glorious kingdom. And this to a certain extent is true. Science may become high priest, but the result of its priestly offices will entirely depend on what kind of a deity it represents —what kind of a god society worships. Science will doubtless become its guide, but whither it leads society will entirely depend on whither society desires to be led.—EDWARD CARPENTER, *England's Ideal*, p. 67.

REFERENCE.—XLI. 7.—H. W. Webb-Peploe, *Calls to Holiness*, p. 75.

'And, behold, the glory of the God of Israel came from the way of the east: and the earth shined with his glory.'—EZEKIEL XLIII. 2.

MR. AUGUSTUS HARE, in *Memorials of a Quiet Life*, quotes a passage from his mother's diary, in which, after writing down this verse, she adds: 'Yes, with the glory of the God of Israel. In itself it was dark and lifeless; but when the glory of the God of Israel arose out of the East, even as the Sun of Righteousness, then the earth reflected His bright shining, and became glorious through His light resting upon it. So have I seen on a bright sunshiny morning at Hurstmonceaux, the line of the sea lit up by the beams of the morning sun, and shining with an almost dazzling brightness in a glory not its own. . . . There is no holiness, no loveliness in man of himself —no, not in regenerate man. His beauty is a beauty wrought in him, and shining over him, through means of the Blessed Fountain of Light.'

REFERENCES.—XLIII. 2.—Newman Smith, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xlv. 1894, p. 243. Bishop Welldon, *ibid.* vol. xlviii. 1895, p. 250.

'Shew the house to the house of Israel . . . shew them the form of the house, and the fashion thereof.'—EZEKIEL XLIII. 10, 11.

'MY very dear brother,' wrote Samuel Rutherford to a young correspondent, 'ye are heartily welcome to my world of suffering, and heartily welcome to my Master's house. God give you much joy of your new Master. If I have been in the house before you, I were not faithful to give the house an ill name, or to speak evil of the Lord of the family; I rather wish God's Holy Spirit (O Lord, breathe upon me with that Spirit!) to tell you the fashions of the house. One thing I can say, that by our waiting, ye will grow a great man with the Lord of the house.'

'THE great deeds of philosophers,' says Huxley, 'have been less the fruit of their intellect than of the direction of that intellect by an eminently religious tone of mind. Truth has yielded itself rather to their patience, their love, their single-heartedness, and their self-denial, than to their logical acumen.'

'MERE culture of the intellect (and education as usually conducted amounts to little more) is hardly at all operative upon conduct. Intellect is not a power, but an instrument—not a thing which itself

moves and works, but a thing which is moved and worked by forces behind it. To say that men are ruled by reason is as irrational as to say that men are ruled by their eyes. Reason *is* an eye—the eye through which the desires see their way to gratification, and educating it only makes it a better eye—gives it a vision more accurate and comprehensive—does not at all alter the desires subserved by it. However far-seeing you make it, the passion will still determine the directions in which it shall be turned—the objects on which it shall dwell.'—SPENCER.

'If they be ashamed of all that they have done, shew them the form of the house, and the fashion thereof.'—EZEKIEL XLIII. 11.

THE idea of a spiritual society could not unfold itself to them while they were living in a heartless, divided, self-righteous state. They must be humbled before they could feel the possibility of such a society; still more before they could confess it to be real. The hindrance to the discernment of it was not an intellectual one; it was not that they wanted the intuition and the foresight of the Prophet; it was wholly moral.—F. D. MAURICE.

INSIGHT, sound, clear vision of the truth, wisdom at once piercing and comprehensive, the noblest and divinest achievements of the reason, demand serenity of soul as their imperative condition. Passion clouds the mental eye; emotion disturbs the organ of discovery; as the astronomer can only rely upon his nicest and loftiest observations when the air is still and the telescope is isolated from all the tremulous movements of terrestrial surroundings, so the thinker can only see justly and penetrate far, when all that could agitate his spirit is buried deep, or put quite away, or laid eternally to rest. The conscience must slumber either in conscious innocence or in recognized forgiveness; the aspirations and desires must be calm, simple, and chastened.—W. RATHBONE GREG.

'This is the law of the house; upon the top of the mountain the whole limit thereof round about shall be holy.'—EZEKIEL XLIII. 12.

THE once wealthy captives by the River Chebar were desiring to restore a society in which they should have the full swing of their tastes and appetites, and plenty of slaves to minister to them. And the false priests and false prophets were ready enough to encourage this opinion. *They* would have the fat of their sacrifices, they would have their obedient troop of female devotees to help them to hunt souls. All should come back again just as it was before; the same vanity, insolence, falsehood, devilry. That would be their mode of reviving a Divine society. But Ezekiel tells them it shall not be so at all.—F. D. MAURICE.

COMPARE Prof. Royce's satirical description (*The Spirit of Modern Philosophy*, p. 446) of a certain other type of mind to which 'there are no evils in society except competition and poverty, which will both cease so soon as we by chance fall to loving one another, and to owning the property of the nation in common. Crime is not a result of anything deep in human nature; selfishness is a mere incident of a defective social system. . . . Satan is mainly an invention of false theories of political economy. A single tax system, or a nationalized labour army, would end the sorrows of mankind.'

REFERENCES.—XLIII. 12.—H. W. Webb-Peploe, *Calls to Holiness*, p. 75. W. L. Watkinson, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lii. 1897, p. 49. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxvii. No. 1618. XLIII. 13.—J. Parker, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xliv. 1893, p. 225; see also vol. liv. 1898, p. 262.

'Let it suffice you of all your abominations.'—EZEKIEL XLIV. 6.

STILL I delayed to scorn and leave the bliss of earthly things. . . . Wretched, most wretched, I had begged chastity from Thee in my early youth, crying, 'Give me chastity, only not yet'. For I feared lest Thou shouldest hear me soon, and cure me soon of the disease of concupiscence, which I wished to have satisfied rather than extinguished.—AUGUSTINE, *Confessions*, VIII. 7.

'They shall bear their shame, and their abominations which they have committed. But I will make them keepers of the charge of the house.'—EZEKIEL XLIV. 13, 14.

THE comparison thought, that profit accrues to a life by the wise memory of its past shortcomings, is brought out in Sir Henry Taylor's *Notes on Life* (p. 112): 'When the consequences of an error are irremediable, how often are those who would animadvert upon it met with the admonition to "let the past be past": as if the past had no relations with the future; and as if the experience of our errors of judgment, and the inquisition into their sources, did not, by its very painfulness, effect the deepest cultivation of the understanding—that cultivation whereby what is irremediable is itself converted into a remedy.'

'Execute judgment and justice, take away your exactions from My people, saith the Lord God.'—EZEKIEL XLV. 9.

A GREAT writer has said that 'grace was beauty in action'. I say that justice is truth in action.—BEACONSFIELD.

REFERENCES.—XLVI. 9.—J. Leckie, *Sermons Preached at Ibrox*, p. 210. XLVI. 16.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons on the Prophets*, vol. ii. p. 54. XLVII. 1.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—Ezekiel*, p. 32. XLVII. 3, 4, 5.—F. B. Meyer, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lviii. 1900, p. 43.

'Afterwards he measured a thousand; and it was a river that I could not pass over; for the waters were risen; waters to swim in, a river that could not be passed over.'—EZEKIEL XLVII. 5.

I TELL you, sirs, you must not trust your own apprehensions nor judgments of the mercy of God; you do not know how He can cause it to abound: that which seems to be short and shrunk up to you, He can draw out and cause to abound exceedingly. . . . This therefore is a wonderful thing, and shall be wondered at to all eternity, that the river of mercy, that at first did seem to be but ancle-deep, should so rise and rise that at last it became 'waters to swim in, a river that could not be passed over'.—BUNYAN.

REFERENCES.—XLVII. 5.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xviii. No. 1054. XLVII. 6, 12.—H. Scott Holland, *Christian World*

Pulpit, vol. lxxi. 1907, p. 337; see also *Church Times*, vol. lvii. 1907, p. 655. XLVII. 8.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxxi. No. 1852.

'And it shall come to pass, that every thing that liveth, which moveth, whithersoever the rivers shall come, shall live.'—Ezekiel xlvii. 9.

In his famous Glasgow speech on Reform in 1866, John Bright closed by applying this passage, or reminiscences of it, to the great cause for which he pled. 'We believe in a Supreme Ruler of the Universe. We believe in His omnipotence; we believe and we humbly trust in His mercy. We know that the strongest argument which is used against that belief by those who reject it, is an argument drawn from the misery and the helplessness and the darkness of so many of our race, even in countries which call themselves civilized and Christian. Is not that the fact? If I believed that this misery and this helplessness and this darkness could not be touched or transformed, I myself should be driven to admit the almost overwhelming force of that argument; but I am convinced that just laws and an enlightened administration of them would change the face of the country. I believe that ignorance and suffering might be lessened to an incalculable extent, and that many an Eden, beauteous in flowers and rich in fruit, might be raised up in the waste wilderness which spreads before us. . . . That is our faith, that is our purpose, that is our cry—let us try the nation.'

'And there shall be a very great multitude of fish, because these waters shall come thither; for they shall be healed.' Ezekiel xlvii. 9.

Who is it that can live by grace? even none but those whose temper and constitution is suited to grace. Hence, as the grace of God is compared to a river, so those that live by grace are compared to fish; for that, as water is that element in which the fish liveth, so grace is that which is the life of the saint. Art thou a fish, man? Art thou a fish? Canst thou live in the water? Canst thou live always, and nowhere else but in the water? Is grace thy proper element.—Bunyan.

References.—XLVII. 9.—C. H. Parkhurst, *A Little Lower than the Angels*, p. 25.

'It shall bring forth new fruit every month, because the waters thereof issue from out of the sanctuary.'—Ezekiel xlvii. 12.

We have been severely enough taught (if we were willing to learn) that our civilization, considered as a splendid material fabric, is helplessly in peril without the spiritual police of sentiments or ideal feelings. And it is this invisible police, which we had need, as a community, strive to maintain in efficient force.—George Eliot, *Essays of Theophrastus Such*.

There is not a secular reform in the whole development of modern civilization which (if it is more than mechanical) has not drawn its inspiration from a religious principle. Infirmaries for the body have sprung out of pity to the soul; schools for the latter that free way may be opened to the spirit; sanitary laws, that the Diviner elements of human nature may not become incredible and hopeless from their foul environment. Nay what impulse would even science itself have had, if sustained only by the material utilities? what inspiring zeal, but for that secret wonder which feels the universe to be sacred, and is a virtual thirst for God?—Martineau.

'And by the river upon the bank thereof, shall grow all trees for meat . . . and the fruit thereof shall be for meat, and the leaf thereof for medicine.'—Ezekiel xlvii. 12.

Part of the poetical works of Young, those of Watts, and of Cowper, have placed them among the permanent benefactors of mankind; as owing to them there is a popular poetry which has imparted, and is destined to impart, the best sentiments to innumerable minds. Works of great poetical genius that should be thus faithful to true religion, might be regarded as trees by the side of that 'river of the water of life,' having in their fruit and foliage a virtue to contribute to 'the healing of the nations'.—John Foster, *On the Aversion of Men of Taste to Evangelical Religion*, chap. ix.

THE IDEAL CITY

'And the sanctuary shall be in the midst of it.'—Ezekiel xlviii. 8.

I. And the sanctuary shall be in the midst of it. This need not startle us unduly; we come here somewhat suddenly upon a great philosophy: this is how all things are moulded and ruled and blessed. It is so in the case of the individual heart. It is a poor life that has not the sanctuary in the midst of it; it may be invisible: God is a Spirit, and not to be seen; to see Him is to annihilate Him. How poor a life it would be without the unseen, the invisible, the throbbing, trembling life just inside a palpitating veil. What is our life? Is the altar its main ornament and its principal force? Is the altar the centre of our life, a centre without which there would be no life? Do we take all our laws from God, now on stone, now on flowers, now on drops of April rain? Do we live and move and have our being in God? You have no life if you have not the altar or sanctuary in the midst of your very heart; without that your life is a kind of haphazard game; you will try this and plunge into that and adventure the other.

II. Think of a house without a sanctuary in the midst! Do not accept my definition of sanctuary, you are not bound to accept any man's definition of that holy word, but you are bound as a man standing upright, with some touch of majesty about you, to have a secret sanctuary, a place of holy communion, from which you must for the moment banish your very dearest one that you may see One dearer still, and see that dearer One with the vision of the heart; then you are master of the day.

III. And so it is in life's daily business; the sanctuary must be in the midst of it. We mistake the values and proportions of things. And a man is in such great haste to get away to his business, which only means, unless there be a high spiritual tone about the man's very soul, that the business will one day

go away from him. A curious life, a singular life, a ghostly life! Oh that men were wise! And so the altar must be in the City. The sanctuary must be in the midst of it.

IV. Did Jesus Christ ever say anything about this matter? Yes; He spoke upon every subject under heaven and above heaven. He gives you exactly this idea of the sanctuary of God being in the midst of the heart, the home, the business, and the City. He said, 'Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you'. What would He do? He would put the sanctuary in the midst, He would make the sanctuary and all that the word sanctuary implies the main thing in life. And I tell you that unless Christianity be the main thing it ought not to be in the life at all; it is the supreme truth, or is it an empty pretence and disappointing mockery. 'Seek ye first the kingdom of God.'—Joseph Parker, *City Temple Pulpit*, vol. v. p. 146.

'The Lord is there.'—Ezekiel xlviii. 35.

Ezekiel, taught to feel the Divine nearness on a foreign soil, applied the words with a new meaning, and found in them a new measure of what was implied by the Divine nearness. The betrothed who delight themselves with planning the house they are to share together would settle every detail with a less loving elaboration than the exile who thus in spirit revisited his native city, and trod the courts of a new temple. To measure its walls and plan out even the outhouses that surrounded it was the pastime of weary hours which the ebb of inspiration left empty and chill, and no civil duty or hope intervened to cheer and occupy.—Miss Wedgwood.

It is man's consolation that the future is to be a sunrise instead of a sunset. Time present works for time to come. Work then, and hope! Such is Ezekiel's cry. . . . As for the city built by him, he mutters above it this mysterious Name, *Jehovah Shammah*, which signifies 'The Eternal is there'. Then, standing silent in the darkness, he shows men, on the far horizon, an ever-widening space of azure sky.—Victor Hugo.

References.—XLVIII. 35.—Silvester Whitehead, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxvi. 1904, p. 56. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxxvii. No. 2182.

DANIEL

THE BOOK OF DANIEL

THE book of Daniel is the young man's guide-book. There were three stages in the courage of Daniel.

I. The Trial of the Flesh.—The curtain rises in Babylon. We see Daniel moving already in the higher circles. He puts a rein upon himself. He avoids all excesses. It was not that he had to resist the temptation of physical appetite. It was that he had to resist the temptation of being a man up to date. What he required was not self-restraint. It was courage. Babylon, like Rome, put a social imprimatur upon her practices; to refuse conformity was to incur ostracism. The man who resists them will require the spirit of a hero.

II. The Trial of the Intellect.—Daniel is poring over a problem. Nebuchadnezzar has had a dream. He has summoned what would now be called the Fellows of the Royal Society to interpret that dream. But he has accompanied the invitation with a threat: all who fail are to be put to death. Daniel was one of this Royal Society, and was therefore under the threat of the king. One could save the society. Daniel sets himself to solve the problem and to save his brethren. Daniel alone succeeded. Why? That which turned the scale between Daniel and his colleagues was courage. In the sphere of practical judgment humanity errs less from want of intellect than from want of nerve. There have been more prizes lost through excitement than through deficiency. But Daniel had ceased to fear for his life, because he had begun to fear for something else—the lives of others.

III. The Trial of the Spirit.—A singular decree had been promulgated by the court of Babylon. Prompted by jealousy of the rising Jewish favourite a powerful faction persuaded the weak Darius to test his loyalty by threatening his religion. They procured the passing of a law which enjoined on every man abstinence from prayer during the entire space of thirty days, and, as the penalty of transgression, sentenced every delinquent to the den of lions. Will he have any chance in the struggle? Yes, and he has won. Daniel has conquered the lions, has made them shut their mouths. By the very consciousness of superiority the meek have inherited the earth. Whence this unexpected pre-eminence? Let Daniel answer. He says that before receiving the kingdom, the form in the likeness of man 'came to the Ancient of Days'. He means that the secret of his power was an influence outside the cave—his religion. He was the only creature that made an approach to the Eternal.—G. MATHESON, *Representative Men of the Bible*, p. 331.

'Nebuchadnezzar besieged Jerusalem,' etc.—DANIEL i. 2, 6.

I WAS taken captive when nearly sixteen years of age. I did not know the true God; and I was taken to Ireland in captivity with so many thousand men, in accordance with our deserts, because we departed from God and kept not His precepts.—Sr. PATRICK'S *Confessions*.

'But Daniel purposed in his heart.'—DANIEL i. 8.

THE strangeness of foreign life threw me back into myself.—NEWMAN, *Apologia*, i.

DANIEL'S SELF-DENIAL

'But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat, nor with the wine which he drank: therefore he requested of the prince of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself.'—DANIEL i. 8.

WE are told about a great many good men in the pages of the Bible: some who were generally beloved by God, as the Prophet Daniel; some who found grace in the eyes of Jehovah, as Noah. It is instructive and interesting to investigate why these men found grace and why they were beloved.

I. The Life of Noah.—If we examine the life of Noah, we find that he had at least four characteristics:—

(*a*) He was obedient to God.
(*b*) He had faith in God.
(*c*) He reverenced God.
(*d*) He worshipped God.

We can thus see to some extent why he found grace in the eyes of Jehovah. The life of Noah, like every other life in the Old Testament, is meant to be an example to us, to show what our lives should be or what they ought not to be.

II. The Life of Daniel.—Again, if we investigate the life of Daniel, we can see some reasons why he was greatly beloved:—

(*a*) He obeyed.
(*b*) He resisted temptation.
(*c*) He held fast to that which was right.
(*d*) He was tempted, yet he refused to partake of the king's meat and imbibe of the king's wine.

He had his reward from God, and also in the worldly sense; for we are told that at the end of ten days after his abstinence his countenance appeared fair, and he was fatter in the flesh than all the others who did eat of the king's meat. Daniel lived at a court where there was much intemperance, much luxury, and much idolatry; and, therefore, thought it his duty in the circumstances to abstain from the king's meat and drink, as from things offered to idols. We need not necessarily suppose that Daniel was a temperance advocate. We have no reason to think

that he regarded wine as a pernicious, deadly thing; but he thought it his duty, because of the occasion and the surroundings, to do without it.

References.—I. 8.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxxix. No. 2291. I. 8-21.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—Daniel*, p. 40.

'Give us pulse to eat, and water to drink.'—Daniel i. 12 f.

See Addison's *Spectator* (No. 195), and Dante's *Purgatorio*, xxii. 145.

'And Daniel continued even unto the first year of king Cyrus.'—Daniel i. 21.

Most failures lie in not going on long enough. I heard a man in a meeting in the country long ago say, that one of the most encouraging verses he knew was a verse of common metre to this effect:—

Go on, go on, go on, etc.

—James Smetham.

What is commonly admired as successful talent is far more a firm realizing grasp of some great principle, and that power of developing it in all directions, and that nerve to abide faithful to it, which is involved in such a true apprehension.—Newman.

Reference.—II.—J. G. Murphy, *The Book of Daniel*, p. 85.

'Nebuchadnezzar's image.'—Daniel ii.-iii.

See Keble's lines on 'Monday in Whitsunweek'.

SUCCESSIVE MONARCHIES

Daniel ii. 1-30.

Nebuchadnezzar has a dream sent him by God.

I. Strange as the vision had been it had left no clear impression upon his mind, but only a vague sense of great terror. He sent for the wise men of the kingdom, but for such a dilemma their art provided them with no expedient. The king threatens them and their families with death unless they make known to him his dream as well as its interpretation.

II. The king commands that all the wise men of Babylon shall be put to death. Among these were Daniel and his companions. Daniel lost neither his faith nor his presence of mind. He is taken into the king's presence, and time is granted him, and a respite for the rest, upon his promising to show the king on the day following his dream and its interpretation.

III. Daniel goes then to some apartment in the college at Babylon occupied by him in common with the wise men, and asks others to join him in prayer. They prayed 'concerning the secret' and 'then was the secret revealed to Daniel in a night vision'.

IV. And now, in full possession of the secret, Daniel goes to Arioch and demands an immediate audience of the king. It is a grand and noble speech which Daniel addresses to the king. He claims no special skill; no illumination from any earthly source, that has taught him what had troubled the king upon his bed in night vision. It was a higher power that had sent the vision, and its object was to reveal what shall be in the latter days.—R. Payne Smith, *Daniel*, p. 37.

References.—II. 3.—Bishop Boyd Carpenter, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxvi. p. 8. II. 3-5.—S. Baring-Gould, *Village Preaching for a Year*, vol. ii. p. 183. II. 21.—R. E. Hutton, *The Crown of Christ*, p. 37.

AFTER THAT, THE DARK

'He knoweth what is in the darkness.'—Daniel ii. 22.

When the Bible tells us that God knows a thing we have to widen the thought of knowledge a good deal. So much of our knowledge is merely speculative, not vitally linked with life and character, that we are apt to forget that all God's thought and love really lie latent in what He knows.

I. He knoweth what is in the darkness of the heart. In the most ordinary life are deeps you cannot fathom. In your own heart is a darkness that you never penetrated. If we could only see into the gloom as God sees we should not surprise each other as we do. We are all far more mysterious than we know. The roots of our best and our worst are in the darkness. It is *that* that makes a man lean hard on God, and say He knows what is in the darkness. Now no man can doubt God's knowledge of that realm who will seriously read the life of Jesus Christ. Few things arrest us more in that high story than how Jesus explained men and women to themselves. It was the witness and proof upon the stage of history that He knoweth what is in the darkness of the heart.

The thought has a twofold bearing upon practice.

(*a*) It is first a great comfort when we are misunderstood.

(*b*) It is a caution against judging others.

II. He knoweth what is in the darkness of the lot. Now if there is one thing on earth it is hard to understand, it is the meaning and the content of life's darkness. There is an element of surprise in all affliction. And it is then, finding that flesh is vain, and turning full-faced to the Eternal God, we hear the exquisite music of our text, 'He knoweth what is in the darkness'.

III. He knoweth what is in the darkness of the future. I think we are all agreed that it is a very merciful provision that God has hidden the to-morrow from us. Of course to a certain limited extent we *do* see into the darkness of to-morrow. We live in a world of most inflexible law, and as a man soweth, so also shall he reap. But after all it is a limited vision. The fact remains that in His infinite pity we are shielded and safe-guarded by our ignorance; and the quiet thinker will waken every morning saying to his own heart 'God knows'.—G. H. Morrison, *Sun-Rise*, p. 133.

'The image seen by the king.'—Daniel ii. 33.

I am not one who in the least doubts or disputes the progress of this century in many things useful to mankind; but it seems to me a very dark sign respecting us that we look with so much indifference upon dishonesty and cruelty in the pursuit of wealth. In the dream of Nebuchadnezzar it was only the *feet* that were part of iron and part of clay; but many

of us are now getting so cruel in our avarice, that it seems as if, in us the *heart* were part of iron, part of clay.—Ruskin in *The Two Paths.*

In Nebuchadnezzar's image, the lower the members, the coarser the metal; the further off the time, the more unfit. To-day is the golden opportunity, to-morrow will be the silver season, next day but the brazen one, and so long till at last I shall come to the toes of clay, and be turned to dust. Grant therefore that to-day I may hear Thy voice. And if this day be obscure in the calendar, and remarkable in itself for nothing else, give me to make it memorable in my soul, thereupon, by Thy assistance, beginning the reformation of my life.—Thomas Fuller.

THE KINGDOM OF THE SAINTS

'The stone that smote the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth.'—Daniel II. 35.

Even one poor coincidence in the history of Rome, viz. of the anticipated and the actual duration of its greatness, does not fail to arrest our attention. We know that even before the Christian era it was the opinion of the Roman augurs, that the twelve vultures which Romulus had seen previous to the foundation of the city, represented the twelve centuries, assigned as the limit of its power; an anticipation which was singularly fulfilled by the event. Yet what is this solitary fact to the series of varied and circumstantial prophecies which ushered in, and were fulfilled in Christianity? Extend the twelve centuries of Roman dominion to an additional half of that period, preserve its monarchical form inviolate, whether from aristocratic or popular innovation, from first to last, and trace back the predictions concerning it, through an antecedent period, nearly of the same duration, and then you will have assimilated its history—not altogether, but in one or two of its features—to the characteristics of the Gospel Dispensation. As it is, this Roman wonder only serves to assist the imagination in embracing the marvellousness of those systematic prophecies concerning Christ's kingdom, which, from their number, variety, succession, and contemporary influence, may almost be accounted in themselves, and without reference to their fulfilment, a complete and independent dispensation.—J. H. Newman.

Reference.—II. 36-49.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—Daniel*, p. 48.

'The fourth kingdom . . . shall break in pieces and crush.'—Daniel II. 40.

Let's have no more dominant races; we don't want them; they only turn men into insolent brutes.—Burne-Jones.

The toes of the feet were part of iron and part of clay.'—Daniel II. 42, 43.

There be also two false *Peaces*, or *Unities*; the one, when the Peace is grounded, but upon an implicit ignorance; For all Colours will agree in the Darke. The other, when it is peeced up, upon a direct Admission of Contraries, in Fundamentall Points. For Truth and Falsehood, in such things, are like the *Iron* and *Clay in the toes of Nebuchadnezzar's Image*; They may Cleave, but they will not Incorporate.—Bacon.

The image that appeared to King Nebuchadnezzar in a dream was made of gold, of silver, of iron, and of clay. The idol of this world differs from that seen by the Babylonian monarch; for it is all gold—pure gold—and does not even possess the humanity of clay.—Sir Arthur Helps.

Reference.—II. 44.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons Preached in Sackville College Chapel*, vol. i. p. 44.

'The stone brake in pieces the iron, the brass, the clay, the silver, and the gold.'—Daniel II. 45.

Christ's religion was not a mere creed or philosophy. A creed or a philosophy need not have interfered with kingdoms of this world, but might have existed under the Roman Empire, or under the Persian. No; Christ's kingdom was a counter kingdom. It occupied ground; it claimed to rule over those whom hitherto this world's governments ruled over without rival; and if this world's governments would not themselves acknowledge and submit to its rule, and rule under and according to its laws, it 'broke in pieces' those governments.—Newman.

'Then Daniel requested of the king, and he set Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, over the affairs of the province of Babylon.'—Daniel II. 49.

When Omar Khayyám was a pupil of the Imám Howaffah at Naishapur, he struck up a friendship with two other pupils who were of his own age, Hasam and Nizam. One day they made a covenant and pledge with one another that whoever should gain a high position, should share his good fortune with his less favoured companions. The vow, it seems, was kept. Nizam became vizier, and did not forget his friends, both of whom received from him or through him what they desired.

'Daniel was in the gate of the king.'—Daniel II. 49.

Before I was humbled I was like a stone lying in deep mud; and He who is mighty came, and in His own mercy raised me, and lifted me up, and placed me on the top of the wall. . . . And me—who am detested by this world—He has inspired beyond others (if indeed I be such), but on condition that with fear and reverence, and without complaining, I should faithfully serve the nation to which the love of Christ has transferred me.—St. Patrick's *Confessions.*

'Nebuchadnezzar the king made an image of gold, whose height was threescore cubits, and the breadth thereof six cubits.'—Daniel III. 1.

Bentley's first year at Trinity is marked by at least one event altogether fortunate—his marriage. At Bishop Stillingfleet's he had met Miss Joanna Bernard, daughter of Sir John Bernard, of Brampton, Huntingdonshire. 'Being now raised to a station of dignity and consequence, he succeeded in obtaining the object of his affections,' says Dr. Monk—who refuses

to believe a story that the engagement was nearly broken off owing to a doubt expressed by Bentley with regard to the authority of the book of Daniel. Whiston has told us what this alleged doubt was. Nebuchadnezzar's golden image is described as sixty cubits high and six cubits broad. Now, said Bentley, this is out of all proportion; it ought to have been ten cubits broad at least, 'which made the good lady weep'. The lovers' difference was possibly arranged on the basis suggested by Whiston—that the sixty cubits included the pedestal.—Sir R. C. Jebb's *Bentley*, pp. 97, 98.

'All the people fell down and worshipped the golden image.'
—Daniel iii. 7.

When he was away from his beloved Hanover, everything remained there exactly as in the prince's presence. There were eight hundred horses in the stables, there was all the apparatus of chamberlains, court-marshals, and equerries; and court assemblies were held every Saturday, where all the nobility of Hanover assembled at what I can't but think a fine and touching ceremony. A large arm-chair was placed in the assembly-room, and on it the king's portrait. The nobility advanced, and made a bow to the arm-chair, and to the image which Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up; and spoke under their voices before the august picture, just as they would have done had the king Churfürst been present himself.—Thackeray's *The Four Georges:* 'George the Second'.

'Be it known to thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods.'
—Daniel iii. 8-18.

Here were they who formerly resolved not to defile themselves with the king's meat, and now they as bravely resolved not to defile themselves with his gods. Note—a steadfast, self-denying adherence to God and duty in lesser instances will qualify and prepare us for the like in greater.—Matthew Henry.

References.—III. 9.—J. Baines, *Twenty Sermons*, p. 29. III. 13-25.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—Daniel*, p. 55.

'Is it of set purpose that ye worship not the golden image which I have set up?'—Daniel iii. 14 f.

Whom shall I honour, whom shall I refuse to honour? If a man have any precious thing in him at all, certainly the most precious of all gifts he can offer is his approbation, his reverence to another man. This is his very soul, this fealty which he swears to another: his personality itself, with whatever it has of eternal and Divine, he bends here in reverence before another. Not lightly will a man give this—if he is still a man. . . . Will a man's soul worship that, think you? Never; if you fashioned him of solid gold, big as Benlomond, no heart of a man would ever look on him except with sorrow and despair. To the flunky heartalone is he, was he, or can he at any time be, a thing to look upon with upturned eyes of 'transcendent admiration,' worship, or worthship so-called. —Carlyle, *Latter-day Pamphlets:* 'Hudson's Statue'.

References.—III. 14.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxxii. No. 1930. III. 16-18.—F. J. A. Hort, *Village Sermons* (2nd Series), p. 203. C. Kingsley, *The Good News of God*, p. 31. Bishop Harvey Goodwin, *Parish Sermons* (3rd Series), p. 27. H. M. Butler, *Harrow School Sermons*, p. 147. J. Baldwin Brown, *The Sunday Afternoon*, p. 167. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxxvii. No. 2217. F. Bourdillon, *Plain Sermons for Family Reading* (2nd Series), p. 42.

'We will not.'—Daniel iii. 18.

The Reformer's chief business always is to destroy falsehood, to drag down the temple of imposture, where idols hold the place of the Almighty.

The growth of Christianity at the beginning was precisely this. The early martyrs . . . died, it cannot be too clearly remembered, for a negation. The last confession before the praetor, the words on which their fate depended, were not, 'We do believe,' but 'We do not believe'. 'We will not, to save our miserable lives, take a lie between our lips, and say we think what we do not think.'—Froude.

References.—III. 18.—H. J. Hastings, *Sermons—Trinity to Advent*, p. 299. Bishop Harvey Goodwin, *Parish Sermons*, vol. iii. p. 17. Cecil, *Works*, vol. iii. p. 196. Roberts, *Plain Sermons*, vol. ii. p. 241. Kingsley, 'Song of Three Children,' *Good News of God*, Sermon IV. John Foster, *Lectures* (2nd Series), p. 190. W. M. Taylor, *Daniel the Beloved*, chap. iv. *Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. v. p. 517. Geikie's *Hours With the Bible*, vol. vi. p. 278. Kennedy, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. ii. p. 260. Stanley Leathes, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. iv. p. 289. Coster, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xviii. p. 101. Stanley, *Jewish Church*, vol. iii. p. 31. Spurgeon, *Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, vol. xi. No. 662, and see *Expositor* (2nd Series), vol. viii. p. 223; (3rd Series), vol. i. p. 217. J. Keble, *Sermons for the Sundays After Trinity*, p. 251.

'Lo, I see four men loose.'—Daniel iii. 24 f.

See Keble's lines on 'The Nineteenth Sunday After Trinity'.

'The fiery furnace.'—Daniel iii. 24, 25.

That Babylon has fallen; but there is another Babylon which still goes on, and always will go on, till Christ comes again to judgment. There is the overwhelming and overawing spectacle of this world, with its pomps and glories. Its look is lofty, and it speaks great things, and its vast array is ever before us. We cannot get away from it. Go where we will it follows us. It is a vision before our minds if not a sight before our eyes; it is the scene of Babylonian power and greatness still going on, though in another form, and accommodated to every age in succession. . . . Men reject everywhere the office of witnessing to Divine truth; they throw it off as an obstacle, a shackle, and a burden, something that stands in their way, and prevents them from being friends with the world, and from getting on in the world. They know the truth, but will not witness to it. They know that the world is transitory, and they act as if it were eternal. . . . Yet we may venture to say, and with certainty, that never, on any occasion, by any one of the humblest servants of God, was this office of witness to the truth executed without a reward. Never in this mixed world did a Christian soul offer to God

the sacrifice of a practical confession of Him, by standing apart from the ways of the world—not accepting its voice, not yielding to its spells, or being overawed by its show: never did any one face any measure of adversity or gloom, or isolation or deprivation, as the consequence and penalty of bearing witness to the truth and expressing that truth in action, but he had, like the three witnesses, in that adversity a companion.—Mozley.

THE FURNACE OF AFFLICTION

'Did not we cast three men bound into the midst of the fire? . . . Lo, I see four men loose . . . and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God.'—Daniel iii. 24, 25.

The lessons from this wonderful story are on the surface.

I. Those who are Faithful to God must reckon on being Cast into the Furnace of Persecution.—'All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.' For a time, and along considerable tracts of their experience and intercourse with the world, it may go well with them, as it did with those good and brave Hebrew youths. But when images must be worshipped, or even spoken respectfully of, the case is altered. Slavish compliance with all the customs of the society in which you move, discreet silence, at least, over undoubted wrongdoing, worshipping of certain fashionable idols, all this is demanded by the world, and cannot be given by the faithful follower of Christ. Such collisions kindle the fiery furnace as naturally as the striking of the flint by the steel kindles sparks. It may be gross and declared persecution, it may be coarse mockery or refined sneering, it may be quiet and persistent ignoring of your claims—in one way or another the furnace will be lighted, and you will be cast into it.

II. God will Preserve Those who are Cast into that Furnace for His Sake.—One 'like the Son of God' will remain by their side. Nothing knits true friends together like calamity; and Jesus is the Friend that sticketh closer than a brother. The faithful follower of Christ feels his Saviour nearest when men are most estranged, and know Him kindest when the furnace is hottest.

III. Those who Remain Faithful to Christ 'have no Hurt'.—How many are soured, made selfish and querulous and jealous and melancholy, by their troubles! But he who has the fellowship of Christ in them, standing true to his Master in spite of them, comes through them all unhurt. His nature is refined, not corroded by them. He comes forth from the furnace as gold seven times tried, a vessel meet for the use of the Master.

IV. Those who Remain Faithful to Christ have Liberty given to Them.—Only one thing was burned in that fierce furnace, and that was the fetters by which they had been bound. They were loose, walking in 'the midst of the fire'. If we are humble and Christlike, feeling that we have Christ's presence with us in the midst of our troubles, we shall take to them kindly and feel free in the midst of them. When self is utterly sacrificed, and compromises, which are the miserable bonds between the world and Christ, are burned in the fiery furnace, then you are Christ's freemen, and stand in the liberty wherewith He has made you free.

References.—III. 25.—J. C. M. Bellew, *Sermons*, vol. i. p. 23. Bishop Bickersteth, *ibid.* p. 253.

'The fire had no power over their bodies.'—Daniel iii. 27.

'When a child,' says Thomas Fuller, 'I loved to look on the pictures in the *Book of Martyrs*. I thought that there the martyrs at the stake seemed like the three children in the fiery furnace, ever since I had known them there, not one hair more of their head was burnt, nor any smell of the fire singeing of their clothes. This made me think martyrdom was nothing. But, oh! though the lion be painted fiercer than he is, the fire is far fiercer than it is painted. Thus it is easy for one to endure an affliction, as he limns it out in his own fancy, and represents it to himself but in a bare speculation. But when it is brought indeed, and laid home to us, there must be a man, yea, there must be God to assist the man, to undergo it.'

'And I Nebuchadnezzar was at rest in my house, and flourishing in my palace. I saw a dream which made me afraid.'—Daniel iv. 4, 5.

'Remember,' Mr. F. W. H. Myers once wrote to a friend, 'that first of all a man must, from the torpor of a foul tranquillity, have his soul delivered unto war.'

Reference.—IV. 4, 5, 7.—S. Baring-Gould, *Village Preaching for a Year*, vol. ii. p. 183.

'Thou art grown and become strong.'—Daniel iv. 22-30.

Can we believe that He whose words were so terrible against the pride of Egypt and Babylon, against that haughty insolence in men on which not Hebrew prophets only, but the heathen poets of Greece, looked with such peculiar and profound alarm,—that He will not visit it on those who, in their measure, are responsible for its words and temper, when it takes possession of a Christian nation? Can we doubt what His judgment will one day be on the cynical parade of exclusive selfishness, the cynical worship of mere dexterity and adroitness, in the sophists and tyrants of the old heathen world; and can we doubt what He will think when Christians, disciples of the Lord of truth and righteousness, let themselves be dazzled in matters of right and wrong, by the cleverness of intellectual fence? . . . We have almost elevated pride to the rank of a national virtue; so far from seeing any harm in it, we extol it as a noble and admirable thing. You see it unconsciously revealed in the look and bearing which meet you constantly in society and in the streets. You see it in that tone of insolence which seems to come so naturally to many of us in the expression of our disapproval and antipathy.—R. W. Church.

'Wherefore, O king, break off thine iniquities by shewing mercy to the poor.'—Daniel iv. 27.

We can figure the thought of Louis that day, when, all royally caparisoned for hunting, he met, at some

sudden turning in the wood of Senart, a ragged peasant with a coffin: 'For whom?'—It was for a poor brother slave, whom Majesty had sometimes noticed slaving in those quarters. 'What did he die of?'—'Of hunger':—the king gave his steed the spur.—CARLYLE.

A DECENT provision for the poor is the true test of civilization.—DR. JOHNSON.

'Is not this great Babylon which I have built for the royal dwelling place, for the glory of my majesty?'—DANIEL IV. 30.

KINGSLEY, writing of Sir Walter Raleigh's haughty temper, observes: 'Proud? No wonder if the man be proud! "Is not this great Babylon, which I have built?" And yet all the while he has the most affecting consciousness that all this is not God's will, but the will of the flesh; that the house of fame is not the house of God; that its floor is not the rock of ages, but the sea of glass mingled with fire, which may crack beneath him at any moment, and let the nether flame burst up. He knows he is living in a splendid lie.'

IN the preface to his *Bible in Spain*, Borrow attributes Spanish cruelties in religion not to fanaticism, but to the way in which Rome worked on the predominant feeling of pride in the Spanish nature: 'It was by humouring her pride that she was induced to waste her precious blood and treasure in Low Country wars, to launch the Armada, and to many other insane actions. Love of Rome had ever slight influence over her policy; but flattered by the title of Gonfaloniera of the Vicar of Jesus, and eager to prove herself not unworthy of the same, she shut her eyes, and rushed upon her own destruction with the cry of "Charge Spain".'

'Nebuchadnezzar's confession.'—DANIEL IV. 30-37.

SORROW, pain, and death are sweet to whosoever dares, instead of fighting with or flying from them, to draw near, to examine closely, to inquire humbly, into their nature and their function. He began to perceive that these three reputed enemies, hated and feared of all men, are, after all, the fashioners and teachers of humanity; to whom it is given to keep hearts pure, godly, and compassionate, to purge away the dross of pride, hardness, and arrogance, to break the iron bands of ambition, self-love, and vanity, to purify by endurance and by charity.—LUCAS MALET, *Sir Richard Calmady*.

THE greatest obstacle to any improvement or change in John Bull's sentiments just now is the egregious vanity of the beast. He has been so plastered with flattery, that he has become an impervious mass of self-esteem. Nothing is so difficult as to alter the policy of individuals or nations who allow themselves to be persuaded that they are the 'envy of surrounding nations and the admiration of the world'. Time and adversity can alone operate in such cases.—COBDEN to *John Bright*, in 1851.

REFERENCE.—IV. 34, 35.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xvi. No. 949.

'They shall make thee to eat grass . . . till thou know that the Most High ruleth.'—DANIEL IV. (25), 37.

THIS Nebuchadnezzar curse, that sends men to grass like oxen, seems to follow but too closely on the excess or continuance of national power and peace. In the perplexities of nations, in their struggle for existence, in their infancy, their impotence, or even their disorganization, they have higher hopes and nobler passions. Out of the suffering comes the serious mind; out of the salvation, the grateful heart; out of endurance, fortitude; out of deliverance, faith.—RUSKIN, *Modern Painters*.

I FOUND occasion at this time to conclude, that the *Unio* of our river fords secretes pearls so much more frequently than the *Unionidæ* and *Anadonta* of our still pools and lakes, not from any specific peculiarity in the constitution of the creature, but from the effects of the habitat which it is its nature to choose. It receives in the fords and shallows of a rapid river many a rough blow from sticks and peebles carried down in times of flood, and occasionally from the feet of men and animals that cross the stream during droughts; and the blows induce the morbid secretions of which pearls are the result. There seems to exist no inherent cause why *Anadon cygnea*, with its beautiful silvery nacre—as bright often, and always more delicate than that of *Unio margaritiferus*—should not be equally productive of pearls; but, secure from violence in its still pools and lakes, it does not produce a single pearl for a hundred that are ripened into value and beauty by the exposed, current-tossed *Unionidæ* of our rapid mountain rivers. Would that hardship and suffering bore always in a creature of a greatly higher family similar results, and that the hard buffets dealt him by fortune in the rough stream of life could be transmuted, by some blessed internal predisposition of his nature, into pearls of great price.—HUGH MILLER, *My Schools and Schoolmasters*.

'I Nebuchadnezzar.'—DANIEL IV. 37.

EXPRESS confessions give definiteness to memories that might more easily melt away without them.—GEORGE ELIOT.

REFERENCE.—IV. 37.—J. Keble, *Sermons for the Sundays After Trinity*, 262.

'Belshazzar the king made a great feast.'—DANIEL V. 1.

POMP, in our apprehension, was an idea of two categories; the pompous might be spurious, but it might also be genuine. It is well to love the simple—*we* love it; nor is there any opposition at all between *that* and the very glory of pomp. But, as we once put the case to Lamb, if, as a musician, as the leader of a mighty orchestra, you had this theme offered to you—'Belshazzar the king gave a great feast to a thousand of his lords'— . . . surely no man would deny that, in such a case, simplicity, though in a passive sense not lawfully absent, must stand aside as totally insufficient for the positive part. Simplicity might guide, even here, but could

not furnish the power; a rudder it might be, but not an oar or a sail.—De Quincey on *Charles Lamb*.

See Byron's *Hebrew Melodies*, 'The Vision of Belshazzar'.

'Then was the king greatly troubled.'—Daniel v. 1-17.

From the words of Daniel it appears that Belshazzar had made a great feast to a thousand of his lords, and drank wine before the thousand. The golden and silver vessels are gorgeously enumerated, with the princes, the king's concubines, and his wives. Then follows—'In the same hour came forth fingers of a man's hand, and wrote over against the candlestick upon the plaster of the wall of the king's palace; and the *king* saw the part of the hand that wrote. Then the *king's* countenance was changed, and his thoughts troubled him, so that the joints of his loins were loosened, and his knees smote one against another.' This is the plain text. By no hint can it be otherwise inferred, but that the appearance was solely confined to the fancy of Belshazzar, that his single brain was troubled. Not a word is spoken of its being seen by any one else there present, not even by the queen herself, who merely undertakes for the interpretation of the phenomena as related to her, doubtless by her husband. The lords are simply said to be astonished, i.e. at the trouble and change of countenance in their sovereign. Even the Prophet does not appear to have seen the scroll which the king saw. He recalls it only. He speaks of the phantom as past.—From Charles Lamb's essay on *The Barrenness of the Imaginative Faculty in the Productions of Modern Art*.

'A great feast.'—Daniel v. 2 f.

If men love the pleasure of eating, if they allow themselves to love this pleasure, if they find it good, there is no limit to the augmentation of the pleasure, no limit beyond which it may not grow. The satisfaction of a *need* has limits, but pleasure has none. . . . And, strange to say, men who daily overeat themselves at such dinners—in comparison with which the feast of Belshazzar, that evoked the prophetic warning, was as nothing—are naïvely persuaded that they may yet be leading a moral life.—Tolstoy.

BELSHAZZAR'S FEAST

'In the same hour came forth fingers of a man's hand.'—Daniel v. 5, 6.

I. The Awakening of a Guilty Conscience.
(*a*) When least expected.
(*b*) When least desired.
II. The Manner of its Awakening.
By the finger of God.
(*a*) Without commotion.
(*b*) Without warning.
III. The Effect of the Awakening.
Physical and mental distress.
IV. The Doom which it Foreshadowed.
In that night was Belshazzar slain.—F. J. Austin, *Seeds and Saplings*, p. 36.

References.—V. 6.—H. J. Wilmot-Buxton, *Sunday Lessons for Daily Life*, p. 270. V. 16.—H. Bushnell, *Sermons on Living Subjects*, p. 166. V. 17.—Reuen Thomas, *Christian World Pulpit*, 1891. V. 17-31.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—Daniel*, p. 62.

'Thou hast not humbled thine heart.'—Daniel v. 22.

The late Mr. F. W. H. Myers, speaking of his early passion for the classics, confesses that they 'were but intensifications of my own being. They drew from me and fostered evil as well as good; they might aid imaginative impulse and detachment from sordid interests, but they had no check for pride.'

THE GLORY OF GOD

'The God in Whose hand thy breath is, and Whose are all thy ways, hast thou not glorified.'—Daniel v. 23.

I. Man exists for the glory of God. This is a theological assertion which no professing Christian would challenge, though few have an adequate apprehension of its truth. In what sense, then, is the glory of God the end and object of man's existence? Whatever else man can do or cannot do, it is altogether beyond his power to diminish or add to the eternal glory of the Deity. The character of God is and must be beyond our reach. And yet nothing is more plain in God's Word than that, in some way or another, we are sent into the world that we may glorify Him. How can we do this, if He is so far beyond our reach? We cannot increase God's absolute glory; but it is possible for us to pass that glory on into regions where it has not yet been realized. Thus it is the duty and blessed privilege of man to glorify God—

1. By witnessing to the power of His grace to sustain, defend, and exalt the soul that by faith commits itself to Him, Who is thus seen perfecting His strength in human weakness.

2. By the voluntary acceptance of the Divine Will as the law of human conduct. Revelation has made known to us that the authority of God has been challenged by the fallen intelligences of evil. To such a challenge the child of God responds by accepting the Will of God as the law of his life, and is himself a standing testimony to the perfection of that Will.

3. By so submitting himself here to the Divine Will that he may hereafter triumphantly bear witness, for all eternity, to the perfection of that Divine Will.

4. By the voluntary acceptance of the Divine Will; thus bearing an indirect but eloquent testimony to the perfections of the Divine character, and giving a triumphant answer to Satan—the slanderer of God to man.

II. We shall, perhaps, best understand the full force of the accusation against Belshazzar, and against many now, by considering, How it is possible for us to dishonour God, or to rob God of His glory.

1. We cannot dishonour God more than by ignoring Him altogether. The worst form of insult is, to cut a man dead, as you pass him. How many there

are who are dishonouring God by ignoring Him! Ask yourselves how far would your life have been different if you had been brought up to believe that there was no God? Would you have been a very different person from what you are? You have lived many years in the world: how many of those years have you consciously spent for God's glory?—how many days?—how many hours in a single day? Have you ever definitely regarded God's glory as the thing for which you live? How far have your work and conduct been influenced by the fear and love of God and the desire to advance His glory?

2. We dishonour God when we repudiate the means of salvation which He, at an infinite cost, has provided for us. We are then acting as though we could dispense with His assistance. It is quite possible for us to dishonour God, and to decline to glorify Him, even when we are recognizing Him. We may admit the truth and beauty of those words which describe the object and scope of our Saviour's mission: 'The Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost'. But, before we can understand that infinite Love, we must apprehend that sin has placed us in that position described by the terrible word 'lost'. And here our respectability cries out and protests: 'My life has been a moral and religious one, and I really do not require this provision of Divine Love'; 'My life, though not perfect, has been such a good sort of life that God cannot have much against me; and I am content to take my chance'. Thus you are practically calling the Cross of Calvary a superfluous display of Divine love, and despising the mercy of God by turning your back on His 'unspeakable gift'.

3. We dishonour God when we appropriate to some other use that which He has designed for Himself.

III. Remember—God will not be baffled. He holds your breath; all your ways belong to Him; your 'times are in His hand'; you are surrounded by God's claim, and you cannot get away from it. The everlasting God will have His meed of glory out of every man. He desires it in the voluntary offering of the whole man, body, soul, and spirit, to Him; to have it in the joyful, holy dedication of our whole nature to Him, to Whom it belongs. But, if He may not have it so, He will have it otherwise.

'Mene, Mene, Tekel, Upharsin.'—DANIEL v. 25 f.

IN describing the squalor of Vauxhall Walk, Lambeth, Wilkie Collins observes that 'in this district, as in other districts remote from the wealthy quarters of the metropolis, the hideous London vagabond—with the filth of the street outmatched in his talk, with the mud of the street out-dirtied in his clothes—lounges, lowering and brutal, at the street corner and the gin-shop door; the public disgrace of his country, the unheeded warning of social troubles that are yet to come. Here the loud assertion of modern progress—which has reformed so much in manners, and altered so little in man—meets the flat contradiction that scatters its pretensions to the winds. Here, while the national prosperity feasts, like another Belshazzar, on the spectacle of its own magnificence, is the writing on the wall, which warns the monarch, Money, that his glory is weighed in the balance, and his power found wanting.'—From *No Name*, scene III. i.

DESCRIBING the later days of Raleigh's career at Court, Kingsley sums up the tale of his fopperies with the words: 'But enough of these toys, while God's handwriting is on the wall above all heads. Raleigh knows the handwriting is there. . . . Tragic enough are the after-scenes of Raleigh's life; but most tragic of all are these scenes of vain-glory, in which he sees the better part, and yet chooses the worse, and pours out his self-discontent in song which proves the fountain of delicacy and beauty which lies pure and bright beneath the gaudy, artificial crust. What might not this man have been! And he knows that too. . . . Anything to forget the handwriting on the wall, which will not be forgotten.'

'Tekel: Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting.'—DANIEL v. 27.

IN the *Spectator* (No. 493) Addison describes a dream of a pair of golden scales which showed the exact value of everything that is in esteem among men. Among the experiments which he made with this balance was the following: 'Having an opportunity of this nature in my Hands, I could not forbear throwing into one scale the principles of a Tory, and into the other those of a Whig; but as I have all along declared this to be a Neutral paper, I shall likewise desire to be silent under this Head, also, though upon examining one of the weights, I saw the word TEKEL engraved on it in Capital Letters.'

IN his *Bible in Spain* Borrow describes his feelings when he boldly opened a shop in Madrid for the sale of Testaments. '"How strangely times alter," said I, the second day subsequent to the opening of my establishment, as I stood on the opposite side of the street, surveying my shop, on the windows of which were painted in large yellow characters, *Despacho de la Sociedad Biblica y Estrangera;* "how strangely times alter. . . . Pope of Rome! Pope of Rome! look to thyself. That shop may be closed; but oh! what a sign of the times, that it has been permitted to exist for one day. It appears to me, my Father, that the days of your sway are numbered in Spain; that you will not be permitted much longer to plunder her, to scoff at her, and to scourge her with scorpions, as in bygone periods. See I not the hand on the wall? See I not in yonder letters a *Mene, Mene, Tekel, Upharsin?* Look to thyself Batushca."'

REFERENCES.—V. 27.—H. J. Wilmot-Buxton, *Bible Object Lessons*, p. 20. H. S. Lunn, *Christian World Pulpit*, 3 Sept. 1890. J. M. Neale, *Sermons on the Prophets*, vol. ii. p. 63. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. v. No. 257.

'Belshazzar was slain, and Darius the Mede took the kingdom.'—DANIEL v. 30, 31.

KINGS and Emperors have long ago arranged for themselves a system like that of a magazine-rifle: as

soon as one bullet has been discharged, another takes its place. *Le roi est mort, vive le roi!* So what is the use of killing them?—Tolstoy.

'An excellent spirit was in him,' etc.—Daniel vi. 3, 4.

Whatever the world thinks, he who hath not much meditated upon God, the human soul, and the *summum bonum*, may possibly make a thriving earthworm, but will most indubitably make a sorry patriot and a sorry statesman.—Berkeley.

'Forasmuch as he was faithful.'—Daniel vi. 4.

That we have little faith is not sad, but that we have but little faithfulness. By faithfulness faith is earned. When, in the progress of a life, a man swerves, though only by an angle infinitely small, from his proper and allotted path (and this is never done quite unconsciously even at first; in fact that was his broad and scarlet sin—oh, he knew of it more than he can tell), then the drama of his life turns to tragedy, and makes haste to its fifth act.—Thoreau's *Letters*.

'We have more sneakers after Ministerial favour,' wrote Sir Walter Scott in 1826, 'than men who love their country and who upon a liberal scale would serve their party.'

DANIEL

'Then said these men, We shall not find any occasion against this Daniel except we find it against him concerning the law of his God.'—Daniel vi. 5.

The two points only in this history are the character of Daniel, which here came out like gold from the fire, and the mysterious dealings of God with him.

I. First then, with respect to Daniel's character. There are three points to be especially noticed: (*a*) There is his steady walk with God. He had riches and honours and everything to make this world enjoyable; but he never turned aside from the narrow way either to the right or to the left. The eyes of all were fixed upon him; many envied and hated him. They examined his public conduct; they inquired into his private character; they sifted his words and actions; but they sought in vain for any ground of accusation. He was so steady, so upright, so conscientious, that they could find no occasion of fault in him—they could not touch him except as concerning the law of his God. (*b*) Another point is Daniel's habit of private prayer. He was in the habit of kneeling upon his knees and praying three times a day; this was the practice of holy David, as we read in the Psalms, and this was the spirit of the centurion in the Acts, who prayed to God alway. (*c*) The last point to be observed in Daniel's character is his faith, his confidence in God. The decree appeared, forbidding all sorts of worship for thirty days on pain of death; and oh, how many professors of our generation would have held their peace; Daniel knew that the writing was signed—he knew that he was watched, he knew that his life was at stake—and yet he went to his home and kneeled on his knees and prayed as he did aforetime. Mark here the fruits of daily communion with God; see how a habit of prayer will produce quietness and assurance in the hour of trial and difficulty.

II. The mysterious dealings of God with His faithful and holy servant. (*a*) There was first a season of darkness. Who would have supposed that God would have allowed iniquity so far to triumph as to leave Daniel in the hands of enemies? Who would have thought that this pious old man would be cast into the den of lions? This hour of darkness seems a mystery. But is it not agreeable to all the dealings of God with man? (*b*) How the darkness was scattered and the light returned. Daniel was brought forth and honoured and exalted; while his enemies, in their turn, were cast into the den and the lions destroyed them all. So true it is that light is sown for the righteous, that God will keep them in perfect peace whose minds are stayed in Him. (*c*) Consider what showers of good descended from this dark cloud which at one time seemed so threatening. Think what a blessed effect this deliverance would have on Daniel! What deep views of God's love and power and goodness and wisdom he would obtain. (*d*) Think, lastly, What mighty good would come to the people and cause of God, how much they would be comforted by such a miracle, how much they would be encouraged to go forward; the very thing which once appeared so untoward, which threatened the destruction of Israel and the dishonour of God, would bring glory to the Lord and set forward the Kingdom of Heaven.—J. C. Ryle, *The Christian Race*, p. 258.

Reference.—VI. 5.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—Daniel*, p. 68.

PRAYER AND CONDUCT

'Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house; and his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime.'—Daniel vi. 10.

I. The Value and Importance of Prayer.—It is natural to all men to pray. But here steps in philosophy, falsely so called, and tells us not to pray. This philosophic teacher brings all the learned and profound arguments to show that this natural instinct is mere folly and delusion, and it will end by persuading us that we may adore in praise if we will, but that to ask aught of God is absurd and even profane. Now this is a criminal, unnatural philosophy, which would condemn us to live in a fatherless world, with none to pity, none to comfort, none to help. If any one is led by his sins and worldliness to neglect prayer, let him not think that he is showing superior sagacity and penetration by so doing. Let him rather be ashamed of this, that he neglects prayer, not because he is wise, but because he has corrupted his heart, and has done violence to his own moral and even intellectual nature. How opposed to all this self-conceited, self-corrupted, prayerless character is the example of that aged and wise saint who is portrayed for us by the Holy Spirit in to-day's lesson!

II. We are to Follow this Aged Saint's Example, and be bold, honest, outspoken in our allegiance to God. It is true that none of us is likely ever to be called upon to hazard our lives as Daniel did, but yet how often have we in everyday life to take our stand openly and boldly, either on the side of Christ or of His enemies! Christ requires this of all of us. He requires it in every workshop. He requires it in every office. He requires it in every place of business. He requires of us that we should on all fit occasions declare what we think of Him; that we never from fear of man, never from shame, never from regard to worldly interest, never from fear of ridicule, shun to bear witness for Him, or shrink from avowing ourselves His disciples. It may be, or it may not be, wise or proper for us to enter into argument, or directly to rebuke. Whether it be wise or our duty to do so must always depend upon circumstances. It sometimes happens that a discreet and modest silence is the best way to meet the occasion. No certain and plain rule can be laid down as to how our Lord would have us act. Our action must be guided by our own feeling of what we ought to do. But of one thing we may be certain. On every such occasion Christ is there present. He is there noting how we act, pleased if we maintain the cause of truth and holiness, quick to see if we are in any way ashamed of Him or His words, vexed, frowning, if from cowardice or self-interest we betray His cause or allow His gainsayers to think we agree with them and feel as they do. Even in social intercourse, at times in their own families, men and women have to determine whether they will confess Christ or deny Him, whether they will be faithful to their Lord and Master or flinch from His service and disown it.

III. Not by Words only can we Confess or Deny Christ.—We may do it even more decisively by our deeds. It is very possible for men in word to confess Christ, and yet in heart and life to renounce Him. No confession of the lips can be accepted which has the lie given to it by the life. Vain is our orthodox profession of faith if we are heterodox in the feeling of our hearts. The best, the truest confession of Christ is that which is afforded by the life, by the life in which purity and holiness and charity testify, that we have been with Jesus and have learned of Him. No confession so eloquent as this because it is manifestly sincere, none which so honours our Lord or so much advances His kingdom.

THE SPIRIT OF PRAYER

'Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed he went into his house; and his windows being open in his chamber towards Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime.'—DANIEL VI. 10.

IT is interesting to compare the character of Daniel, 'the man greatly beloved,' with that of St. John, 'the disciple whom Jesus loved'. The likeness can be followed out also through the history of the two men. But that is not my purpose this morning; my desire is to emphasize the value of prayer. So highly was it esteemed by Daniel that he braved death to engage in it. He knew God; and, knowing Him, loved Him. He was ever communing with God. To God he turned in every hour of difficulty. The 'three times a day' were not isolated moments, but rather an integral part of what was a life of prayer. If prayer had been to Daniel what it is to too many of us he would not have risked his life in the way he did; he would have forgone the privilege or he would have prayed in secret.

I. What was it that Caused Daniel to Treat the Decree of Darius as if it were not?—Surely it was his desire after God. Prayer can be regarded in two aspects:—

(*a*) As an act of honour done to God, and

(*b*) As the means of supplying our own wants.

These two ideas take in prayer from two different sides, but they both proceed from the same motive, the desire to know and to love God. Let us never lower the dignity of prayer by regarding it as the mere putting forth of a request; if it be true prayer it will be actuated by a desire after God.

II. Why Did Daniel Pray towards Jerusalem?—Daniel, though favoured by Darius and raised to high position, could never forget that he was an exile where he was. He had wicked Babylon all round him; there were men ready to kill him; yet none of these things moved him. He looked towards Jerusalem; he saw the King in His beauty; his eyes beheld the land which was very far off.

III. The True Basis of Prayer is the Soul's Desire after God.—Put the privilege of prayer out of human life, and what will human life be without it? What will it be when friends disappoint, when temptations assail, when some one very near has gone into the unseen world—not to have access to God?

IV. Daniel's Prayer was Largely Intercessory for Others.—We are not told what was its subject on the occasion mentioned in the text, but we cannot doubt from Daniel's subsequent history that it was wide-embracing in its scope; and so it is with us that he who loves God best has the widest sympathy and the highest faith. Prayer is the one great service we can render to others.

A GOOD MAN

'Now when Daniel knew that the writing was,' etc.—DANIEL VI. 10.

DANIEL was of noble birth, perhaps a member of the royal family of Judah. Born at Jerusalem; carried into captivity in his youth; became a member of the royal court; received a thorough education; acquired a high position through his power of interpreting dreams and mysteries; and, when Babylon was conquered by the united powers of Media and Persia, became premier. Distinguished above all for his piety. He was now eighty years of age. His position exposed him to the envy of his colleagues, who sought to depose him. In this chapter we have an account of their plot and its result. Several characteristics of a good man are mentioned.

I. Moral Integrity which None Could Dispute.

They 'sought to find occasion against Daniel concerning the kingdom,' etc., vv. 4, 5.

Few can stand the close scrutiny of an enemy, or even of a friend.

II. Unflinching Fidelity, which Persecution could not Destroy.

The true value of friendship is not discovered until the hour of trial.

III. A Firm Avowal of Religious Principles.

'He went into his house; and his windows being opened,' etc.

No ostentation, but no concealment.

IV. Habitual Devotion Unhindered by Business.

'As he did aforetime.' 'Three times a day.'

Prayer is one of the chief sources of support and comfort in difficulty and trouble.

V. A Recognition of Mercies in the Midst of Trial.

'And gave thanks before his God.'

'The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away, *blessed* be the name of the Lord.'

VI. Childlike Trust in God Amid the Vicissitudes of Life.

It is hard to stand alone; but God never deserts His people. 'I will never leave thee,' etc.—F. J. Austin, *Seeds and Saplings*, p. 59.

THE OPEN WINDOW

'Now his windows were open in his chamber toward Jerusalem.'—Daniel vi. 10.

It is not easy to know where to begin the story of this man whose windows were open toward Jerusalem. Those open windows are so eloquent. They have such a tale to tell. It is a beautiful, brave, pathetic story, worthy its place in this book that records the purest heroisms, and the most lustrous fidelities, and the holiest patiences of history.

I. Those are not vain hours that a man spends at the open lattice of his heavenly hope. See what the open window did for Daniel. In the city of a thousand spurious divinities, it reminded him of a temple erected for the worship of the One God. In the city full of fascinating lures and shameless enticements, it brought home to his heart every day the sweet, stern morality of the Hebrew ethical ideal.

The breath from that open window kept his life clean. But for it he might have been drawn into the dark current of Babylonian sensuality and sinfulness. He might have become unwilling, unworthy, unable to utter in the ears of Babylon the words of his God. But the open window taught him that Babylon was a terrible place. He saw a sinister shadow in its smiles, he heard the whisper of danger in its plaudits; and three times a day he knelt with his face toward the holy city, and his heart going out unto his God: never too busy or tired for that.

II. We who live in Babylon cannot afford to spend all our time in its streets amid the traffic and the merchandise, the gains and the greetings, the weariness and the sin. If life's western window is never opened; if the breath from the hills of God plays in vain around its closed and dust-laden lattice; if morning, noon, and night the vision is the vision of Babylon and the voice is the voice of Babylon, then 's the seal of the city set ever more broadly upon a man's forehead and its delusions and its passions make their home in his heart.

God is near us in the babel of buying and selling, in the toil for bread, in the rush of life. But they who find Him thus in the thick of the world are they who have first found Him waiting for them, as He waited for one of old, at the window that looks toward Jerusalem, to send them forth into the day's life with the temple reverence and the temple ideal impressed afresh upon their spirit. And when the day is over, and Babylon has done its worst, they find Him there again waiting to sweep the last jangling echoes of the city right out of their hearts—that as they lie down to rest their last thought shall be laden with the peace of that other city—Jerusalem beyond the hills.

III. The men who conquer the world are the men who see beyond the world. Babylon published an interdict, and it meant for Daniel no communion at his western lattice for thirty days: thirty prayerless days! That was what the interdict said; and after it had been signed and sealed by Darius, it was unalterable. The Medes and Persians prided themselves on never going back on anything they had decreed. Babylon had challenged Jerusalem. It had pitted its powers against the powers of the God of Daniel. 'And when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house (now his windows were open in his chamber toward Jerusalem) and he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and gave thanks before his God as he did aforetime.' Babylon had a law that altered not. So had Daniel. He was not a Babylonian. He lived under the law of another city, and he obeyed that law, and it cast him into a den of lions, and it brought him out again and made him a splendid witness for God. History tells us that, whenever the heavenly unalterable and the earthly unalterable have met, one has always had to alter, and it has not been the heavenly one.—P. Ainsworth, *The Pilgrim Church*, p. 107.

THE OPENED WINDOWS

'His windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem.'—Daniel vi. 10.

It was in an hour of very sore distress that Daniel acted in the manner of which our text speaks. The crisis had come which he had long expected, and the crisis drove him to the feet of God. There was widespread irritation, rising at times into very bitter envy, among the aristocratic patrons of Babylon at the powerful eminence of foreigners like Daniel. And it was then, when Daniel fully recognized his peril, that he went into his house to pray, his windows being open to Jerusalem.

I. The Moral Significance of Indifferent Actions.—There was nothing remarkable in opening a window, yet every time that Daniel opened that lattice it

spoke of a heart that was travelling to Jerusalem. It revealed a heroism which no impending doom could shake. There are actions which are quite indifferent in themselves, yet if they reveal the trend of character and the direction that our thoughts are setting in no man dare say they are immaterial.

II. The True Relationship of the Unseen and the Seen.—When Daniel opened his window an instinct moved him to open the window towards Jerusalem. He could brook no barrier betwixt him and the unseen. Now that is like a little parable of something that happens to the truly religious man. Let him open the window of his heart on the unseen, and the life at his door grows doubly real to him. There is no such instance in history of this as the life of Jesus Christ Himself. His heart was in heaven as truly as the heart of Daniel was in Jerusalem. Yet though all the windows of His soul were opened heavenward the life round Him was infinitely precious. The meanest villager ceased to be insignificant to a heart whose lattice was thrown wide on God.

III. The Right Attitude Towards the Unattainable.—Daniel was a prisoner in Babylon. Yet though all hope of seeing Jerusalem was banished, he opened his windows toward Jerusalem. Every man who is striving to live nobly is struggling after things he cannot reach. Have the casement open toward the unattainable, and by the open casement be in prayer. —G. H. Morrison, *Sun-Rise*, p. 207.

References.—VI. 10.—Canon Duckworth, *Christian World Pulpit*, 1891. R. J. Campbell, *Sermons Addressed to Individuals*, p. 37. T. Arnold, *Sermons*, vol. iii. p. 175. G. W. Brameld, *Practical Sermons*, p. 386. J. Vaughan, *Fifty Sermons* (2nd Series), p. 90. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xx. No. 1154. *Ibid.* vol. 14, No. 815. J. J. S. Perowne, *Sermons*, p. 17. VI. 13.—F. W. Farrar, *Everyday Christian Life*, p. 93. H. P. Hughes, *Essential Christianity*, p. 57. VI. 14.—H. J. Wilmot-Buxton, *Sunday Lessons*, vol. i. p. 393. VI. 16-28.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—Daniel*, p. 75. VI. 20.—H. J. Wilmot-Buxton, *Sunday Lessons for Daily Life*, p. 284. J. E. Vaux, *Sermon Notes* (2nd Series), p. 44. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xlix. No. 2859. VI. 22.—J. H. Horton, *Every Sunday*, p. 467. C. Stamford, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxi. p. 328.

THE CALAMITY THAT HURTS NOT

'Daniel was taken up out of the den, and no manner of hurt was found upon him, because he believed in his God.'—Daniel vi. 23.

It is not enough for a man to be taken out of his den. When he has been raised from his calamity the question remains, Has it hurt him? It seems a small thing to record of Daniel that after his life had been preserved from the lions 'no manner of hurt was found upon him'. But in truth the great fear in such cases is just their after-effects.

I. Calamity has not always a good influence upon a man. It changes many a soul for the worse. There are hundreds who after their liberation from the den of lions live as if they were still in the den. There are men who have risen to opulence after a hard fight with poverty and who never forget their early scars. They resent the years that the locusts have eaten. They preserve a demeanour of frigidness, of sourness, of cynicism towards all the events of life; they damp the enthusiasm of those who are entering in.

II. It is a great thing if a man can emerge from the den not only sound in body but unharmed in mind. What enabled Daniel to come forth mentally whole? The passage states the reason explicitly—'He believed in his God'. The mental effects of calamity can only be conquered by a mental attitude. It is a great mistake to suppose that we require trust in God merely for the future; we need it as much for the past. We think of Daniel as trusting in God before he was thrown in; he required an equal faith after he had come out.

III. We doubt, not only in the hour of danger, but in the hour of retrospect. Faith may waver over the question, What if this befall me? But it can also waver over the question, Why has this befallen? If I am to be free from mental gloom, I must see a bow in the cloud of yesterday as well as in the cloud of to-morrow. God must justify to my soul the shadows of last night. Nothing else will obliterate my inward scars; nothing else will enable me to come forth from the den unhurt.—G. Matheson, *Messages of Hope*, p. 284.

References.—VI. 23.—A. Ainger, *Sermons Preached in the Temple Church*, p. 1. VI. 27.—D. Swing, *American Pulpit of To-day*, vol. i. p. 90. VI. 28.—F. Bourdillon, *Plain Sermons for Family Reading*, pp. 43, 55. VI.—J. G. Murphy, *The Book of Daniel*, p. 119. VII.—*Ibid.* p. 124.

'And four great beasts came up from the sea.'—Daniel vii. 1 f.

I am amusing myself with thinking of the prophecy of Daniel as a sort of allegory. All those monstrous, 'rombustical' beasts with their horns—the horn with eyes and a mouth speaking proud things, and the little horn that waxed rebellious and stamped on the stars, seem like my passions and vain fancies, which are to be knocked down one after another—until all is subdued with a universal kingdom over which the Ancient of Days presides—the spirit of Love—the catholicism of the universe—if you can attach any meaning to such a phrase.—George Eliot to *Sara Hennell*

'The books were opened.'—Daniel vii. 10.

Compare the reference in Tennyson's 'Sea Dreams,' and this rabbinic saying: 'Consider three things, and thou wilt not fall into the hands of transgression: know what is above thee, a seeing eye, a hearing ear, and all thy deeds written in a book'.

References.—VII. 10.—J. Vaughan, *Fifty Sermons* (6th Series), p. 214. J. Keble, *Sermons for Advent to Christmas Eve.*

'The reign of one like the Son of man.'—Daniel vii. 12 f.

By resigning His strength, by declining to appeal to force, by committing Himself into God's hand, Jesus took the direct path to supreme power and universal dominion. Such is the honour which He felt to be owing to the kingdom of the Truth, to leave it to win its own way against the suffrages of all men. 'He must reign. . . .' Christ steals on and on in the

world of human thought, and the enmity of one age falls before Him in the next. 'Every battle (among men) is with confused noise and garments rolled in blood;' but after quite another manner God is bringing about the unification of all nations under Christ. Truth's battle which is Love's success, steals on, like some sweet mystic fire which 'subdues all things to itself'.—Dr. John Pulsford.

Reference.—VIII.—J. G. Murphy, *The Book of Daniel*, p. 140.

'I was by the river Ulai.'—Daniel viii. 2.

In his *Remarkable Passages of the Life and Death of Mr. John Semple*, minister of Carsphairn in Galloway, Patrick Walker tells how 'that night after his wife died, he spent the whole ensuing night in prayer and meditation in his garden. The next morning, one of his elders coming to see him, and lamenting his great loss and want of rest, he replied: "I declare I have not, all night, had one thought of the death of my wife, I have been so taken up in meditating on heavenly things. I have been this night on the banks of Ulai, plucking an apple here and there."'

'I was in the palace . . . and I saw in the vision.'—Daniel viii. 2.

Even in a palace life may be lived well.—Marcus Aurelius.

See M. Arnold's Sonnet, 'Worldly Place'.

'The pageant of the beast empires.'—Daniel viii. 3 f. 7 f.

As I gazed out into vacancy, the grey masses began to move, to wave to and fro; it seemed as if the wind swept heavy veils away, and suddenly there lay disclosed right before me a sheet of cold, dark northern sea. A rock rose out of it, snow-covered, and carrying on its crags long icicles, which hung down to the sinister-looking water. On the top of the rock sat a huge polar bear; his paws were holding the carcass of the last animal he had found in this wilderness, and he looked triumphantly around as if to say, 'Now am I sole lord of the world'. But already the black waters moved and gurgled, and out of them arose the shining body and the huge fins of a snake-like monster; his walrus head carried a real mane, and from his mouth hung seaweed and the remnants of some small fish—the last he had found in the sea. His glassy, greenish eyes stared about, and they also seemed to say, 'Now am I quite alone, master of the world'. But suddenly the huge white bear and the sea monster caught sight of each other; the enormous fins beat the waves, the cruel paws clawed at the rock. Both were yet gorged with food, but already they were measuring one another with angry looks like future adversaries. They had devastated the whole world, and now they met in this desolate waste for the ultimate fight. . . . I believe that for a moment the clouds which ever surround us had lifted, allowing me to catch a glimpse of the history of the world; which often is a history of wild beasts.—From *The Letters Which Never Reached Him.*

Compare the closing paragraphs of Victor Hugo's *Shakespeare.*

Reference.—VIII. 19.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xv. No. 886.

'I was astonished at the vision, but none understood it.'—Daniel viii. 27.

Great position often invests men with a second sight whose visions they lock up in silence, content with the work of the day.—John Morley.

'I Daniel fainted, and was sick certain days, then I rose up and did the king's business.'—Daniel viii. 27.

There's many a good bit of work done with a sad heart.—George Eliot's *Adam Bede.*

References.—IX. 1-13.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xlviii. No. 2802. IX. 1-19.—*Ibid.* vol. iii. No. 154.

'With fasting.'—Daniel ix. 3.

Fasting is an indispensable condition of a good life; but in fasting, as in self-control in general, the question arises, With what shall we begin? How to fast, how often to eat, what to eat, what to avoid eating? And as we can do no work seriously without regarding the necessary order of sequence, so also we cannot fast without knowing where to begin—with what to commence self-control in food. Fasting! and even an analysis of how to fast, and where to begin—the very notion of it sounds ridiculous and wild to most men. I remember how, with pride at his originality, an evangelical preacher, who was attacking monastic asceticism, once said to me, 'Ours is not a Christianity of fasting and privations, but of beefsteaks'.—Tolstoy.

'O Lord, the great and dreadful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy.'—Daniel ix. 4.

The *attractive* aspects of God's character must not be made more apparent to such a being as man than His chastening and severer aspects. We must not be invited to approach the Holy of Holies without being made aware, painfully aware, of what Holiness is. We must know our own unworthiness ere we are fit to approach or imagine an Infinite Perfection. The most nauseous of false religions is that which affects a fulsome fondness for a Being not to be thought of without awe, or spoken of without reluctance.—Bagehot.

'We have sinned.'—Daniel ix. 4 f.

For God is at hand, and the Most High rules in the children of men. . . . The same light which lets you see sin and transgression, will let you see the covenant of God, which blots out your sin and transgression, which gives victory and dominion over it, and brings into covenant with God. For looking down at sin and corruption and distraction, ye are swallowed up in it; but looking at the light, which discovers them, ye will see over them.—George Fox *to Lady Claypole.*

References.—IX. 14.—J. Bolton, *Selected Sermons* (2nd Series), p. 229. IX. 14, 23.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xlix. No. 2850. IX. 17.—*Ibid.* vol. xlviii. No. 2788.

'And whiles I was . . . confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel.'—Daniel ix. 20.

See Miss Rossetti's lines, 'By the Waters of Babylon'.

'My sin and the sin of my people.'—Daniel ix. 20.

Do you know, when I see a poor devil drunk and brutal, I always feel, quite apart from my æsthetical perceptions, a sort of shame, as if I myself had some hand in it.—W. Morris.

No man's thoughts ever fell more into the forms of a kind of litany than Mr. Maurice's. . . . They were the confessions befitting a kind of litany, poured forth in the name of human nature, the weakness and sinfulness of which he felt most keenly, most painfully, but which he felt at least as much in the character of the representative of a race by the infirmities of which he was overwhelmed, as on his own account. . . . Whenever you catch that he feels—as all the deeper religious natures have always felt—a sort of self-reproachful complicity in every sinful tendency of his age, you feel that the litany in which he expresses his shame is not so much morbid self-depreciation as a deep sense of the cruel burden of social infirmity and social sin.—R. H. Hutton.

Thomas Boston of Ettrick, in his *Memoirs*, mentions the scandal caused by a local minister having been guilty of adultery. 'I well know,' he adds, 'that many a heavy heart it made to me, and remember the place where I was wont heavily to lament it before the Lord in secret prayer.'

'At the beginning of thy supplications the commandment came forth.'—Daniel ix. 23.

Remember the rebuke which I once got from old Mr. Dempster of Denny, after preaching to his people: 'I was highly pleased with your discourse, but in prayer it struck me that you thought God *unwilling to give*'. Remember Daniel: 'At the beginning of thy supplications the commandment came forth'.—McCheyne *to Bonar*.

'Consider the vision.'—Daniel ix. 23 f.

See Keble's lines on 'Thursday Before Easter'.

Reference.—IX. 24.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xlii. No. 734.

'To bring in everlasting righteousness.'—Daniel ix. 24.

Not long after Phryne's religious performance at Eleusis came the last days, too, of the national life of the Jews, under the successors of Alexander. The religious conceptions of the Jews of those days are well given by the book of Daniel. How popular and prevalent these conceptions were is proved by their vitality and power some two centuries later at the Christian era, and by the large place which they fill in the New Testament. We are all familiar with them; with their turbid and austere visions of the Ancient of Days on His throne, and the Son of man coming with the clouds of heaven to give the kingdom to the saints of the Most High and to bring in everlasting righteousness. Here, then, is the last word of the religion of the Hebrews, when their national life is drawing to an end, when their career has been, for the most part, run; when their religion has had nearly all the development which, within the limits of their national life, belonged to it. This, we say, is its last word: *To bring in everlasting righteousness*.—Matthew Arnold.

See, further, *Literature and Dogma*, III. *ad init.*

References.—IX. 24.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxviii. No. 1681. IX. 25.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons Preached in a Religious House*, vol. ii. p. 440. IX.—J. G. Murphy, *The Book of Daniel*, p. 152.

DIVINE APPOINTMENTS

'The time appointed was long.'—Daniel x. 1.

All things are appointed. Yet it pleases our little vanity to imagine that we appoint some things ourselves. Oh the fuss of the world, and the noise, and the fruitlessness! We have deposed God from being husbandman, and have taken to growing crops of our own kind. They always fail.

The appointing God is on the throne; the Lord reigneth, let the earth rejoice.

It is interesting to me as a student of the Book to see in how many aspects Divine appointment is presented in the Holy Scriptures. God has taken everything under His own care; He has allowed no one little inch of His great creation to bear any name but His own.

Let us look at some of the instances in which the Divine appointment appears as the central thought. 'Is there not an appointed time to man upon earth?' (Job vii. 1). Job found that out by sorrow.

I. Sorrow is one of the head-masters in God's school; it is the costliest department of the great school of God, is the department of sorrow. To think of it all: the child's little face all bloom waiting the sharp chisel and the heavy mallet of the sculptor. It is so that we learn really where we are, and what we are, and what we should be, and what we should do. He who made man appoints his time; all our days are in God. He never shows us tomorrow; He might do that. No, therein is the sovereignty of God. This is Sunday; might not God show us now, getting on to mid-day, just one gleam of Monday? Never! Monday is where God is; the future is as invisible and as incomprehensible as God. Men do not think of that. They chaffer about tomorrow as if they owned it.

II. Sometimes the appointments of God are associated with high joys, with royal feast and plenteousness, and the wine in which there is no drunkenness. So in Psalm lxxxi. 3, I read, 'Blow up the trumpet . . . in the time appointed'. It would be a poor world without the trumpet and all that the trumpet means. The trumpet means victory, progress, thankfulness, courage, and an enemy beaten and blown off. So there is an appointed time for bright joy to come and take up the trumpet and blow a blast that will be music in the ear of God. The world shall not always be sunless. We live in these high promises; these are the vaticinations that make the future

tolerable; but for such prophetic outlook and forecast who dare pray that he may awake to-morrow? God has filled His book with trumpets and shawms and cymbals and dances, and sometimes the Church even now goes wild with holy ecstasy. There is great danger in that, however, because only the ecstatic can understand ecstasy, and only those who were born full of red blood can enter into Pentecostal thunder and fury and anthem.

III. Then we come to another view in Daniel x. 1: 'The thing was true, but the time appointed was long'. What does it matter about the time if we have got the truth? Mark these wonderful words: 'The thing was true'—that is the point to stop at —'but the time was long'. A century is nothing to those who have the truth and hold it for man and God. God counts time in His own way. He does not listen to the tick of our poor pendulum; a man might stop that, a little child could stop the pendulum, but not the time, not the evolution, not the certainty of the final point.

IV. The old saints were trained by waiting. Habakkuk was; he says, 'The vision is yet for an appointed time . . . wait for it' (Hab. ii. 3). Can we go further to-day than this grand prophecy? Is not this one sentence a great philosophy of history and of time and of divinity? The vision was for an appointed time. If the Lord has said, 'I will wait,' that is enough for me; I do not ask when, nor do I ask how; He has defined my function, He says in one pregnant injunction, 'Wait for it'. Beware, however, of intellectual or spiritual indolence; it is not a question of turning your back upon the Divine word, and saying, 'Let it come, then, according to some Divine appointment,' but waiting is worshipping, waiting is hoping, waiting is praying. Do not imagine that we are remitted to a sleepy slumberous ministry of inertness or inactivity in any shape or in any degree. The highest expression of power is repose; the highest expression of energy is standing still under Divine conditions and according to the movement of the Divine inspiration.—Joseph Parker, *City Temple Pulpit*, vol. vi. p. 19.

'Even a great warfare.'—Daniel x. 1 f.

Then suddenly would come a dream of far different character—a tumultuous dream—commencing with a music such as now I often heard in sleep—music of preparation and of awakening suspense. The morning was come of a mighty day—a day of crisis and of ultimate hope for human nature, then suffering mysterious eclipse, and labouring in some dread extremity. Somewhere, but I knew not where—somehow, but I knew not how—by some beings, but I knew not by whom—a battle, a strife, an agony, was travelling through all its stages—was evolving itself, like the catastrophe of some mighty drama, with which my sympathy was the more insupportable, from deepening confusion as to its local scene, its cause, its nature, and its undecipherable issue. . . . Some greater interest was at stake, some mightier cause, than ever yet the sword had pleaded, or trumpet had proclaimed. Then came sudden alarms; hurryings to and fro, trepidations of innumerable fugitives; I knew not whether from the good cause or the bad; darkness and lights; tempest and human faces.—De Quincey, *Confessions of an English Opium-Eater*.

Reference.—X. 1.—J. Vaughan, *Fifty Sermons* (7th Series), p. 174.

THE UNSEEN VISION

'I Daniel alone saw the vision; for the men that were with me saw not the vision.'—Daniel x. 7.

Cyrus had been King of Babylon three years when the revelation was vouchsafed to Daniel. He had a vision of the eternal Son. And so overpowering in its glory was it all that the comeliness of Daniel was turned into corruption, and he retained no strength.

I. The circumstances at once suggest that vision is not conditioned by locality. Daniel and his friends were all in company, but 'I Daniel alone saw the vision'. The same thing meets us in life on every hand; set down a poet on any spot on earth and he will enmantle it with gold and glory, and have his vision in it of all lovely things.

II. The same thing is very true of pioneers in social reform. Picture the first poor homeless waif who arrested the gaze of a Dr. Barnardo. Many an eye had glanced at him that night; some had bidden him move on, and some had pitied him; but 'I Daniel alone saw the vision,' a vision of that boy clothed and redeemed; a vision of the boy out on the fields of Canada, with the sunshine on his cheek. All great movements for bettering mankind have begun not in a brain that schemed, but in a heart that saw.

III. This, too, is pre-eminently true of Christ. If He was separated from His race by being sinless, He was separated not less by what He saw. He saw such heights and depths and undiscovered glories that, matched with His, the keenest eyes are blind.

IV. There is another suggestion in the words; it is that the secret of vision lies in character. Why did these men who were with Daniel see nothing of the glory in the heavens?

(*a*) They were not on the path of duty. It was such a smooth and easy life in Babylon that they shirked the toil and the hardship of return. Daniel was there because God willed it so.

(*b*) They did not see the vision because they felt not the burden and sorrow of Israel. That burden had wellnigh broken Daniel's heart, but there is no sign that it troubled them at all. Must there not always be a preparation of that kind if we are to see the vision of Christ Jesus? The man who has seen the depths of his own heart, and knows how tangled are the roots of evil, is ready for the appearing of the Lord.—G. H. Morrison, *The Wings of the Morning*, p. 145.

'So I was left alone, and saw this great vision.'—Daniel x. 8.

It takes solitude to get yourself saturated by any thought, and to the great majority of men even solitude will not effect it, but only lower their thinking power to the congealing point. Nevertheless, as Mr. Darwin saw in relation to the growth and decay of species, the very condition which kills out a weak thinking power, feeds and elevates to the glowing point a strong thinking power. . . . Till the life of a thought becomes identical with the life of an emotion, it will never really dominate the minds of men. And so far as I can judge by history, this result is never attained for thought, without long, solitary brooding over it.—R. H. Hutton.

'O Daniel, thou man greatly beloved.'—Daniel x. 11.

And as I walked towards the jail, the word of the Lord came to me, saying, 'My love was always to thee, and thou art in My love'. And I was ravished with the sense of the love of God, and greatly strengthened in my inward man. But when I came into the jail, where the prisoners were, a great power of darkness struck at me, and I sat still, having my spirit gathered into the love of God.—Fox's *Journal*, 1649.

'Stand upright.'—Daniel x. 11.

Do you know, more people perish from lack of proper self-appreciation than from consumption.—Maxim Gorky.

Reference.—X. 11.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxxviii. No. 2256.

'From the first day that thou didst set thine heart to understand, thy words were heard.'—Daniel x. 12.

It is strange to say, but it is a truth which our own observation and experience will confirm, that when a man discerns in himself most sin and humbles himself most, when his comeliness seems to him to vanish away and all his graces to wither, when he feels disgust at himself, and revolts at the thought of himself—seems to himself all dust and ashes, all foulness and odiousness, then it is that he is really rising in the kingdom of God, as it is said of Daniel, 'From the first day that thou didst set thine heart to understand and to chasten thyself before thy God, thy words were heard, and I am come for thy words'.—Newman.

See Dora Greenwell's *Covenant of Life*, pp. 134 f.

THE PRACTICAL DIFFICULTY OF PRAYER

'For how can the servant of this my Lord talk with this my Lord.'—Daniel x. 17.

Daniel's difficulty is our difficulty. How can we talk with our Lord? That is the perpetual problem. It is not that prayer is impossible, or that we are unwilling to pray; it is that 'we know not how to pray as we ought'.

I. Let us contemplate the inquiry.

(*a*) What was the actual motive in the case before us. It was the sense of *ignorance*. 'This my lord' was mysterious and overwhelming to Daniel. If Daniel had known this 'Lord' more fully he could have talked with Him, but ignorance gives him a stammering tongue: ignorance almost seals his lips. That is often our difficulty in prayer.

(*b*) *Reverence* moulded Daniel's inquiry. See t repeated 'my lord'. Shall the servant utter flue familiarities to the Lord? Nay verily. That, too, is our difficulty in prayer. Divineness arrests our presumption.

(*c*) *The sense of sin* prompted Daniel's cry. He felt the awful disparity between himself and the Lord to whom he spoke. To talk with *One* holy, harmless, and undefiled seemed impossible. Penitence arrests speech. Sinners realize the incongruity of talking with their Lord.

(*d*) Forgetfulness of former answers to prayer often lies at the root of this inquiry. We deem prayer beyond us, because we do not recall what it has wrought for us in the past. 'They soon forget' is true of God's Israel to-day as of Israel in the olden day.

(*e*) Lack of spiritual aspiration sometimes explains this inquiry. Bishop Creighton said that the greatest danger of the twentieth century would be 'the absence of high aspirations'. It is an ever-present danger with us all. And it works fatally in the world of prayer.

II. Let us suggest response to the inquiry. The practical difficulty of prayer has been abundantly resolved in Christian experience.

(*a*) Recollect *the Lord's love*. Love can be talked with, though it be 'lord'. Love is approachable, even when Divine. Love is full of sympathy, and sympathy delights to hearken when need tells its story. Could we but realize the loving sympathy of Christ we should know how to pray. He is always accessible. He desires us to talk with Him.

(*b*) *Remember the Lord's promises*. The servant can talk with the Lord when the promises of the Lord shine before his gladdened eyes. John Bunyan spoke of 'leaping into the bosom of the promise'. They find a tranquil refuge who do so. The Bible is one colossal promise to the praying soul.

(*c*) *Plead His atonement*. The greatest secret of successful prayer is an evangelical secret. To multitudes of supplicants prayer would be an insuperable difficulty were it not that they have recourse to the sacrifice Christ offered on Calvary. The cross solves the riddle of prayer. Surrender the substitutionary sacrifice, and you lose the key of prayer. Many a prayer is sore labour and ineffectual labour, because it is not bedewed with Jesus' blood.

(*d*) Expect the help of the Holy Spirit. We sadly multiply the practical hindrances to prayer because we so ignore the work of the Holy Spirit.

(*e*) *Bethink you of the evil of restraining prayer*. How you reflect on God—His veracity and His fidelity—by so doing. Base, too, is the ingratitude of suppressing prayer. Says John Pulsford, that noble mystic, 'sow your prayers into the heart of God'.—Dinsdale T. Young, *The Enthusiasm of God*, p. 192.

References. — X. 18.—G. Mulligan, *Comradeship and Character*, p. 173. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxii. No. 1295. X. 18, 19.—Archbishop Benson, 'Boy Life,' *Sundays in Wellington College*, p. 219. X. 19.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xix. No. 1089.

'And now I will shew thee the truth. Behold, there shall stand up three kings in Persia,' etc.—Daniel xi. 2 f.

While philosophy had for the Jews no meaning, history had a deeper significance than it had for any other people. It was the chief factor in their national unity, the source from which they drew ethical and spiritual enlightenment. Thither they turned as to living oracles inscribed with the finger of the Almighty. To history they appealed as the supreme tribunal of God's justice. The great monarchies, Egypt, Assyria, Babylonia, Persia, pass across the scene. Their fortunes cross and interlock into those of the chosen race. Israel is the pivot on which their destiny turns. History, in a word, is the drama in which God Himself is the protagonist, vindicating his justice and moral government on the stage of the visible world.—Butcher, *Harvard Lectures on Greek Subjects*, pp. 29-31.

'He shall pervert by flatteries.'—Daniel xi. 32.

Crows pick out the eyes of the dead, when the dead no longer need their eyes. But flatterers destroy the souls of the living, and blind their eyes.—Epictetus.

Cf. the Flatterer in the first part of the *Pilgrim's Progress*.

'The people that know their God shall be strong, and do exploits.'—Daniel xi. 32.

The course of this man's life had been very simple, and yet crowded with events, and with manifold activity. The element of his energy was an indestructible faith in God, and in an assistance flowing immediately from Him.—Goethe upon *Jung Stilling*.

Reference.—XI. 32, 33.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xi. No. 609.

'They shall fall by the sword and by flame, by captivity, and by spoil, many days.'—Daniel xi. 33.

It is sometimes argued that religious convictions are not as strong as they were in old times. But 'that the fervour for truth is not diminished may be seen in regions outside theology. . . . At this moment hundreds of educated men are defying the whole power of the Russian Empire in the struggle for constitutional liberty. Every month sees a score or more of them consigned to a hopeless dungeon or sent to Siberia, and the ranks close up again firmer after every fresh gap. Some of us cannot have forgotten how a crowd of Poles, men and women, knelt down in 1861 in the great square of Warsaw, praying and singing hymns, as fifteen volleys of grape-shot tore through their ranks. The sacrifice was unavailing; but it is by sacrifice of this sort that national character is regenerated, and as long as the spirit of martyrdom lives, there seems no need to despair of the future of humanity.—C. H. Pearson.

'And some of them that be wise shall fall.'—Daniel xi. 35.

See Browning's poem, 'A Lost Leader'.

'Even to the time of the end.'—Daniel xi. 35.

In Greek authors of classical times there is no trace of the thought that the human race as a whole, or any single people, is advancing towards a Divinely appointed goal; there is nothing of what the moderns mean by the 'Education of the World,' 'the Progress of the Race,' the 'Divine guidance of Nations'. The first germ of the thought is in Polybius[1] (*circa* 204-122 B.C.), whose work illustrates the idea of a providential destiny presiding over the march of Roman history, and building up the imperial power of Rome for the good of mankind.—Butcher's *Aspects of the Greek Genius*, pp. 155, 156.

'Neither shall he regard any God: for he shall magnify himself above all.'—Daniel xi. 36 f.

Others may occupy themselves, if they will, in seeking a nostrum to destroy the phylloxera; be it mine to find one that shall destroy the Christian religion. —M. Paul Bert.

Can there be a more dreadful delusion than to see God where He is not, or to imagine ourselves more enlightened than Jesus Christ?—Dr. William Barry.

'He shall have power over the treasures of gold and of silver. . . . Yet he shall come to his end.'—Daniel xi. 43-45.

I can never forget the inexpressible luxury and prophanenesse, gaming and all dissoluteness, and as it were total forgetfullnesse of God (it being Sunday evening) which this day se'nnight I was witness of, the king sitting and toying with his concubines, a French boy singing love songs in that glorious gallery, whilst about twenty of the greate courtiers and other dissolute persons were at Basset round a large table, a bank of at least 2000 in gold before them, upon which two gentlemen who were with me made reflexions with astonishment. Six days after was all in the dust!—Evelyn's *Diary*, Feb. 1685.

'Yet he shall come to his end, and none shall help him.'—Daniel xi. 45.

Our physical organism was devised for existence in the atmosphere of our globe and so is our moral organism devised for existence in justice. Every faculty craves for it, is more intimately bound up with it than with the laws of gravitation, light, or heat; and to plunge into injustice is to fling ourselves head foremost into what is hostile and unknown.—Maeterlinck, *The Buried Temple*.

References.—XI.—J. G. Murphy, *The Book of Daniel*, p. 166. XII. 2, 3.—J. C. M. Bellew, *Sermons*, vol. ii. p. 166.

'And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament: and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever.'—Daniel xii. 3.

I do believe the station of a popular preacher is one of the greatest trials on earth: a man in that position does not stop to soberly calculate how much, or

[1] *i.e.* a contemporary of the Prophet who wrote the book of Daniel.

rather how little is done when there appears a great effect, nor to consider how immense is the difference between deeply affecting the feelings and permanently changing the heart. The preacher who causes a great sensation and excited feelings is not *necessarily* the one who will receive the reward of shining as the stars for ever and ever, because he has turned many to righteousness.—F. W. Robertson.

'As the stars.'—Daniel xii. 3.

Yonder stars are rising. Have you ever noticed their order, heard their ancient names, thought of what they were, as teachers, 'lecturers,' in that large public hall of the night, to the wisest men of old? Have you ever thought of the direct promise to you yourselves, that you may be like them if you will? 'They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness, as the stars, for ever and ever.' They that be *wise*. Don't think that means knowing how big the moon is. It means knowing what you ought to do, as man or woman; what your duty to your father is, to your child, to your neighbour, to nations your neighbours.—Ruskin, *Fors Clavigera*, lxxv.

I like to associate my friends with particular stars, there is something so sweet and intimate and confidential in a star. The sun and the moon, but especially the sun, are too universal and general for particular friendship; but you may consider a star as your own.—Erskine of Linlathen.

Heine, in his *Confessions*, tells of an interview he once had with Hegel. After supper the poet, looking out of the window, began to speak sentimentally of the stars as the dwelling-place of the blessed. Hegel muttered, 'Hum! hum! The stars are simply a brilliant leprosy on the face of heaven'. 'In God's name,' cried the poet, 'is there then no happy place above where the virtuous may find reward after death?' Whereupon Hegel rejoined, 'So you think you deserve a *pourboire* for tending your sick mother, or for not poisoning your elder brother!'

'They that turn many to righteousness.'—Daniel xii. 3.

Take as many to heaven with you as ye are able to draw. The more ye draw with you, ye shall be the welcomer yourself.—Samuel Rutherford.

Reference.—XII. 3.—T. Sadler, *Sunday Thoughts*, p. 212.

'Many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased.'—Daniel xii. 4.

It is written, *Many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased.* Surely the plain rule is, Let each considerate person have his way, and see what it will lead to. For not this man and that man, but all men make up mankind, and their united tastes the taste of mankind. How often have we seen some such adventurous and perhaps much censured wanderer light on some outlying, neglected, yet vitally momentous province; the hidden treasures of which he first discovered, and left proclaiming till the general eye and effort were directed thither, and the conquest was completed. Wise was he who counselled that speculation should have free course, and look fearlessly toward all the thirty-two points of the compass, whithersoever and howsoever it listed. —*Sartor Resartus*, book i. 1.

The art of printing appears to have been providentially reserved till these latter ages, and then providentially brought into use, as what was to be instrumental for the future in carrying on the appointed course of things. The alterations which this art has already made in the face of the world are not inconsiderable. By means of it, whether immediately or remotely, the methods of carrying on business are in several respects improved, *knowledge has been increased*, and some sort of literature is become general.—Butler.

'Shut up the words and seal the book . . . till the time of the end.'—Daniel xii. 4, 9.

My book will await its reader; has not God waited six thousand years before He has created a man to contemplate His works?—Kepler.

References.—XII. 4.—H. W. Beecher, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxix. p. 291. XII. 6.—J. Kerr Campbell, *Christian World Pulpit*, 1890, p. 131.

AUTHORITY

'And he said, Go thy way, Daniel: for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end. Many shall be purified, and made white, and tried; but the wicked shall do wickedly: and none of the wicked shall understand, but the wise shall understand.'—Daniel xii. 9, 10.

It is the manner of the Holy Spirit in sacred prophecy to pass rapidly from one future event to another foreshadowed by it. The Prophet in this Scripture having revealed the sufferings which the Hebrew Church and nation would endure in the time of Antiochus Epiphanes, passes on by a quick transition to unfold the trials which await the Christian Church in the latter days. It is a subject for serious inquiry whether, in the history of the Church or world of late years, there has not been a gradual tendency towards a fulfilment of this prophecy.

I. In reviewing the past we may recognize a remarkable change in popular opinion concerning the origin and claims of authority, both civil and ecclesiastical. The belief taught by St. Paul and St. Peter that authority is derived from God, and that obedience is due to lawful authority in things not unlawful for the Lord's sake, has now been greatly weakened; and authority is commonly supposed to be derived from earth and not from heaven, and to have no other claim upon allegiance than that which depends on the voice of the people, and not on the will of God. Together with the change in popular opinion as to the claims of authority two other powers have grown up. Men crave protection, and admire strength. On one side some have almost deified the Roman Papacy, and on the other side some have been driven to defy all authority whether temporal or spiritual, and to cast away all belief in a Personal Ruler of

the World, and in future rewards and punishments, and to place the people on the throne of God.

II. Our own duty in face of these events. We must endeavour to revive in the public mind a recognition of the Divine origin of authority. This feeling needs to be answered in rulers as well as in subjects. If parents, masters, and governors were resolved to act in the consciousness that their authority is received from God, and that He will call them to account at the Great Day, then they would use it as a sacred trust from heaven, and never abuse it to gratify their own selfish desires.—Bishop Wordsworth, *Clerical Library*, vol. II. p. 262.

'They that be wise.'—Daniel xii. 10.

God will not judge men by what they know; yet to have used knowledge rightly will be a staff to support and comfort us in passing through the dark valley.—Jowett.

'But the wicked shall do wickedly.'—Daniel xii. 10.

Where, if not in Christ, is the power that can persuade a sinner to return, that can bring *home a heart to God?* Common mercies of God, though they have a leading faculty to repentance, yet the rebellious heart will not be led by them. The judgments of God, public or personal, though they ought to drive us to God, yet the heart unchanged runs the further from God. Leave Christ out, I say, and all other means work not this way; neither the works nor the word of God sounding daily in his ear, *Return, return.* Let the noise of the rod speak it too, and both join together to make the cry louder *yet the wicked will do wickedly.*—Leighton.

'For thou shalt rest, and stand in thy lot at the end of the days.'—Daniel xii. 13.

Nature in her grave nobleness is not less, but more dear now, when I remember that I shall soon bid her good even, to enter into the presence of her Lord and mine. New heavens and a new earth—I cannot sever my human heart from mine own land; and who shall say that those noble countries, casting off all impurity in the fiery trial that awaits them, shall not be our final heaven?

I love to think that it may be so; I love to think that the Lord, in His humanity, looks tenderly upon the mortal soil on which He sojourned in His wondrous life, and that here, perchance, in these very lands, made holy by His grace and power, our final rest shall be. It may be but a fancy; but it comes upon me with gentle might, like the whispered comfort of an angel. A new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness—a glorified humanity which, remaining human, is mortal no longer! with the judgment and the condemnation and the wars of the Lord overpast, and the earth and the heaven one fair broad country, and Himself over all, blessed for ever! These are the old man's dreams; and they shed new glory over the pleasant places in which my lines have fallen.—From *Adam Graeme of Mossgray*, by Mrs. Oliphant.

Spare no deceit. Lay the sword upon it; go over it: keep yourselves clear of the blood of all men, either by word or writing; and keep yourselves clean, that you may stand in your throne, and every one have his lot, and stand in the lot in the Ancient of Days. —Fox's *Address to the Quakers*, 1656.

'Thou shalt stand in thy lot.'—Daniel xii. 13.

Jesus, that Flower of Jesse set without hands, getteth many a blast, and yet withers not, because He is His Father's noble Rose, casting a sweet smell through heaven and earth, and must grow; and in the same garden grow the saints, God's fair and beautiful lilies, under wind and rain, and all sunburned, and yet life remaineth at the root. Keep within His garden, and you shall grow with them, till the great Husbandman, our dear Master Gardener, come and transplant you from the lower part of His vineyard up to the higher, to the very heart of His garden, above the wrongs of the rain, sun, and wind. —Samuel Rutherford.

GO THOU THY WAY

'But go thou thy way till the end be: for thou shalt rest, and stand in thy lot at the end of the days.'—Daniel xii. 13.

If there be any deep prophetic sense in these last words of God to Daniel, I do not mean to endeavour now to search them far. I wish only to accept them very practically, and very simply, as they apply to every one of us; and this is what they say to you and me.

I. Go Thou Thy Way.—'The future is wrapped in clouds; much is hidden from your view; and there are many mysteries—"But go thou thy way"; do not hesitate, do not look back, do not measure by results—go thou thine own proper way and appointed way. Do thy work, whatever it be, that God has given thee to do; fulfil thy part; execute thy mission; act out thy destiny—"Go thou thy way".' And there are many of you to whom this command appears now especially to apply. I see some of you afraid to begin. Halting at the threshold, you have such a fear lest you should fall back again, and do harm by your inconsistencies, and grieve the Holy Ghost, and it would be worse for you than ever. To you it comes—'Go thou thy way'. Or you have tried and failed so often that you are utterly discouraged, and you are sure that you shall never succeed; nevertheless, 'Go thou thy way'. Or the work which you are now called to do is very great, and it so outstretches all your strength and all your grace that you dare not touch it—'Go thou thy way'. Or the differences of opinion in the Church are so apparent. It is so hard to know 'what is truth'—I am drawn so many ways, I see so many contradictions, such opposites, I do not know what to believe—'Go thou thy way'. Or there are such inconsistencies everywhere. I see so much that is wrong in Christian men that I feel frequently staggered—'Go thou thy way'. You cannot be wrong if you are in the path of duty, *that* is safe;

the rest will take care of itself. Only act out your convictions, and keep well in your own true line.

II. **But be sure it is 'Thy Way'.**—But then you must first have well ascertained that that way which you are now going to take is '*thy* way'. This was the point at issue between Christ and Satan. Satan, falsely quoting, said: 'In their hands they shall bear Thee up'—leaving out the sequel, which was the hinge of the promise, 'in all Thy ways'. Christ saw the omission, and saw that any venture which was without that condition would be presumptuous; and therefore He answered: 'Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God'. The first thing, therefore, that you have to do is to be quite sure that the way you are taking is 'thy way'. Ask God to make this quite clear. Try it by some of the great tests. Does your conscience quite go along with it? Have you a vocation? Is it directly or indirectly to usefulness? Is there any cross in it? Does it bring you nearer to Christ? Do you believe that He is pleased with you in it? Does it advance truth and holiness? If you are quite satisfied by such proofs that it is *your* way, then go, nothing doubting. With the end you have nothing to do; that is God's care. He will be sure to make that right. Deal with the present, and watch for, but do not anticipate nor wish to hasten conclusions. Steadily, patiently, and perseveringly work on, wait on, believe on, till the end be. And, be that end what it may, it will be a blessed end to you; strange, perhaps, very contrary to your expectations, but a right end and a happy end. I know of no comfort in life—I know of no repose greater than this—to-day, duty; to-morrow, trust—the foot straight in the road, and the eye looking out for loving ends it cannot see.

III. **The Soul's Rest.**—I do not wonder that the very next words are 'thou shalt rest'—'Go thou thy way,' and 'thou shalt rest'. There is the soul's rest, increasing experience of God's faithfulness, a growing assurance of forgiveness, a greater and greater nearness to Christ, tokens for good, glances of the smile of God—all these will be 'rest,' even while you are on the road.

REST FOR GOD'S SERVANTS

'But go thou thy way till the end be: for thou shalt rest, and stand in thy lot at the end of the days.'—DANIEL XII. 13.

THESE words are addressed to Daniel, now an old man, when his work is over, and little remains for him but to die.

I. For God's servants this present life is a time of labour, and in respect of it their time of rest is not yet. They are looking forward to their rest. This is the place of labour, with its accompanying measure of weariness and pain. Rest is an eventide blessing and comes when the day ends. True, the Gospel holds out a present rest, real and wonderful, to men believing, but it is true that called to rest in God, the Christian is also called to service: and this service has in it a laboriousness, a burden-bearing, an experience of weariness and an exercise of patience.

II. But this labour has its period. While He appoints to His servants their day of work, and amid the blessings of the life of faith disciplines them with their measure of toil and pain, He will certainly (and not too late) bring them into their rest. But what can we say of it?

(*a*) One thing certain we may fix upon—its sinlessness. What exercise, what high employment, may be theirs, we do not know. But this wonderful rest goes through it. Sin and temptation come nigh them no more.

(*b*) Here we live in a continual experience of change. But then how different. For want of constancy our rest here is unquiet and precarious at best—a brief snatch of breathing: but they possess it there.

(*c*) We know how any great experience, religious or not, disquiets us here. The heart beats quick, and becomes too full, and joy itself becomes painful. Not so there: not so with those who are made conscious of the love that blesses them, and of the nearness of that uncreated and eternal nature.

III. At the end of the days God's servant shall find the work in which he bore a part perfected. And he shall find his own labour in it. So, when God subjects His servants to that discipline which the most eminent of them, and those that have served most faithfully, have experienced, He is not sending them away as useless servants.—R. RAINY, *Sojourning With God*, p. 37.

REFERENCES.—XII. 13.—C. Stanford, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 1033. J. Vaughan, *Fifty Sermons* (10th Series), p. 54. A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—Daniel*, p. 84. XII. —J. G. Murphy, *The Book of Daniel*, p. 199.

HOSEA

HOSEA

References.—I. 4, 6, 8-10.—S. Cox, *Expositor* (1st Series), vol. x. p. 422. II. 1, 21, 22.—*Ibid.* II. 3.—G. Matheson, *Sermon on the Mount*, p. 193. II. 5-7.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. x. No. 590. II. 8.—J. Parker, *The Gospel of Jesus Christ*, p. 220. F. D. Maurice, *Prophets and Kings*, p. 195. II. 14.—J. N. Norton, *Golden Truths*, p. 134. II. 14, 15.—H. Melvill, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 1843.

THE CHRISTIAN IN THE WILDERNESS

'Therefore, behold, I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness,' etc.—Hosea ii. 14, 15.

Little as the Israelites were permanently benefited by their sufferings in the desert, they appear never to have forgotten them. Hence 'the wilderness' became another word among them for trouble and sorrow. It bears that meaning here.

I. It points out to us, in the first instance, the Author of affliction.

II. The text shows us next why God afflicts us; at least, it discovers to us one of the most frequent causes of our sorrows.

III. We learn further in the text how God sometimes afflicts us. It describes Him as doing it gradually, compassionately, tenderly.

IV. Having followed the Christian into the wilderness, consider, in the next place, the comfort the Lord imparts to him there. 'I will speak comfortably unto her.'

V. But consolation is not all that an immortal spirit needs in sorrow. Our attention is called, therefore, to the supplies which God furnishes in tribulation.

VI. The hope that God excites in affliction. The valley of Achor was situated at the very entrance of the promised land.

VII. The effect to be produced on Israel by the mercies vouchsafed to her. 'She shall sing there as in the days of her youth.'—C. Bradley, *Sermons*, p. 21.

THE VALLEY OF TROUBLING

'I will give her . . . the valley of Achor for a door of hope.'—Hosea ii. 15.

I. 'Achor' means 'troubling,' and the valley got its name from a great crime, a great disaster, and a great act of judicial punishment. The crime was that of Achan, who hid in his tent spoil that ought to have been consecrated to Jehovah. The disaster was the consequent defeat of the Israelites in their assault upon one of the hill cities of Canaan. The judicial act was that, by Divine command, the culprit who had troubled Israel, bringing on it defeat, was stoned to death, his body and all his possessions burned, and a great cairn piled over his ashes. Hosea is prophesying of the captivity in Babylon under the figure of a repetition of the earlier history and the experience of the Exodus. The valley of trouble is turned into a means by which hope draws nearer to the beaten and desponding host.

II. The strength of a Christian man is in his sinlessness. And so we may learn that if we have been beaten once, and again attack, and again are foiled, the shameful disaster is a Divine warning to us to look not only to our equipment, but to our temper, and see whether the reason for failure lies, not only in something wrong in the details or accompaniments of our effort, but in something lacking in the communion which we have with God Himself. But again, Hosea's imaginative use of the old story teaches us how hope may co-exist with trouble, sorrow, trial, affliction, or the like. Such co-existence is quite possible.

III. Hosea here teaches us, not only the possible co-existence of hope and trouble, but the sure issue of rightly borne trouble in a brighter hope. Assuredly if a man has accepted the providences there will follow on the darkest of them a brightening hope. Then there is another reason why the sure child of trouble patiently, Christianly borne, is a more joyful hope. And that reason is set out in full by a man that was an expert in trouble, viz. Paul, when he says, 'tribulation worketh patience'. Thus tribulation which borne in faith works patience, and patience which brings evidence of a Divine Helper, teach us to say, 'Thou hast been my help; Thou wilt be my help'. And so hope is the last blessed result of tribulation.—A. Maclaren, *The Baptist Times and Freeman*, 15 August, 1902, p. 603.

References.—II. 15.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons Preached in Sackville College Chapel*, vol. iii. p. 337. A. Maclaren, *Weekday Evening Addresses*, p. 159. Bishop Lightfoot, *Old Testament Outlines*, p. 266. II. 21, 22.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons on the Prophets*, vol. ii. p. 72. III. 5.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xv. No. 888.

EPHRAIM AND HIS IDOLS

'Ephraim is joined to idols; let him alone.'—Hosea iv. 17.

These words are not intended as a threatening of the cessation of the Divine pleadings. There are no people about whom God says that they are so wedded to any sin that it is no use trying to do anything for them.

I. Ephraim is the name of the Northern Kingdom of Israel, one of the two into which the nation was divided. It is the people in the other, the neighbouring nation, that are spoken to; and what is meant by the 'letting alone' is plainly enough expressed for us in the previous verse: 'Though thou, Israel, be faithful, yet let not Judah offend. . . .

Ephraim (Israel) is joined to idols; (Judah) let him alone'. That is to say, do you not go and walk in his ways, and meet a snare to your soul.

II. Between God's Church and the contiguous world let there be a gulf. Ephraim and the idols are confused and melted together, and the world and its idols are confused and moulded together in the same fashion. So then, if you are joined to them you are joined to their idols; and if you do not let Ephraim alone, you have community with the idolatry which belongs to him.

III. It is a very bad sign of a Christian man when his chosen companions are people that have no sympathy with him in his religion. There may be a great many things about religious people that may repel religious people as religious people of other characters, yet between you, if you are a Christian man, and the most unlike you of your brethren, there is a far deeper sympathy than there is between you and the irreligious man that is most like you in all these things.—A. Maclaren, *Contemporary Pulpit*, vol. vi. p. 56.

References.—IV. 17.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xix. No. 1140. Bishop Woodford, *Occasional Sermons*, vol. i. p. 32.

THE CONFESSION OF SIN

'I will go and return to My place, till they acknowledge their offence, and seek My face: in their affliction they will seek Me early.'—Hosea v. 15.

It is the picture of a father dealing with a child who has not yet owned his fault. The father has been trying to persuade the child, but the child will not confess. Then the father says, 'I will try another way, "I will go and return to my place, till they acknowledge their offence, and seek my face"; my absence will be sure to bring with it sorrow and trouble: and "in their affliction they will seek me early"'. And then it is beautiful to link on the next verse. It is almost a pity that it has been thrown into another chapter. The absence has brought the affliction, and the affliction has brought confession: 'Come, and let us return unto the Lord: for He hath torn, and He will heal us; He hath smitten, and He will bind us up'. We often feel as if God was gone away from us. May it not be that there is just that difference, that distinct boundary-line between absence and presence—'till they shall acknowledge their offence'. And may not that affliction which has visited you have come upon this very errand, to say, 'Confess, confess that secret sin, which is keeping God away from you'? Confess your sins. Bring out those captive kings out of the cavern of your heart. You will find it such a relief; there will come such a sense of liberty; God will be so pleased with you; and you will begin, from that moment, to feel so much happier. There may be very little which stands between you and peace but the silence you are keeping, and the deceit you are practising about some sin. Make the effort. Determine, 'Whatever I am besides, I will be honest, be open, and confess'. But now, let us consider how this confession is to be made.

I. Confess in Humiliation.—Confession is to God, and it should be done with the deepest and most careful humiliation. Whatever can help to humiliation, do it. God requires that the relation with Himself which has been interrupted and reversed by your sin should be re-adjusted. You must go very low down into the dust, and God must go up very high. The one will not do without the other. As self goes down, Christ must go up; and as Christ goes up, self must go down. Put yourself, really and simply, at the very lowest—down into the dust—that is the essence of confession.

II. Particularize Your Sins.—To the same end let your confession to God particularize. Be very minute—as minute, let your confession be, as you can possibly make it. Mention all the little things. Make them stand out in bold relief. It is the sum of confession. Generally, persons are ready enough to confess many, nay, most of their sins—but there is one which they do not like to speak of, even when they are speaking to God. Now, your confession will be nothing at all if you only reach to that. There are a great many good suggestions and rules about confession in the book of Leviticus, 'And it shall be, when he shall be guilty in one of these things, that he shall confess that he hath sinned in that thing'—*that thing*. That thing do you lay out before God in all its parts—the guilty omissions which went before it—the wrong motives—the secret feelings—the aggravating circumstances, the special acts—the guilty pleasure—the resistance of the Spirit, the grievings of conscience—the miserable consequences.

III. Accept the Punishment.—When you confess sin, always do it as one who is accepting punishment. Open your breast to take punishment. Feel and say, 'Lord, I am here—no punishment can be too heavy for me'. But, Oh! Father, 'mercifully look upon our infirmities, and for the glory of Thy name, turn from us all those evils that we most righteously have deserved'. 'O Lord, correct me, but with judgment; not in Thine anger, lest Thou bring me to nothing.'

IV. Lay the Sin upon the Altar.—And at the same moment realize, and do not doubt, that you are laying your sin upon the true altar, the Lord Jesus Christ. As you speak the self-demeaning words, and as you feel the heaviest convictions, believe that you are laying all upon the head of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who shall carry all that is there laid on Him, up, far, far away into a land, not inhabited, where they shall be seen and mentioned no more.

V. Make Some Act of Devotion.—Then go and try to embody that confession, and give it all the force and substance you can, by some holy act—some self-denying labour of love—some gift of God—some special act of devotion.

But true confession to God will always be accompanied with, and will always produce, the wish to make some confession to man. If you have ever stolen anything, restore it. If you have told a lie, acknowledge it. If you have done anything that can hurt anybody's feelings, or anybody's soul, go

and make what amends you can. You owe it to that man, you owe it to your own soul. It will be good evidence to all men of the reality of your faith and love.

References.—V. 15.—J. Keble, *Sermons for Sundays After Trinity*, part ii. p. 289. J. Vaughan, *Sermons* (6th Series), p. 14. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxv. No. 1493. VI. 1.—J. Baldwin Brown, *The Sunday Afternoon*, p. 269. VI. 1-10.—F. Hastings, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxix. p. 261. VI. 3.—T. R. Williams, *Sermons by Welshmen*, p. 169. J. M. Neale, *Sermons on the Prophets*, vol. ii. p. 72. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxi. No. 1246.

Hosea vi. 4.

My text is the sad Divine comment upon the apparently genuine repentance and quick return to God expressed in previous verses. But God sees how flimsy and hollow that repentance is.

I. It is a strange and awful fact that men can thwart God. The words of the text express perplexity, and it would seem as if we must accept them as implying the failure of every weapon He has. It is a mystery, but it is no less a certainty. But it is not owing to deficiency in his appliances.

II. The most dangerous of all man's ways of thwarting God is through transient impulses and resolutions.

III. Our resolutions to amend are incomplete, and usually arise from fear or pain.

IV. The Divine effort to amend us persists. What is the effect of all our unbelief upon God? It is not to make Him angry, not to make Him pause, but to heighten the energy of His efforts.—A. Maclaren.

References.—VI. 4.—H. W. Beecher, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xx. p. 1381.

MERCY, AND NOT SACRIFICE

'For I desire mercy, and not sacrifice, and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings.'—Hosea vi. 6.

Hosea conceives the relation of Jehovah to His people as a moral union.

I. Not with violence, but gently, with tender indulgence and consideration, had they been treated; Jehovah had shown towards them the love and regard of a father. Israel, as an aggregate of individual persons, is Jehovah's family; and between the members of a family governed by such a Head, mutual loyalty and kindness, mutual consideration and regard, ought instinctively to prevail, and form a natural bond regulating the intercourse of each with his fellow-man.

II. By 'knowledge of God,' Hosea here means not a merely intellectual apprehension of His nature, but a knowledge displaying itself in conduct, a knowledge of His power, His influence, and His character, resting upon spiritual experience, and resulting in moral practice.

III. The Israelites, Hosea says, had misapprehended the nature of Jehovah's demands: they were prompt, and even punctilious, in the performance of outward religious ceremonies, supposing that this would satisfy His requirements; but what He delighted in was conduct governed consistently by a moral purpose, and a life regulated by a cheerful regard for the rights and needs of other men: sacrifice was offered properly as the expression of a right state of heart, but it could not be accepted in lieu of it; it was valueless unless accompanied by sincerity of purpose and integrity of life.

IV. Mercy and not sacrifice! The knowledge of God, rather than burnt offerings! The saying is one of those pregnant ones which abound in the writings of the prophets, and which, expanded and generalized, became the basis of the teaching of Christ. Christ enforced anew the true character of religion. The citizen of the Kingdom of Heaven was recognized, not by external marks, but by Godlike dispositions, by humility, meekness, the aspiration after goodness, simplicity.—S. R. Driver, *Sermons*, p. 217.

A FALSE STANDARD

'But they like men have transgressed the covenant; there have they dealt treacherously with Me.'—Hosea vi. 7.

In the Old Testament the idea of covenant colours the whole history. Pious Jews looking back interpreted the past of their race by this great thought. They were the children of the promise, and the promise was the gracious relationship into which God entered with the people of Israel. To Hosea it was a figure of speech by which he expressed his interpretation of the spiritual history of Israel, stating the terms of love in which God stood towards them, and on the other side the moral obligations that lay upon them in view of that gracious attitude. Israel's privilege meant Israel's duty. The covenant was broken when they ceased to do justly and love mercy and walk humbly with God. They put themselves out of that sweet relationship, wilfully robbed themselves of the promise, when they did not perform their part of the loving contract. They took the rank and place of other men. They like men transgressed the covenant. Thus these words are more than an assertion of universal human fallibility, more than saying that it is human to err, like men to transgress. It is the assertion of a higher standard for Israel. Israel had special privileges, peculiar opportunities, and was charged with a mission. To fail, to be after all only like other men, was to come under heavier condemnation. If they are not better than others they are worse; for they have sinned against clearer light, and sinned against special love.

I. The principle of this greater condemnation is a common one, and works out in every relationship of life. Every step of progress sets a new standard; and men are judged not by what they have passed on the way, but by what they have attained. Every advance is a fresh obligation. New knowledge is new duty. The higher you rise, the higher rises the standard of judgment. Do you complain? Nay, it is the reward of efficiency. In business the capable man is not laid on the shelf as a reward for his capacity. He is promoted, advanced to harder and more responsible positions. It is the practice of life; and we recognize the principle in every sphere.

II. There is, however, a constant tendency to level down the standard, and to be content with just what is expected by the mass. It was against this tendency that the prophets ever had to strive. The higher religion with its sterner, simpler rites, with its great moral claims on life, was ever menaced by the surrounding idolatries with their appeal to sense and their laxer standard. There was also a heathen party in Israel, even in her most faithful days, a party ever ready to take advantage of every weakening of the religious conscience and ever making a strong appeal to the lower instincts of the nation. Why should they be bound to a covenant so severe? Why not be like the men of the place, like the men around them, who get on very well and have a happier time where less is expected of them? The strongest count in Hosea's indictment against them, that 'they like men transgressed the covenant' was also the strongest temptation. It is the common temptation still to accommodate oneself to environment. We excuse ourselves that we are just like men when we transgress the covenant, the covenant which our own hearts acknowledge.

III. The men who will sneer at you as a 'saint' will admire you for being what they call a man of the world. You will get plenty of help in being like others, and plenty of hindrance in attempting the exceptional or uncommon. In addition to this outside pressure of a low worldly standard, another subtle encouragement to reduce the level of conduct is due to a disillusionment which comes regarding others, sometimes in men we have admired and looked up to. We find they are like men, hampered by the same weakness, liable to the same temptations, overtaken by the same faults. We take a low estimate of human nature, and bring down our own standard of duty to suit it. On such reasoning there could be no progress at all. There would be no stainless peaks on earth; only a dreary level. We have not come to our kingdom as men till we have got past the merely social conscience, the outside standard of others, and have within ourselves a measure of right and wrong and are parties to a personal covenant in which we stand to God.—Hugh Black, *University Sermons*, p. 175.

References.—VII. 8.—J. Baines, *Sermons*, p. 100. C. J. Vaughan, *Lessons of Life and Godliness*, p. 65. VII. 9.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xiv. No. 830. VIII. 2.—J. N. Norton, *Old Paths*, p. 172. J. H. Hitchens, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxvii. p. 59. VIII. 12.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. i. No. 15. X. 2.—*Ibid.* vol. v. No. 276. X. 12.—E. Bleucowe, *Plain Sermons to a Country Congregation* (2nd Series), p. 231. XI. 1.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxviii. No. 1675. XI. 3, 4.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons on the Prophets*, vol. ii. p. 87.

SOW TO YOURSELVES

'Sow to yourselves in righteousness, reap in mercy.'—Hosea x. 12.

Our hearts are like a field, and if we neglect them the only crop we can look for is the natural weeds of the soil; but if we get our hearts made clean and then diligently sow to ourselves in righteousness, we may hope for a gracious and holy harvest.

I. We are to sow to ourselves. Religion is personal, and our first duty is to look well to ourselves.

(*a*) Our own spiritual comfort is of paramount importance.

(*b*) In order to sow in righteousness, unrighteousness must be put away.

II. What shall we sow? We are to sow in righteousness—that is, we are to cultivate and practise the things which constitute a righteous and godly life. To sow in righteousness—

(*a*) We must have simple, earnest faith.

(*b*) We must cherish a holy dread of sin.

(*c*) We must seek after spiritual knowledge.

(*d*) We must cultivate love.

(*e*) We must maintain Christian habits.

What our habits should be we may easily learn from the Word of God. This sowing in righteousness must be constant.

III. If we sow we shall also reap. 'Reap in mercy.' The reaping mercy will be in this world as well as in the next. Religion bears present fruit.

(*a*) One result of sowing in righteousness will be strength and stability.

(*b*) Another result of righteous sowing will be spiritual comfort and joy.

(*c*) We are to reap in mercy—God's infinite everlasting mercy to His children. Mercy for all our need. Mercy for ever. Only sow to yourselves in righteousness, and you shall reap according to mercy—in the life that now is, and in that which is to come.—G. Charlesworth, *Sermonic Suggestions*, p. 19.

SEEKING THE LORD AN IMMEDIATE DUTY

'It is time to seek the Lord.'—Hosea x. 12.

The state of the people of Israel was such that they had need to seek God by repentance and prayer. But the text is equally applicable to all who are not at peace with God.

I. A Great and Solemn Duty.—The duty of seeking God is the first and most pressing duty of every sinner.

(*a*) The text implies that God has been forsaken, or forgotten. This is true of all who have not repented and come to God.

(*b*) Since man, as a sinner, is estranged from God, his duty is to seek God by repentance and prayer.

(*c*) Seeking God implies faith in Jesus Christ.

(*d*) Only by seeking God can we be delivered from sin and its dreadful consequences.

II. It is Time to Seek.

(*a*) That it is time to seek the Lord is clear from the plain teaching of Scripture.

(*b*) It is time to seek the Lord because much evil has already been committed.

(*c*) It is time to seek the Lord because difficulties are increased by delay.

(*d*) It is time to seek the Lord because life is so uncertain.—G. Charlesworth, *Sermonic Suggestions*, p. 22.

CORDS OF A MAN

'I drew them with cords of a man, with bands of love: and I was to them as they that take off the yoke on their jaws, and I laid meat before them.'—Hosea xi. 4.

Hosea, who lived at the decline and fall of the Northern Kingdom of Israel, had to speak mostly of doom. The Prophet, loving his country with a passionate devotion, had no hope for the future except from the mercy of God using the inevitable chastisement to bring Israel back to a purer faith and a nobler life.

I. In the earliest days of all God taught the nation to walk, holding it by the arms, with patience and affection, as a mother teaches her child, encouraging him, but not too quickly lest he should overtask his strength; and when he falls taking him up in her arms, comforting and healing him. And then as the nation grew strong and could walk, and like a child now grown to manhood was set tasks and had to bend to serious burdens, like the oxen which did all the draught work in Palestine, the figure changes from that of a loving faith or mother teaching a child to that of a considerate master driving a team of oxen. When Israel was grown up and had to carry heavy burdens, which is the lot of all men, God was to them as a considerate Master, never leaving them, making them feel that He was with them through it all, setting them to the tasks, and gently leading them, and strenuously upholding them, taking His place beside them, treating them with human sympathy, drawing them with cords of a man, with bands of love.

II. They are homely figures of a father with the patience of love towards his little child, and of a wagoner with the kindness of sympathy towards his labouring cattle; but what figures could be more expressive of the thought which Hosea is seeking to express of the constant loving providence of God? His love faileth never. He would still as of old, still even at the eleventh hour, draw them with cords of a man, with bands of love. Is not this explanation of Israel's history the true reading of our own experience. The secret of all God's dealings with us is love. Even in the experience that was hardest to understand, one day it comes to us with the force of a revelation that God has been teaching and training us. It is this that makes the religious man, and distinguishes him from the irreligious. Upon all men are laid the trials and tasks of life; to all men come the burden and the yoke. The religious man knows that God is in all his experience, ever drawing him with cords of a man, with bands of love. This consciousness of a Divine sympathy makes a man strong, and assures him that his life is worth living since it commands the interest of heaven.

III. Hosea saw the past history of Israel to be the very romance of Divine love. It was the key to explain all His dealing with them, from their childhood right on through the long years of training. The revelation of God's Divinity has been a revelation of His humanity, drawing them with the cords of a man, with bands of love. How much more clearly should the Christian Church see this than Hosea, after the greatest of all object-lessons in Jesus Christ! The whole story thrills with human tenderness, with human sympathy, sympathy with men in their joy and their sorrow, sympathy with the little child, and with all on whom the yoke pressed, the labouring and heavy-laden. Can He fail to draw all men unto Himself? With the cords of a man He is drawing men: in the bands of love He is binding the world together. Who can resist the appeal of His broken body and shed blood?—Hugh Black, *Christ's Service of Love*, p. 109.

References.—XI. 4.—Bishop Temple, *Rugby Sermons* (1st Series), p. 1. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xvi. No. 934. XI. 8.—J. Baldwin Brown, *The Sunday Afternoon*, p. 261. XII. 9.—Phillips Brooks, *The Law of Growth*, p. 365. XII. 10.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. iv. No. 206. XIII. 11.—J. H. Newman, *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, vol. iii. p. 29. XIII. 14.—J. Vaughan, *Fifty Sermons* (9th Series), p. 69. H. Melvill, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 1994.

REPENT AND RETURN

'O Israel, return unto the Lord Thy God.'—Hosea xiv. 1.

Hosea's closing appeal is full of tenderness, gracious authoritativeness, and hopefulness.

I. God's Call to Israel.—It was a call to repentance. They had gone far and for a long time from Him. It is not yet too late nor too far to return; but they must return, and not stop short of Him. The simple word 'return' speaks of hope, and may inspire confidence. They are encouraged also by the reminder that they are 'Israel,' the name so significant as their covenant name. Still further are they helped by God's name expressing the relation in which He stood to them, 'The Lord thy God'. Jehovah, their Creator, Benefactor, Redeemer, in covenant with them, and still their God, willing as ever to bless them, and with claims upon them notwithstanding their departure from Him. That which might seem to bar repentance is the very reason for its exercise. The need of repentance is pressed home. The fallen are the proper subjects of repentance.

II. The Method of Returning.—God does not leave Israel in the dark as to the style and spirit of repentance, but gives specific information regarding the acceptable and successful way of returning to Him. '*Take with you words.*' Do not appear before the Lord empty or silent, yet bring no outward gifts or sacrifices; bring only *words*—words of penitent confession. Do not put Him off with vague longings and wistful yearnings and confused thoughts; give shape to your feelings and form your thoughts in words; be definite; say something. Of course the words must come from the heart, and be its true expression. There is to be no sullen silence, but a simple utterance of penitence. Words coming from the heart are worth more than elaborate and costly but heartless sacrifices. Words compel us to analyse our emotions and embody our desires, and fix us down to distinct statements. But such words as God thus requires are not natural to those fallen in iniquity.

God Himself gives them; He fills our mouth with arguments.

III. What Words Shall We Take?—'Say unto Him'—

(*a*) '*Take away all iniquity.*' A great saying, involving confession of our iniquity, the need of its removal, God's power and readiness to remove it, our inability to remove it.

(*b*) '*Receive us graciously;*' literally, 'receive good'; *q.d.* accept the only good thing we bring, the confession which we offer, and which Thou hast put into our heart and mouth.

(*c*) '*So will we render the calves of our lips,*' i.e. present the prayers and praises of our lips as thankofferings. This stands for the vow of a new and changed life of devotion to God's worship and service. It is the promise of self-consecration to God—an indispensable element in true repentance, without which prayer for forgiveness becomes little else than a request for liberty to sin afresh, and with impunity.

(*d*) '*Asshur shall not save us;* we will not ride upon horses, neither will we say any more to the work of our hands, Ye are our gods.' These words primarily refer to two serious breaches of Israel's covenant relation. They had recourse to foreign aid in national straits, instead of calling on Jehovah. Sometimes they looked to Assyria and sometimes to Egypt, the great country for horses and chariots. They had also fallen into idolatrous worship, and gone deeper until they worshipped gods of their own making. They had, in short, depended on foreign help and on their own devices. This dependence they abjure. All other confidences than God are to be rejected; all worldly policies and refuges and helps forsaken; all trust in self, or in any work of our own hands, renounced.

(*e*) '*In Thee the fatherless findeth mercy.*' This is to back up the whole penitential prayer. It is a revelation and assurance of the compassionate nature of God. It is an appropriate encouragement to a penitent sinner coming back to God, away from Whom he has been truly fatherless, coming back conscious of his loneliness and dependence as a desolate orphan.

PUBLIC WORSHIP

'So will we render the calves of our lips.'—HOSEA XIV. 2.

THERE is but One Priest Who in His own right can approach God; but One Mediator Who can plead His own goodness; and so there is but One propitiatory, expiatory sacrifice, even 'the One full, perfect, and sufficient Sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction,' once made upon the Cross, for the sins of the whole world. There never has been, there never will be, any other. Except for this one and only Atonement, nothing we could say, think, or do, would be acceptable to God; but for this we should remain as we were born, an accursed race.

But though this be true, yet, with respect to those who rely on the intercession of that one great Priest, and, by faith, plead and apply to their souls the merits of that One expiatory sacrifice, the Spirit teaches us that they render unto God acceptable service; God for Christ's sake will permit them to approach Him, and accept a service at their hands. And this gives us the idea of a sacrifice. For a sacrifice is something presented to God, in behalf of man, by persons Divinely appointed to 'offer gifts unto the Lord'. In this sense, the 'blood of bulls and of goats,' under the law, became a typical sacrifice; and, under the Gospel, the Eucharist is thus designated, being a commemorative sacrifice. But according to Scripture—

I. Public worship is also a sacrifice, and it is very essential to represent it as such. This doctrine is directly implied in the text by a figure of speech. As calves were offered in sacrifice, so are the lips of worshippers to be as calves; they are to offer to God the sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving (Amos IV. 5; Heb. XIII. 15). St. Peter, speaking of the Christian Church, says: 'Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ' (1 Peter II. 5). He cannot here refer to the Eucharist, because he is addressing Christians generally as a holy priesthood, and the celebration of the Eucharist requires the intervention of a special order of men separated from among the general body of believers; he must, therefore, refer to the service of public or common prayer, which he describes as a spiritual sacrifice. The sacrifice offered in public worship is the Sacrifice of Prayer and Praise. It is offered in each congregation for the Church universal, for the Church of the province, for the Church of the diocese, more especially for the Church of the parish, and for all the members of the same; it is offered by the assembled worshippers, being baptized persons, 'continuing steadfastly in the Apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers' (Acts II. 42). Such persons are for this purpose 'an holy Priesthood,' appointed to offer up these 'spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ' (1 Pet. II. 5, 9; Rev. I. 5, 6; V. 9, 10). As certain believers are elected from their brethren, and ordained to be priests for the higher service of the Holy Eucharist, and that they may bless the people in the Name of Him Whose ministers they are; so are the members of the Church, as their name denotes (Ecclesia), a people 'called out' of mankind, to act as priests in the general sacrifice of prayer and thanksgiving; and, although the presence of ministers is required in the conduct of the morning and evening prayers, by the responses ample provision is made for the people generally to discharge their priestly function.

It would appear, then, that we are all permitted, for the sake of a crucified Saviour, to draw nigh unto God with boldness, and to offer Him a gift, even our reasonable service, our service of prayer and praise, which, through the mediation of an Interceding Saviour, is a sacrifice acceptable to God.

II. Now let this view be taken of the public worship of the Church, and we shall discharge this, our bounden duty and service, with very different feelings from those who regard it as doing openly what they do when they pray in private. We shall not palliate neglect of public worship, if no sermon be preached, by saying that we can pray at home as well as in the Sanctuary. When we regard public worship as a sacrifice, we look off from ourselves, and on to God; we are exerting all our energies to glorify God. That our own souls will be benefited is most true; but by it we are called off from that self-contemplation which makes men 'lovers of their own selves'. Prayer is beneficial to the soul. And as God is praised, God blesses; and in the blessing which alights on the Church, each living member, each 'lively stone,' has his share.

REFERENCE.—XIV. 5.—J. H. Norton, *The King's Ferry-boat*, p. 135.

THE DEW AND ITS INFLUENCES

'I will be as the dew unto Israel: he shall grow as the lily, and cast forth his roots as Lebanon.'—HOSEA XIV. 5.

CONSIDER some of the points of analogy between dew and the work of Christ and His Spirit.

I. *Dew is silent, gentle, and noiseless in its operations.* The dew moves on the noiseless wing of night. The eye cannot see, the ear cannot hear its silent and secret fall. It eludes the touch. The great forces of nature which influence the being, the life, the comfort, and joy of man, work the most silently.

II. *The dew is free and copious.* The abundant supply of the Spirit implied in the promise which is the subject of my sermon is aptly typified in the world of nature.

How free is the grace of God! 'I will love them freely.' The believer is freely loved (Deut. VII. 7, 8); freely chosen (Eph. I. 4-8). Christ is the gift of free love (John III. 16). The spirit is free: 'Uphold me with Thy free Spirit' (Ps. LI. 12). Our justification is free (Rom. III. 24); our adoption free (Eph. I. 5); our entire salvation free (Titus III. 5; Acts XV. 11)—like the 'dew of the Lord that waiteth not for man, nor tarrieth for the sons of men'. 'The morning light comes unfettered by any condition, and so also descends the rain. They are like God's greatest gifts, without money and without price; and they come with an overflowing plenty, for freeness and fullness go hand in hand.'

III. *Dew refreshes, revives, and invigorates.* Who has not felt and seen the refreshing influences of the dew in the early summer morning, when every blade of grass and every leaf has sparkled like a diamond in the morning light?

How the Israelites, when marching through the arid desert, must have enjoyed the baptism of the cloud! When any one has experienced the fiery power of the law, or when some assault of Satan has stirred up the passions of the soul, or when some fiery trial has come upon him, how comforting and refreshing the sweet influences of the heavenly dew! 'Shall not the dew assuage the heat?' (Ecclus. XVIII. 16). So copious is the grace, and yet so gentle is the influence, that it does not break the bruised reed nor injure the most tender plant. It is on this account, because of its refreshing and reviving effects, that the dew symbolizes the mission of the Israel of God in the world around. The 'remnant of Jacob shall be in the midst of many people as a dew from the Lord'. So shall it be with Israel as a people among the nations of the earth in the time of their regeneration.

IV. I have only time to add one more analogy between the dew and the work of the Holy Spirit. *Dew fructifies and matures.* Rains and dews are a chief cause of all fruitfulness. In nature the quantity of the fruit as much depends upon the rain and dew as upon the sun. 'So the believer's growth and fruitfulness are equally dependent upon the Spirit of grace from Christ Jesus, as upon the glories of His person and the fullness of His work; these, indeed, are in order to the other, and the fullness of the Spirit is in His hand to give, and promised by Him to all His people.' Wherever there is much of the Spirit's influence, there, of necessity, will much fruit be brought forth to God.—J. W. BARDSLEY, *Many Mansions*, p. 265.

GOD'S LOVE FOR ISRAEL

'I will be as the dew unto Israel.'—HOSEA XIV. 5, 6.

I. The departure of Israel from God. No figure which could be imagined could be so true of God's love for Israel; none so accurately describe that love which was stronger than her sin. The sadness of God as he looks upon Israel is given in the strongest form in this parable.

II. The ruin which follows departure from God. The sin of Israel was deep, of the darkest order, and yet the love of God is deeper, and will not be turned.

III. There are offers of mercy and restoration. It is the one great feature of this book. In every utterance of woe there is an undercurrent of the tenderest gentleness, continually breaking out into entreaty and sorrow. The application is clear. Be careful to regard the Divine order of things. The safety of home, the security of the nation is endangered when men begin to defy that Divine order, and loosen the ancient bands of morality.—H. GREENE, *The Church Homilist*, p. 229.

THE DEW AND THE PLANTS

'I will be as the dew unto Israel; he shall grow as the lily, and cast forth his roots as Lebanon. His branches shall spread, and his beauty shall be as the olive-tree, and his smell as Lebanon.'—HOSEA XIV. 5, 6.

HOSEA is eminently the Prophet of repentance and of pardoning love. The text comes from a fervent and tender appeal to Israel to come back to its God. The Prophet presses into service the lily, the cedar, the olive, and the springing corn and the blossoming vine, as symbols of what God is able and willing to do to penitents that come back and submit themselves to His influence.

I. The source of fruitfulness. The deceitful ray of prosperity is full of danger to the spiritual life, and no less cruel are the fervid beams of fiery temptation with which we have all to be tried. And where is our strength? I know but one source of it—that we shall receive the communications of that spiritual life, the gift of which is the central blessing of the Gospel. So we have to begin with confession; we have to begin with penitence; we have to receive into opening hearts the welcome of our pardoning Father, and then we may be sure that we shall receive the promised gift. And the silent influence will come stealing over the landscape, and everything that was wilting and drooping in the deadly sunshine will be freshened and restored in the cool stillness of the moist-laden night.

II. The profuse beauty which will follow the fall of the dew. 'He shall grow as the lily.' A profusion of grace ought to match the profusion with which the dew comes from God. But let Christian people remember what a great many are apt to forget, that we are bound to try to make our Christianity attractive. Grace means both a gift from God and beauty; and the double meaning of the word should always be kept in mind. There ought to be the beauty of holiness where there is the dew from the Lord.

III. The strength which should go with the beauty. To the beauty of the fragile lily we must add the strength of the stable cedar. There must be strength conjoined with beauty in a world like ours, full of conflict and strength. If you are to be beautiful you have to be strong. The only way to be strong is to 'stand fast in the Lord, and in the power of His might'. Open your hearts to God's dew, and you will have the beauty of the lily and the strength of the cedar.

IV. The fruitfulness which should crown beauty and strength. On our barren stems little that is good can grow. We must be grafted into the true Vine. Vital union with Jesus Christ through simple faith is the condition of all true goodness. A man that is apart from Christ does nothing and is nothing, and is whirled away at last before the storm.—A. Maclaren, *Christian Commonwealth*, 27 April, 1899, p. 488.

References.—XIV. 5, 6.—J. Vaughan, *Sermons* (10th Series), p. 181. XIV. 7.—J. Keble, *Sermons for Holy Week*, p. 163. XIV. 8.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxiii. No. 1339. XIV. 9.—J. M. Gibson, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxxii. p. 344.

JOEL

JOEL

THE MESSAGE OF THE BOOK OF JOEL

'The word of the Lord that came to Joel.'—Joel i. 1.

The book of Joel, as we have it, consists of two parts.

I. A violent plague of locusts had visited the land, and from this destruction the Prophet saw nothing to save the people but repentance. In his call to repentance we notice four suggestions.

(*a*) He discovers to the people the condition of affairs. He challenges them to say whether, in the memory of anyone living, a crisis of such importance had arisen.

(*b*) He bids them wait for the desolation that covers the land. He calls in the nation to weep as a virgin mourning for the spouse of her youth.

(*c*) He warns them that all that has happened is but the prelude of more awful judgments.

(*d*) But having described to them the greatness of their danger, the Prophet goes on to tell them that from this danger they can only escape by genuine contrition and sincere repentance.

II. The Prophet's call to repentance had not been in vain, and to the humble and penitent nation Joel was sent to declare the Divine promise. In this we notice that it was:—

(*a*) A promise of Restoration. Very shortly after refreshing showers had fallen, and the country, bare, barren, and desolate, was once more showing signs of life.

(*b*) A promise of Refreshment. Upon the nation penitent and restored, the gift of God's spirit was to fall, bringing with it a new revelation of God, and a new power to serve Him in the world.

(*c*) A promise of Deliverance. The day of the Lord, which was certainly coming, was to be a day of salvation to the Lord's people by being a day of destruction to their enemies.

(*d*) A promise of Rest. No more famine, no more scarcity, no more barrenness, no more conflict; but rest and peace and joy in favour of the Lord.

III. The story of the book of Joel is a story with a national bearing. The language of this book had a clear and definite meaning for those to whom it was spoken, and no doubt much in the book has been already fulfilled. But the fulfilment of the book as a whole belongs to the time of the millennial glory when Israel shall have received and enthroned as King her long rejected Messiah.

IV. But let us not lose sight of its individual bearing. It is a call to contrition and repentance. God bids us recognize, and that speedily, the sinfulness of our present lives, and bids us humble ourselves before Him because of that.—G. H. C. Macgregor, *Messages of the Old Testament*, p. 167.

References.—II. 1.—J. Keble, *Sermons for Sundays After Trinity*, part ii. p. 342. G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, pp. 163, 272.

CONVERSION

(Ash Wednesday)

'Turn ye even to Me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning.'—Joel ii. 12.

A great national calamity, either impending or just passed, was the occasion of the prophecy of Joel. It is traceable to national sin, and its remedy is national repentance.

The words of our text bring before us a matter which is peculiarly fit for Ash Wednesday consideration—the doctrine of Conversion; for conversion is the first step in that life of penitence to which Lent calls us. But conversion is a subject about which there is much misunderstanding.

I. What Conversion is not.

(*a*) Many persons confound conversion with regeneration, with which it has hardly anything in common. The grace of regeneration can be given but once, for we can only be born once, but conversion may be necessary many times in our life, as often indeed as we turn away from God.

(*b*) Conversion is not always the same in every one. With some, like St. Paul, it is instantaneous; with others it is gradual, and so free from any special manifestation that they can hardly tell when they were converted.

(*c*) Conversion is not everything, it is only the first step in the life of penitence, and of little use if it does not lead to the fullness of Christian fellowship.

II. What Conversion is.—It is the turning of the will to God. By the gift of free will, which God has bestowed upon us, we are able to make our actions meritorious by doing them freely, with the love of God as their motive, and the glory of God as their end.

III. There are Many Degrees of Sin Possible in Man.

(*a*) We can live in open rebellion.

(*b*) We can compromise, and while serving God outwardly, we may fall short of conformity to His will.

IV. Conversion.

(*a*) Must be thorough. We must turn to God with our entire will.

(*b*) The accompaniments of conversion are, fasting, weeping, and mourning; these are signs of deep penitence, and all are fruits of a thorough conversion.

—A. G. Mortimer, *One Hundred Miniature Sermons*, p. 161.

References.—II. 12.—J. E. Vaux, *Sermon Notes* (1st Series), pp. 36, 38. II. 12, 13.—E. Bleneowe, *Plain Sermons to a Country Congregation* (2nd Series), p. 138. G. W. Brameld, *Practical Sermons*, p. 58. Bishop How, *Plain Words* (1st Series), p. 33. II. 17.—J. Keble, *Sermons for Septuagesima to Ash Wednesday*, p. 352. II. 25.—F. W. Farrar, *The Fall of Man*, p. 292. J. Vaughan, *Old Testament Outlines*, p. 273. II. 26.—J. Keble, *Sermons for Septuagesima to Ash Wednesday*, p. 249. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xix. No. 1098. H. Melvill, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 1541. J. Vaughan, *Fifty Sermons* (2nd Series), p. 220. II. 28.—E. Bayley, *Sermons on the Work and Person of the Holy Spirit*, p. 221. II. 28-32.—*Ibid.* p. 1.

A MESSAGE OF DELIVERANCE

(Ash Wednesday)

'And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be delivered.'—Joel II. 32.

This verse occurs three times over in the Scriptures, once here in the old dispensation, once again on the birthday of the new, and once again thirty years later, when the great Apostle was facing the problem of the admission to the Church of the Gentiles.

I. The Message Proclaimed:—

(*a*) *By the Prophet Joel.*—Nearly three thousand years ago the words were spoken first. Judea had reached a period of prosperity, but both king and people had forgotten to walk humbly with their God. And Joel tells, in language which cannot be misunderstood, what must happen to a nation which will live without God. Is there then no hope for the people? He passes on to tell them of the hope that there is in the Lord (Joel II. 12 and 13). Even the fire of prophecy burns up afresh. Joel sings a song which is full of joy (II. 24). Further still he looks to the dawn of the new dispensation. 'I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh.' Then further still, to the end of the dispensation on earth altogether. Then, even then, it shall come to pass that 'whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be delivered'.

(*b*) *By St. Peter.*—Eight hundred years later, when the Day of Pentecost has come, St. Peter is about to preach the first Christian sermon, and our text was his text. When the sermon was over, there was such a result as proved God's blessing on his interpretation of the text: for men were moved, not in hundreds but in thousands, to ask the great question, 'What shall I do?'

(*c*) *By St. Paul.*—The world rolls on again for thirty years, steadily becoming worse, and the Apostle to the Gentiles, grasping for the first time with full force the magnificent width of the Christian Church, also takes up this text, and looking round on all the darkness of the heathen world, on the hollowness which was creeping even then into the infant Church, he declares with emphasis that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.

II. A Message for To-day.—That was the message with which the Church went out into the world, that is the message the Church has preached ever since, and it is the message the Church delivers to-day. And to-day, as we enter upon this holy season of Lent, we do well to remember that the message has never at any time lost its force. Do not let us explain it away. Do not let us think it cannot be accepted literally. It is exactly and literally true. By that message we must be judged some day. If it be 'easy' as some say to call upon the Lord, it is only because all that was hard was taken by Him and borne for us. Do not let us think that salvation is so complicated a thing that it cannot be contained in a message like that. It is true that salvation is a very wide and deep thing, but the first thing it must mean to every soul is salvation from the wrath of God. The criminal under sentence of death must first be pardoned, and know it, before he can come out and live a life worth living. 'Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord,' aye, even now, 'shall be delivered,' shall be saved from the wrath upon him because of original sin, from the burden of the guilt which belongs to him from actual sin, shall know that he has passed from death into life, the life which Christ gives him as a gift.

III. A Personal Question.—Have you ever made one real effort to call upon the name of the Lord to be saved? This is the question I would press home upon you at this Lenten season. What does the message mean? Simply this—faith, which acknowledges Jesus as the Saviour. Faith first, which looks up to Him believing that He is able to do what I long for Him to do. Then, secondly, simple acceptance. I must be ready to take what He gives, to accept it, to believe it, to rest upon it.

References.—II. 32.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxxii. No. 1931. III. 14.—J. C. M. Bellew, *Sermons*, vol. i. p. 109. III. 21.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. vii. No. 379. R. F. Norton, *The Hidden Guest*, p. 233.

AMOS

AMOS

THE PROPHET AMOS

'The words of Amos.'—Amos i. 1.

To estimate the Prophets' message we must consider something of the times in which they lived and the circumstances under which they spoke. Let us do so in the case of the Prophet Amos, from whose writings our lessons for to-day are taken. You will notice as you study the prophetical books of the Old Testament that in almost every case the writing opens with a short description of the writer and precise mention of the time during which his witness was given.

I. The Prophet Amos.—The book of Amos opens with these words: 'The words of Amos, who was among the herdmen of Tekoa, which he saw concerning Israel in the days of Uzziah King of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam the son of Joash King of Israel, two years before the earthquake'. We learn here one or two interesting particulars. In the first place, Amos was of humble origin. He had not been brought up in the stir and bustle of town life, but away on the open downs and pastures which stretch to the south of Jerusalem, where he had tended his flocks and pruned his sycamore-trees, far from the haunts of men, his experience of towns confined probably to the yearly journey to one of the markets of the land to sell his wool and dispose of his fruit; and so there he appeared, a mere yokel, in the midst of the festival of Bethel, and was roughly bidden by Amaziah to go about his business. 'I was no prophet, neither was I a prophet's son; but I was an herdman, and a gatherer of sycamore fruit: and the Lord took me as I followed the flock, and the Lord said unto me, Go, prophesy unto My people Israel.' God has His own way of preparing His servants for their work, and Amos is not the only Prophet who was in the deserts until the day of his showing unto Israel. There, in the unmitigated wilderness, as a graphic writer calls it, where life is reduced to poverty and danger, where Nature starves the imagination but excites the faculties of perception and curiosity, with the mountain tops, the sunrise in his face, but, above all, with Jerusalem so near, Amos heard the Voice calling him to be a Prophet, and gathered those symbols and figures in which his Prophet's message reaches us with so fresh and so austere an air. The time of his message was the latter part, probably, of the reign of the namesake of the founder of the kingdom, Jeroboam, the second of whom it is said that 'he departed not from all the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin'. In Amos, therefore, as most critics agree, we have the earliest recorded voice of prophecy.

II. To Whom he Spoke.—Now let us try for a moment to estimate the state of society in Israel in the reign of Jeroboam II. The record of his time is in the fourteenth chapter of the second book of Kings. It was a time of singular prosperity. But prosperity and security brought, as is too often the case, grave evils in their train, and the pages of the Prophet disclose a state of society very different from the old. The primitive simplicity had disappeared, and luxury, oppression, and vice were abounding. Partly for defence and partly for pleasure, society was congregating in the towns. Agriculture was being displaced by commerce, and rural simplicity was giving way to the dangers and conventionalities of city life. The rich were conspicuous for their luxury. They had their winter and their summer houses, sumptuously furnished, houses of ivory, and great houses, as Amos called them, where they feasted to excess. Public and private virtues alike had decayed, and, engrossed with their own pleasures, the individuals showed a callous indifference to the moral ruin of their country. 'They are not grieved for affliction of Joseph,' says the Prophet. If the outward ordinances of religion were scrupulously observed, there was no heart worship. They sought evil and not good. Now into such a state of society Amos comes, an unwelcome intruder doubtless, even a despised personality, whose countrified aspect would provoke a smile, but burdened with a message from Jehovah, which he is bold to deliver. In the first place he rudely dispels the fond idea which Israel hugged in its national pride that to the favoured nation of Jehovah no harm could happen. 'You only have I known of all the families of the earth; therefore, I will punish you for all your iniquities.' Such is his startling and almost paradoxical message, and then, in a series of simple figures, drawn from his desert life and shepherd experience, he strives to gain the ear of the people for himself. Having rebuked their self-delusion, he goes on to predict the coming judgment, and in clear terms he lays down what God requires of them.

III. The Message and Our Own Times.—The writings of the Prophets have a function to discharge and a moral to convey to the twentieth century. Recognize, it has been said, that the fundamental meaning of the prophecies must be that which they bore to the living generation to whom they were first addressed, and you are at once inspired by their message to the men of your own time. Yes, and how history repeats itself in the circumstances of our

time! The dangers and temptations of city life, as agriculture gives place to commerce, the snare of luxury, the deadening influence of a mere pleasure-seeking existence, the falling away from the simple life, the pride of national prosperity, the bitter cry of the poor, the delusion of a worship which is merely ceremonial, are not all these things with us to-day, and do they not form a menace not only to national righteousness and justice and purity, but also to that real personal religion, to that seeking the Lord through Him Who is the Light and to Whom the Old Testament witnesses, and whom the New Testament reveals? Are there none here who feel anxious, sometimes, as to the future of their country, none who have grieved over the sins of our age in the great cities of the world, the insensate luxury, the commercial immorality, the unchastity, the callousness, dark stains on her nominal Christianity? Are there none who fear lest God might say, 'Shall I not visit for these things, shall not My soul be avenged on such a nation as this?' We need a Prophet's voice, backed by a Prophet's power. 'Seek the Lord and ye shall live. Seek good and not evil. Seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness.' We need the power which came in another, a much later Prophet's vision, when upon the dry bones lying white and bare in the valley the quickening breath of God came, vivifying them into life and activity. And so upon our beloved land, upon our great cities, upon our congregations, upon individual men and women, we want the Divine breath to come which shall quicken each soul, inducing righteousness, stimulating faith, increasing love, till a great army of true and loyal servants of Jesus Christ stands upon their feet, each one a power for righteousness working unceasingly for the conversion of fresh souls and for the regeneration of society. For it is—and we must never lose sight of the truth—through individual souls seeking for God that the awakening and regeneration must come.

References.—II. 11, 12.—S. R. Driver, *Sermons on Subjects Connected with the Old Testament*, p. 99. II. 13.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. viii. No. 466. III. 1, 2.—H. Hensley Henson, *Christ and the Nation*, p. 117; see also *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxvi. 1904, p. 120. III. 2.—W. R. Inge, *All Saints' Sermons*, 1905-1907, p. 59. H. C. G. Moule, *Fordington Sermons*, p. 39. J. H. Rushbrooke, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxxiii. 1908, p. 259. III. 3.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. x. No. 597; vol. xlvi. No. 2668. W. Hay M. H. Aitken, *Mission Sermons* (3rd Series), p. 82. A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—Ezekiel, Daniel, and the Minor Prophets*, p. 143. III. 3-6.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xii. No. 705. III. 6.—*Ibid.* vol. vii. No. 426. H. D. Rawnsley, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xliv. 1893, p. 389. III. 7.—C. Holland, *Gleanings from a Ministry of Fifty Years*, p. 150. IV. 4-13.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—Ezekiel, Daniel, and the Minor Prophets*, p. 150. IV. 10, 11.—Hugh Price Hughes, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lii. 1897, p. 177. IV. 11.—A. F. Winnington Ingram, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lix. 1901, p. 169. IV. 12.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xvi. No. 923, vol. li. No. 2965. H. P. Liddon, *Advent in St. Paul's*, pp. 317, 329, 343, 355. 'Plain Sermons' by contributors to the *Tracts for the Times*, vol. i. p. 287, vol. vii. p. 225. J. M. Neale, *Sermons Preached in Sackville College Chapel*, vol. i. p. 51. W. C. E. Newbolt, *Church Times*, vol. lii. 1904, p. 793. V. 4.—H. C. Beeching, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxx. 1906, p. 345. V. 4-15.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—Ezekiel, Daniel, and the Minor Prophets*, p. 157. V. 4-27.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. li. No. 2965. V. 5.—Hugh Price Hughes, *Essential Christianity*, p. 179.

THE WORKS OF GOD

'Seek Him that maketh the seven stars, and Orion, and turneth the shadow of death into the morning, and maketh the day dark with night: that calleth for the waters of the sea, and poureth them out upon the face of the earth: the Lord is His name.'—Amos v. 8.

The text brings the works of God and the name of God into one focus, and makes use of both as an argument with man to raise himself from the low and unworthy pretences of religion to Him Who sits high above the magnificence of all material forms, yet deigns to listen to the whisper of a kneeling child.

I. Seek Him because He is Immutable.—This is declared by 'the seven stars and Orion,' and by all the constellations among which the Pleiades are set. It is a wonderful thought that when we look up to the mighty heavens we see precisely what Adam and Eve saw when, through the openings among the trees of Eden, they looked on the same heavens. They beheld the Pleiades, that group of stars so beautifully likened to 'a knot of fire-flies tangled in a silver braid'. They beheld those shining orbs in which we detect the appearance of an armed warrior, and call Orion. Through all the changes of human history those celestial bodies have shone with like brilliancy, and moved with like pomp in the great spaces overhead. The continuance of those material forms may be for millenniums multiplied by millenniums, but eventually they will fade. Yet 'Thou art the same, and Thy years shall have no end'. He was before them, and when they have vanished He will be, in all the grandeur of His being, what He is at the present moment.

II. Seek Him because He is All-powerful.—This also is declared by 'the seven stars and Orion'. Many have looked on the Pleiades as but an insignificant group in the heavens; but that constellation has depths of glory which the unaided eye cannot reach. We count seven stars, but the telescope announces fourteen magnificent sun-like bodies clustered comparatively near to one of the seven. An astonishing universe; and yet we can stand beneath all that pomp of worlds; we can look on the constellations, which are but as the index of wonders far withdrawn into the depths of space, and we can say, 'My Father made them all'.

III. Seek Him because of His Beneficent Activities.—'And turneth the shadow of death into the morning, and maketh the day dark with night: that calleth for the waves of the sea, and poureth them out upon the face of the earth.' How beautiful is morning as it comes with golden sandals and rosy veil through the gates of the east! How beautiful is night! How soft and soothing the shadows with

which it enwraps the earth! How beautiful the silent processes by which the rain is distilled on the thirsty ground! Think of the oceans—those mighty reservoirs of the Most High. Think of the clouds drawn from them; now white as the snows which crown a mountain's forehead; now gorgeous, as if woven of a thousand rainbows; now black as a funeral pall. Think of the rain, how it falls; not in a sudden and overpowering splash; not in a flood, tearing the leaves from the trees and the young shoots from the soil, but in a succession of gentle drops. Is not this gracious Being, Whose hand is in the pleasing changes of day and night, and in 'rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness,' One with Whom it is desirable to live in filial relationship? If we seek Him, He will turn the shadow of every trouble that may hang over us into the beautiful morning of His love; and when He makes the day of life dark with night, He will be so near us, and speak in such a strain of tender, helpful promise, that we shall not be afraid of the darkness; nor will He fail, while we stay below, to make our souls as a fruitful field with the genial, gentle rain of His Holy Spirit.

IV. Seek Him because of His name.—'The Lord is His Name.' It is not simply that He is as Jehovah, or the Self-Existent; for with the announcement of that awful name there is also the announcement of gracious qualities, which embolden us to call Him, not only Lord, but also our Father. Glance at some of those ideas which the ancient saints attached to the Divine name. Jehovah-jireh—the Lord will provide. Jehovah-nissi—Jehovah my banner. This was the name which Moses gave to the altar he built as a memorial of Israel's victory over Amalek. What a banner! Jehovah-shalom—the Lord is my peace. Jehovah-Tsidkenu — the Lord our righteousness. This title is specially connected with the manifestation of God in Christ Jesus. What honour, what safety, in being able to appropriate this name as the confidence of our souls! 'And be found in Him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.'

References.—V. 8.—B. W. Jackson, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxxix. 1891, p. 125. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. liii. No. 3034. V. 18.—E. C. S. Gibson, *Messages from the Old Testament*, p. 215. V. 24.—J. Stalker, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xlii. 1892, p. 388. V. 25, 26.—T. G. Rooke, *The Church in the Wilderness*, p. 265.

Amos vi. 1.

There is a saying which I have heard attributed to Mr. Carlyle about Socrates,—a very happy saying, whether it is really Mr. Carlyle's or not—which excellently marks the essential point in which Hebraism differs from Hellenism. 'Socrates,' this saying goes, 'is terribly *at ease in Zion*'. Hebraism—and here is the source of its wonderful strength—has always been serenely pre-occupied with an awful sense of the impossibility of being at ease in Zion. . . . It is all very well to talk of getting rid of one's ignorance, of seeing things in their reality, and seeing them in their full beauty; but how is this to be done when there is something which thwarts and spoils all our efforts? This something is *sin*.—M. Arnold in *Culture and Anarchy*.

References.—VI. 1.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. vii. No. 417. C. Perren, *Revival Sermons in Outline*, p. 120. VI. 1-8.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. lii. No. 2977. A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—Ezekiel, Daniel, and the Minor Prophets*, p. 163. VI. 6.—A. E. Garvie, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxxiii. 1908, p. 231. VI. 12.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxv. No. 1470; vol. lii. No. 2977. VII. 1-6.—*Ibid.* vol. lii. No. 2977. VII. 7, 8.—*Ibid.* vol. l. No. 2904. R. Winterbotham, *Sermons Preached in Holy Trinity Church, Edinburgh*. VIII. 1.—J. Menzies, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xlii. 1892, p. 112. VIII. 1-14.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—Ezekiel, Daniel, and the Minor Prophets*, p. 169. VIII. 1, 2.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. vi. No. 343. VIII. 9.—W. Huntington, *The Eternal Setting of the Sun, Sermons*, 1781-1877. VIII. 11.—Bishop Lightfoot, *British Weekly Pulpit*, vol. ii. p. 446. H. A. Stimson, *The New Things of God*, p. 85. VIII. 11, 12.—J. J. Tayler, *Christian Aspects of Faith and Duty*, p. 1. IX. 9.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xiv. No. 825. IX. 13.—*Ibid.* vol. vi. No. 296. J. Wallace, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lv. 1899, p. 142.

OBADIAH

OBADIAH

POSSESSIONS POSSESSED

'The house of Jacob shall possess their possessions.'—OBADIAH v. 17.

THEY shall not finally lack anything which is rightly theirs. Their promised inheritance shall ultimately appertain to them. God will see to it that His people have estate corresponding to their dignity of character. 'The house of Jacob shall possess their possessions.'

I. Precious Possessions.—The house of Jacob have 'their possessions'. We are informed by our scholars that the word here rendered 'possessions' is a rare word in the original. A rare word is used to describe rare possessions. So special is the quality of that which is alluded to that a unique word has to be requisitioned. The possessions of the people of God as singularly precious.

The possessions set forth by Obadiah are (1) vision, (2) deliverance, (3) holiness.

II. Precious Possessions Unpossessed. — 'The house of Jacob shall possess their possessions.' That 'shall' is ominous. Do they not possess them now? And if not, why not?

Reason is assigned by Obadiah. The house of Jacob was enduring 'the day of their destruction' (v. 12). It was 'the day of their calamity' (v. 13).

And how had this come about? Alas! Partly as retribution for their past negligence and sin.

They did once possess their possessions, but they had been retributively dispossessed of them. They had proved unworthy of such treasure.

III. Precious Possessions Possessed.—'The house of Jacob shall possess their possessions' is a grander word far on Christian lips than on the lips which uttered it first. The channels of grace deepen as they run through Scripture. Numerous converts to the faith are a precious possession we may possess. John Bunyan said in his immortal *Grace Abounding:* 'I have counted as if I had goodly buildings and lordships in those places where my children were born'. And the glorious evangelist was right in his accounting. No possession is more precious than spiritual children. May Zion's converts be many! May each of us possess our possessions!

Fellowship with God is a possession we may all possess. By grace many of us do possess that precious possession. Temporal provision is another of our possessions, and God promises us we shall possess it. Hold to the promise amid all the strain and poverty of these times, my much-cumbered hearers.

Heaven is of all our possessions the most precious, and that we shall at length possess. God told Abraham that to him and to his seed after him He would give Canaan 'for an everlasting possession'. To the Christian—Abraham's seed—this promise is secured. And when the Lord willeth we shall go in and enjoy the good land for ever.—DINSDALE T. YOUNG, *The Gospel of the Left Hand*, p. 179.

JONAH

JONAH

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RENEWED CONFIDENCE

'I am cast out of Thy sight; yet I will look again toward Thy holy temple.'—JONAH II. 4.

THE Prophet is a picture of the backslider, of the man who has somehow failed to fulfil his vows of obedience and loyalty to God. Sometimes it is by reason of cowardice when confronted by duty, as in the case of Jonah; or again, by wilful sin when compelled to choice, as in the case of Judas; or yet again by neglect when enjoined by the necessities of the case as well as by the Divine Word to wholeheartedness, as with Peter, that men depart from God. No experience of life is less disputed than the difficulty of maintaining attitudes of obedience and faithfulness to spiritual vows. There are few who do not continually run the risk or becoming cast-away, and each of us needs grace not only to serve God, but to serve Him with fear. For even in the slightest defection from the plain path of His will, there lurks the certain power of eventually putting infinite distance between the soul and God. It is a solemn fact, too, that God's love, despite its strength and long-suffering, may eventually be conquered by man's sin and negligence, of which the beginning may be but trifling and insignificant. Hence the history of Jonah's fall and repentance is full of meaning to us all.

I. **'I am cast out of Thy sight'**—thus he speaks when he is at last brought by adversity of circumstance to recognize his own mistake. Hitherto he has lost the sense of sin just because he has lost the sense of God, for these two are ever simultaneous processes. The extremity of need into which the Prophet has been brought has, however, brought him to a knowledge of his sin and has also produced a longing for restoration.

II. The same providential ordering which produces this sense of need and sin also creates hope. The knowledge that God is taking note inspires the wandering soul to say, 'Yet I will look again'. And here the memory of his former looking to the Lord is an encouraging impulse. Nothing was then seen but mercy and love, pity and pardon. And He is still the unchanged Lord. Jonah has found no evil in God at any time, and past experience assures him of the full welcome which awaits the repentant and returning soul. 'I will look again,' for, though far away by his own transgressions, the unfaithful servant is not beyond His help. What courage may we not gather from these words, and from this history of the disobedient messenger! However and wherever we have failed, we need not be hopeless so long as there is in us a God-created consciousness of sin and a willingness to return. The feeblest spark of desire for restoration has been kindled by the fire of His love, and conscience and memory unite in constraining us to 'look again' unto Him who is both Author and Finisher of our faith. And His restoring grace is not limited to a sevenfold experience, nor to an experience repeated seventy-fold!—J. STUART HOLDEN, *The Pre-Eminent Lord*, p. 171.

REFERENCES.—II. 4.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxx. No. 1813. J. M. Neale, *Sermons Preached in Sackville College Chapel*, vol. iii. p. 172. II. 7.—*Ibid.* vol. iii. p. 179. II. 8.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—Ezekiel, Daniel, and the Minor Prophets*, p. 184. J. Duncan, *The Pulpit and the Communion Table*, p. 307. II. 9.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. iii. No. 131. III.—*Ibid.* vol. xliii. No. 2544. III. 1, 2.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons Preached in Sackville College Chapel*, vol. iii. p. 187. III. 1-10.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—Ezekiel, Daniel, and the Minor Prophets*, p. 189. III. 4.—A. G. Mortimer, *One Hundred Miniature Sermons*, vol. i. p. 216. III. 4, 5, 10.—R. E. Hutton, *The Crown of Christ*, vol. i. p. 303.

REPENTANCE

(For Ash Wednesday)

'So the people of Nineveh believed God, and proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them even to the least of them,' etc.—JONAH III. 5, 10.

AMONG all the passages in the picturesque narratives of the Old and New Testaments, there is none that, as a picture, is more wonderfully illustrative of the repentant life than is this. It brings before us three well-defined points.

I. First, as to the cause which leads a man to repentance. The people of Nineveh are here said to

have believed God. I want to submit to you that this curious statement about this people strikes one more forcibly the more one contemplates it. We could imagine the people turning at the sound of the Prophet's voice and seeing there a stranger, and asking each other what it was he was saying. 'Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown? What nonsense this man says! He must be beside himself.' But they say nothing of the sort. Instead, I find that they accepted, according to this story, exactly the judgment that the Prophet foretold. They heard not his voice alone, but they caught the very voice of God, speaking through the Prophet. And, says the story, they believed God. That belief in God was, to the men of Nineveh, the start of their repentance.

II. Then, secondly, here there are recorded the characteristics of the repentant life. Now the vision of God, what is it to you and me? In one way of viewing it, it is the recognition by the mind of man of all that God means. In one very real sense it may be said that God's attributes are Himself. When we think of God, what do our minds realize but His perfect goodness, His perfect holiness? In fact, you may take every attribute, every ideal, and in that which we call God, that attribute, that ideal has its perfect existence. Now when I go and stand beneath that great life and let my mind go out to the recognition of all that God means, and I catch the vision of His perfect goodness, what does that vision do but drive my mind inwards upon itself and make me recognize my own utter badness? When I look upon God as the perfection of all that is merciful, beautiful, holy, what does it do but make me recognize my own absolute failure in His sight, and I stand in the vision of God through the Holy Spirit's agency to see myself lost, and undone, a creature without hope except what hope I have in Him, my Ideal? That vision inevitably creates the sternest sorrow that ever invades the life of a man. Repentance turns the mind from sorrow to prayer. Did you notice that the men of Nineveh, led by their king, were told to cry mightily unto God? Prayer is a characteristic of the life of repentance. We go to a trusted minister of Christ, and we open our grief to him, and tell him our fears; but all that he can do is to guide us to this. 'Cry mightily,' he says, 'to God.' Out of the depths the soul lifts up its voice to God, that He may hear its prayer; and if there is a prayer that ever comes from the soul of man and ascends to the Throne of God, that He cannot turn away from, that He must stretch out His Hand readily and immediately to help, it is the prayer of the repentant soul.

REFERENCES.—III. 5.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons Preached in Sackville College Chapel*, vol. iii. p. 194. W. Howell Evans, *Sermons for the Church's Year*, p. 73. III. 10.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons Preached in Sackville College Chapel*, vol. iii. p. 202.

JONAH IV.

THERE are those, I am afraid, who would rather see their neighbours suffer than their own forebodings fail. Jonah is not the only Prophet of evil whom it has *displeased exceedingly*, and who has been *very angry*, because God is *a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil.* The beautiful apologue of the gourd is still, and, I fear ever will be applicable to many.—JULIUS HARE in *Guesses at Truth.*

JONAH'S CHARACTER

'But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was very angry.'
—JONAH IV. 1.

Jonah's Character.—At first it seems inconsistent and contradictory; but a little consideration shows that he represents a large class in every age, a class in which good and bad traits are combined.

I. Jonah's Anger.—Several causes have been suggested for it, and perhaps almost all of them more or less entered into it.

1. *Personal humiliation;* that his prediction having failed he might be regarded as a false Prophet.

2. *Zeal for God's honour among the heathen,* which might be diminished by the failure of His Prophet's prediction.

3. *The painful contrast between the conversion of Gentile Nineveh and the impenitence of his own people.*

4. *Patriotism;* the danger to his own country of the threatening power of Nineveh. This was probably the principal cause; since, if Nineveh had been destroyed, Israel would have been safe.

His anger causes him such misery that he requests for himself that he may die. God gently rebukes Jonah's anger by the question, 'Doest thou well to be angry?' The best remedy for anger is quiet consideration of the matter, an appeal to our sense of justice, a seeing things as they are in God's sight and not merely in our own prejudiced and selfish vision.

II. God's Gift of the Gourd.—In times of trouble God prepares consolation for the relief of His people. Such a refuge was Jonah's gourd. Jonah quickly recovers his temper. He 'rejoiced with great joy' over the gourd. This reaction is a sign of his peculiar temperament, either very optimistic or very pessimistic.

The gourd, however, did not last. God, who had prepared it, prepared the worm which was to destroy it. But worse still. God prepared a vehement wind, the sirocco.

Again there is a reaction, and Jonah desires to die. God sometimes withdraws the gifts of earthly consolations that we may learn to bear our cross in reliance upon Him, and not to rest in mere amelioration of our troubles and difficulties.

III. Jonah's Character.—He was a sincerely religious man and yet very human. His temperament leads him to vacillate between extremes; first open rebellion against God, then deep penitence; afterwards perfect obedience, then discontent and despair. Throughout we see a strong trait of selfishness. A very contradictory character, and yet true to life.

A man of irascible temper, easily provoked, and then most unreasonable.

There are many lessons we may draw from Jonah's character. Let us dwell on one. Conversion does not mean complete sanctification. The one may be the act of a moment, the result of an overwhelming sense of penitence; the other is the work of many years, often of a lifetime.—A. G. Mortimer, *One Hundred Miniature Sermons*, p. 233.

References.—IV. 1.—*Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxii. 1902, p. 60. IV. 1, 2.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xliii. No. 2544. IV. 3.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons Preached in Sackville College Chapel*, vol. iii. p. 210. IV. 6.—*Ibid.* p. 216. IV. 7. —D. L. Ritchie, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxiv. 1903, p. 310. IV. 10, 11.—A. G. Mortimer, *One Hundred Miniature Sermons*, vol. i. p. 249. IV. 11.—R. Hislop, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxx. 1906, p. 212. A. F. Winnington Ingram. *ibid.* vol. lxxiii. 1908, p. 200

MICAH

MICAH

References.—I. 1-4.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons on the Prophets*, vol. ii. p. 72. I. 5-8.—*Ibid.* p. 109. II. 7.—A. Maclaren, *Christ in the Heart*, p. 305.

THE POLLUTION OF THE WORLD

'Arise ye, and depart; for this is not your rest: because it is polluted, it shall destroy you, even with a sore destruction.'—Micah ii. 10.

We might perhaps suppose that this is an address of Micah to righteous people, and a warning to them that the world is inherently polluted. But the words are not addressed to righteous persons; they are not warnings to righteous persons to arise and depart, in the spirit at least, from the pollutions of the world; they are addressed to those who have caused the world to be polluted, those who are responsible for the pollution of the world. It is a prophetic statement that it is man that has polluted the world, not the world that has polluted man. The verses immediately preceding this are eloquent in that direction; they tell us that those persons who are thus addressed are those who have committed all sorts of crimes; they have stripped the poor man of his raiment by day, of his clothing by night, they have driven out the widows from their quiet habitation; they have gone further and have cut off the young children from the glory of the Lord for ever. These are they to whom this verse is addressed, and they are told to arise and get out, if they can—get out from the world they have polluted.

There is nothing in all this which suggests that view that in the early ages of Christianity many held, to the effect that because the world seemed so wicked, and was so wicked, it could not have been created by an absolutely pure and beneficent Being, but that it must have been created by a being in whom there is blended a great deal of good and evil. There is nothing in this which justifies that philosophic idea developed by early Christian philosophers, that there must have been something inherently bad in the world as created by God.

I. Modern Truth in Ancient Garb.—In this prophecy of Micah there is a wonderful amount of modern work, only of course in ancient dress. He tells, for instance, of great catastrophes that shall come; and this comes home to us when we hear of terrible volcanic eruptions in one part of the world and another; great railway catastrophes—Micah might have foreseen these; he speaks of great catastrophes, chariots and horses—he knew nothing of express railway trains, but he did know of horses and chariots. Cities and strong towers shall be rooted up; they seem to speak to us out of our own experience in quite recent times.

More than that, he tells that there has been a great loss of confidence as between man and man—that you can trust nobody. 'Trust ye not in a friend,' etc.

Again he says that those were times when false teaching was popular; he calls it false prophecy. As you know, prophecy has two meanings, the speaking forth, and the speaking beforehand; here he is speaking of speaking forth—what we call preaching. True, earnest, honest teaching was unpopular, and the people loved to have it so; they desired smooth things. They desired also—they had itching ears—desired new things, things invented by man, not things revealed by God. It was popular to disbelieve all that was revealed to them, to discard all earnest, honest, searching preaching.

Again they were—and this was universal in this time—they were going after idols, false gods. And it is remarkable how time after time the words silver and gold came in; idols of silver and gold. Well, we make ourselves idols of silver and gold. We do not waste the silver and gold making them into molten and graven images, but I put it to you, is it not true that on the face of things there is a great waste of silver and gold now? That as in those days they desired those images and bowed down before them, so there is now a great desire to obtain, at any cost, any sacrifice of what is right, to obtain more and more idols of silver and gold.

And there was the general dislocation of society, the breaking and bursting of social ties as though an earthquake had happened and burst up society; and that especially, Micah says, especially in the capital of the kingdom.

II. These are very Grave Warnings indeed to us.—Not that the world is inherently polluted, but that man has so polluted the world that unless somehow or other he can get himself free from these pollutions, him it will destroy. Now there is a passage very familiar to all of you, and very comforting to us who have to stand on one side and have closely brought home to us a terrible sudden destruction. That passage is where our dear Lord makes a tender revelation on this subject. 'Think you,' He said, 'that those Galileans whose blood Pilate mingled with their sacrifices were sinners above all others? Or think ye that those thirteen on whom the tower of Siloam fell were sinners? I tell you nay; but except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.' These great catastrophes, our Lord Himself said, are warnings to those that survive, not punishment on those

that are destroyed. That is the clear outcome, without any straining or stretching at all—that is the clear outcome of our Lord's own teaching on this which to us now is so tremendously personal a point. A warning to those who survive; not in itself a punishment on those who are destroyed. And that warning we carry about with us in the world. These dangers are always under our feet, these warnings are always ready to burst upon us.

The most recent theory formed by the physicists of the constitution of the earth and the causes of earthquakes is that the solid crust of the earth is but thin; thirty miles is the largest that I have heard it put by eminent physicists, and some put it as low as twenty miles; that inside that, is a packing of some kind, not, as we have been accustomed to believe, of molten stuff, of infinite heat, but a packing of some kind; and that an earthquake is caused by some dislocation of that packing. But I am told that whenever an earthquake is carefully examined into, it always takes the form of a subsidence of the surface, and when a dislocation has taken place in one part of the crust of the earth it is translated also to other parts, and that as time goes on there is a cycle of these until the packing of the earth has got once more into a quiescent state. So that we have always under our feet this possibility, not so very far from us, perhaps thirty miles at the outside, this possibility of displacement of the packing that causes a subsidence in the surface of the earth.

So these warnings are always with us, and we are to take them as warnings and not, surely not, that that dreadful destruction which comes upon a place in an earthquake is because the people are wicked—that it is a judgment on them. Our Lord has warned us of any such idea as that by telling us that it is a warning for us, and that unless we repent we shall all likewise perish.

References.—II. 10.—J. Baines, *Sermons to Country Congregations*, p. 37. II. 13.—J. N. Norton, *Every Sunday*, p. 11. III. 8.—D. W. Simon, *Twice Born and Other Sermons*, p. 46.

THE GOLDEN AGE

'But in the latter days it shall come to pass. . . .'—Micah iv. 1.

The Prophet lifts his eyes away to the latter days to gain refreshment in his present toil. Without the anticipation of a golden age he would lose his buoyancy, and the spirit of endeavour would go out of his work. What are the characteristics of the golden age to which the Prophet was looking with hungry and aspiring spirit?

I. In the golden age emphasis is to be given to the spiritual. In the latter days the spiritual is to have emphasis above pleasure, money, armaments. In whatever prominence these may be seen they are all to be subordinate to the reverence and worship of God. Military prowess and money making and pleasure seeking are to be put in their own place, and not to be permitted to leave it. First things first! 'In the beginning, God.' This is the first characteristic of the golden age.

II. People are to find their confluence and unity in common worship. The brotherhood is to be discovered in spiritual communion. We are not to find profound community upon the river of pleasure or in the ways of business or in the armaments of the castle. These are never permanently cohesive. Pleasure is more frequently divisive than cohesive. It is in the common worship of the one Lord. It is in united adoration of the God revealed in Christ that our brotherhood will be unburied, and we shall realize how rich is our oneness in Him.

III. The conversion of merely destructive force into positive and constructive ministries. 'And they shall beat their swords into plow-shares, and their spears into pruning-hooks.' That is the suggestion we seek in the golden age; all destructive forces are to be changed into helpful ministries. Tongues that speak nothing but malice are to be turned into instructors of wisdom. All men's gifts and powers and all material forces are to be used in the employment of the kingdom of God.

IV. There is to be a distribution of comforts. 'They shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig-tree.' To every mortal man there is to be given a little treasure, a little leisure, a little pleasure. In the golden age peace is to be the attendant of comfort, and both are to be the guests in every man's dwelling.

V. The beautiful final touches in this Prophet's dream; 'I will assemble her that halteth, and I will gather her that is driven out and her that is afflicted'. They are all to be found in God's family. The day of grief is to be ended, mourning shall be the thing of the preparatory day which is over; 'He shall wipe away all tears from the eyes, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away'.—J. H. Jowett, *Homiletic Review*, 1904, vol. xlviii. p. 309.

THE REIGN OF PEACE

'In the last days it shall come to pass that the . . . Lord . . . shall judge among many people, and rebuke strong nations afar off; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks: nation shall not lift up a sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.'—Micah iv. 1, 3.

The Holy Ghost, we say, as we repeat our Creed, spake by the Prophets; and when we read verses like these we feel that we have here one of the great utterances thus inspired and spoken long ago. This vision of the Prophet Micah is recognized as one of the great visions of history, one of those flashes from the Divine life that remains with us as a great possession for all succeeding generations of men, illuminating, enriching, inspiring with a new spirit. But the strange and the melancholy thing is that this vision of the reign among men of the spirit of peace, a vision so noble and so beautiful, and universally recognized as expressing some of the highest and best aspirations of the human heart, still remains unrealized, even in the most advanced and the most Christian communities.

I. These facts of life may well perplex thoughtful

men. Does the goddess of warfare and strife still rule the nations, even the most civilized and the most enlightened among them? Is the issue of the days still practically as far off as it was when Micah saw it in his vision? We acknowledge that, indeed, it is not so. The issue of the days is nearer to us. We see striking phenomena on the other side—great armies of peace, and self-sacrifice, and personal devotion, and charity marching to their lifelong warfare under the banner of Jesus of Nazareth; or, again, we contrast the ways of Turk and Christian, and we see that there is a great gulf separating them in all their moral and spiritual attributes, and that gulf is the witness of what you and I owe to the revelation of Jesus. That revelation has given to men a new sense of the value of each human soul. As under its influence and possessed by its spirit you look in the eyes of man, woman, or child, you are moved to a new feeling of the sacredness of human life. It has given you a new pity for human suffering—in one word, a new sense of humanity.

II. The rule of the Spirit in men's hearts, the history of moral enlightenment and progress, has been strangely partial. It has laid its redeeming hand on one nation, or race, or continent, and left another hardly touched, unmoved. It has changed one half of a man's life and not the other half; changed, for instance, our standards of private conduct but hardly those of political conduct, bringing half of our life into, at any rate, a nominal allegiance to Christ, but leaving the other half practically pagan. How marvellously inconsistent and contradictory are the phenomena of our complex Christian society! And amidst all this there comes to us day by day, little noticed it may be in the excitement of the daily life, the soothing voice of the pleading Saviour as He stands at our side, invisible, but really present with us, calling us one by one to give Him an unstinting and not a conventional or half-hearted allegiance, to make our Christianity a real power, actual and dominant, in the practical affairs of both public and private life.

III. Among the lessons of Christ we have to learn more fully is this one—that war is a weapon of barbarism, a dreadful scourge, and full of misery, and all the more because the miseries fall not on the men who make the war, but on the victims who suffer. Thus a selfish war, a war of greed, a war to satisfy the pride or the personal ambition or temper of a politician, or a really unnecessary or ill-ordered war, is a great crime. Our plain duty is to put goodwill above jealousy and enmity, and to enthrone law in the place of brute force. 'Even in thy warfare thou must be of the peace-making spirit,' said the great Augustine to the soldier of his day. It is a great and a good word for you and for me. Let us carry it with us into all the opinions and the conduct of our common life.

IV. It is because through all the clouds and the dust of politics and of war we see unmistakable signs of the growth and the spread of this love of peace among men, among men of goodwill, that we do not despair. The growing signs of brotherhood among nations, the growing conviction that war is a method of barbarism, the growing feeling that it is a crime, a national crime, to sacrifice the humble multitudes to the ambitions of the comparatively few, the growing recognition that, if the Spirit of Christ is to rule amongst us, and not to be a mere shadow of a name, our conduct must be regulated by law, and justice, and goodwill, and not by force or greed—all this makes for growing peace and extending happiness in the years that lie before us. A great orator declared that what is morally wrong cannot be politically right. It is an obvious truth as we listen to it. Well, then, let us translate it into the language of our practical politics, for it simply means that what would be indefensible or wrong for us, as individuals, to do, cannot be right for the conduct of nations or empires. And it is because of the growing hold of great truths like this upon the consciences and the lives of men that we feel ourselves to be nearer to the ultimate fulfilment of the Prophet's vision, even while what he saw be far off on the distant horizon.

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THE DIVINE REQUIREMENTS

'Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself, before the high God?'—Micah vi. 6.

Such is the question which the Prophet urges upon the people of Israel. He answers it for them in words which we can hardly ever forget, 'He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?' Of these words it is sometimes said that they are the greatest words in the Old Testament. They are, indeed, golden words, and should be carried about by every one who desires to be well inspired and rightly guided in his journey through life. And yet it may be doubted whether they hold anything like the place they deserve to hold in the life and thought of most of us; for, as a rule, we give far too little attention to these writings and appeals of the Hebrew Prophets. Yet it is certain that he who neglects these inspired and inspiring utterances of the Lord's Prophets thereby impoverishes both his moral and spiritual life. This inquiry, for instance, which Micah puts before us with such emphasis—'Wherewith shall I come before the Lord?'—has within it whole departments of life which men scarcely profess to bring before God for inspiration and for guidance in regard to them, and yet it is an inquiry which should surely be

repeated continually concerning all our lives by every soul that looks upward. The Divine answer is always the same, unchanging, pointing the way of the true life: 'What doth the Lord require of thee, O man, but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly'. He puts it before us, you see, as embracing the whole duty of man, and this neglect of the prophetic portion of our Bible, of its searching criticism of life and conduct, involves a great loss both to individuals and nations. Some results of it are plainly obvious in the common life.

I. The Prophets and National Life.—What gives special value to the life and work of these inspired Prophets of Israel and eternal power to their words is that they rise before us as the Divinely illuminated words to a God-fearing people, and they apply—as it should be remembered in every congregation, for it is a supremely important part of the matter—to every quarter and to every grade of the national life. These Prophets represent no class particularly—they represent the outpouring of the Spirit of God upon the heart of the people. One day it is the voice of Amos, the obscure and humble shepherd of the hill country of Judea, hearing the call of God amidst the silence of the hills. Another day it is Isaiah who speaks to us, a man at home in the presence of the royal court. Or it is Jeremiah or Ezekiel, from the heart of the priesthood, or Micah the Prophet of the poor. From every point of the compass in the field of the nation's life they come before us, awakening, assisting, arousing, questioning, appealing, and denouncing, in the name of Jehovah. They are preachers of right conduct. We should live all our life in the presence of the Lord, the righteous judge, in all public affairs as in every private relationship. These preachers of righteousness come as guides, searching national and individual conscience; they voice the will of Jehovah as of a father with his children, and their searching appeal runs through every individual and every national omission or neglect. To these men, the makers of Israel, the only true and faithful precept was that man should strive to put all his life and the life of his country into obedience to the mighty Jehovah, Who loveth righteousness. The result of their teaching, the infection of their spirit, and the power of their message is seen in the uplifting of the national life on the wings of national education, while the rest of the world was morally stagnant.

II. Teaching for Our Own Age.—Surely such teachers are our teachers through all time, and we should do well to uphold their teaching in our day as much as we can, and love this portion of our Bible wherein they are enshrined, which has, as a rule, so little influence over our common life. And in the light of such consideration we take up the grateful words of this Prophet Micah. He flung them out into the life of his countrymen 2600 years ago as the medicine then needed for their souls' good, and we, brethren, have to confess that the medicine is still needed, and the words are never dead—he still speaks as a living contemporary to every one of us in this direct and searching appeal: 'What doth the Lord require of thee? To do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly.' As we look over our lives, over our own hearts or our present habits, over our usual ways and customs, our political servitude to parties rather than to principles—a servitude which seems sometimes to endanger public morals—as we think of the vice with which a great deal of our modern life is filled, as we think of the gospel of pride and appearance which rules in so many of the departments of our life, or the gospel of amusement and self-indulgence which prevails in so many others, we can hardly deny, I think, that we need to be called back to the direct simplicity of ancient and honest faith. It is in these simplicities and sincerities that the moral power of the Hebrew Prophet is especially found. He comes to us straight from communion with God—he is simply the mouthpiece. He has no ambition in his heart but to speak as a preacher of right conduct, and he has no fear of the consequences.

III. Our Duty is Simple.—But many of us, unlike this Hebrew Prophet, are in the habit of talking much about the complexity of moral life or society, and we do not always bear sufficiently in mind that life may be very complex all round, and yet your own duty in the midst of it plain and simple. In matters of conduct or opinion, of custom or of fashion, we feel, very likely, the diversity of the manifold influences playing upon us—the force of many currents that direct us this way or that; or—to change the metaphor—we feel what a tangled web of divers threads it is in which our life is but a part, and so we make our excuses. If our life is, in the main, a purposeless thing, following no clear call of God, moved by no persistent enthusiasm or devotion, doing little or nothing for any of the greater calls that are always appealing to us—as it is all too often—is it not futile to urge as our apology that life is so very complex? This ancient man of God, with his Prophet's mission, tears off all the web of sophistry with this plain question—'What doth the Lord require of thee?' And his answer solves for us, if we are sincere, the riddle of our hesitation and uncertainty and ambiguities. The whole character of your life depends on what you seek first of all. I have said that this word of the Prophet has been called the greatest word in the Old Testament, and we feel its greatness much more when we listen to the voice of the Saviour Himself in the New Testament: 'Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled. Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.' And whoever among you carries about in his heart these inspiring words as the guide of his purpose and his conduct, by whatever name he may be called, has learned the secret of the true life in Christ, and the secret we learn from these voices of the Prophets and these words of Jesus is that the motive power of our lives and conduct, the character of it for good or ill, is in the things we think, and not merely in the things we do.

WORSHIP AND CONDUCT

'Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God? Shall I come before Him with burnt-offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams? . . . What doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?'—MICAH VI. 6-8.

It is not right to say that this inspired summary of wherein true worship, true ritual, true religion consists, was a wholly new thing when Micah spoke. 'Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt-offerings as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold to obey is better than sacrifice.' The notes of this trumpet-call had never died away since Samuel uttered them to the ashamed Saul. It was, however, given to a man of the soil, a simple vine-dresser, to whom 'life was real, life was earnest,' to put into words that burn and shine for ever the noblest views as to the reality of religion ever delivered by a Prophet of Old Testament times to the world.

I. It was the crofter trouble of these old times which in part caused Micah to speak burning words. It was a time of splendid luxury up at the Capital, and the worst of it all was that the rich tyrant class felt itself so respectable that it could not think the judgment was possible. Meanwhile the great palaces at Jerusalem were rising upon the ruin of the people.

II. The patriot Micah perceives that the sin of Jerusalem is not want of zeal in worship, nor rebellion against God, but the real lack of understanding that religion to be anything must mean conduct and character, and that Jehovah, if He is God, is a God who demands that men should give Him their reason and thought as well as their emotions and desire to fulfil the minutest regulations of ritual or religious ceremonial. He urges them to believe that like as a father pitieth his children, so will God reason with their reasonable minds.

III. As one gazes back upon the Old Testament heroes, one sees that with all their faults their righteousness lay in conduct. Righteousness was for them not holiness so much as right dealing and kindly dealing between man and man as members of a nation. Not purity of heart so much as right doing—this was what the Prophets demanded. They lifted up their voices in protest against the mistaken importance given to outward forms of religion. They did not denounce sacrifice, for the idea of sacrifice was as much a matter of course as our idea of going to church on Sunday. But they did denounce the hypocrisy of all this outside show of worship when the heart refused to humble itself upon the altar by deeds of mercy and justice.

IV. Micah's voice has never been silenced. It may sound paradoxical, but the very fact that men are forsaking the ordinances of religion in all the churches in this money-seeking age of commerce and competition and unreality in religion is a sign that they feel that till our ways are more just and kind, and full of reverence in our dealings between man and man, it is mockery to attend church services, and for a pretence make long prayers.—H. D. RAWNSLEY, *Church Family Newspaper*, 1907, vol. LXXII. p. 912.

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THREE MARKS OF A TRUE MAN

'Wherewith shall I come before the Lord,' etc.—MICAH VI. 6-8.

I. A Rebuke of the Religion of Mere Outward Ceremony and Ritual.—Very few people indeed now go to a church because they have to; it is a far more healthy condition that religion is being regarded less as a ceremony and more as a life.

II. A Rebuke of the Religion of Ostentation.—Are there not gifts made to religion whose main purpose is, How will it impress the public? Can I buy God's favour with my gifts? Also, there is an ostentation in the religion of our churches. The lavish expenditure is too often not an effort to do honour to God, but an effort to advertise the particular church which can afford it.

III. A Rebuke of the Religion of Fanaticism.—The fanatic of religion is the man or woman who is carried away with a fad, who runs to extremes in some *ism*, who, yielding to some emotion, devotes his or her life to the propagation of some little idea in religion which, according to their view, is going to transfigure the world.

IV. A Rebuke of Exclusiveness.—The tendency is to build fences of privilege. The dominant note of false religion is railed spaces. But these ideas form the antithesis of a world-wide religion.—D. S. MACKAY, *The Religion of the Threshold*, p. 272.

LEVITICUS OLD AND NEW

'What doth the Lord require of thee?'—MICAH VI. 8.

If we could know that, we need not desire to know any more. Our life is best spent when spent in asking, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? We are not to consult ourselves, but to consult God; the law is written; it is not a conjecture, it is a statutory declaration, and it is to be found in the law-book: to the law and to the testimony, therefore, and to no supposition, fancy, or conjecture of mortal man.

I. Where can we begin? God has given us a thousand points at any one of which we can begin. We might, first of all, think it impossible to know the will of God, because it would be so stupendous, that is to say, so comprehensive, so vast, and so overwhelming, that it would be utterly impossible for the finite imagination to conceive what God intends us to do. The Lord delivers us from that difficulty; He has written down His will in little words, He has come right into our daily life and told us how to manage ourselves, and how to conduct the economy of life. He does not always talk theology to us, He talks about daily things in our mother tongue, and says in effect, You may begin there. And wherever we can begin God begins along with us, hears us spell a little lesson, tells us just the quantity of the syllable, the measure of the rhythmic foot, and repronounces the music to us in order to make us sure of its accent and

its balance. He comes down from all the mountains of eternity and meets us at the base of the hill, and says, Little children, I will speak your language until you are able to speak Mine.

II. What doth the Lord thy God require of thee? If I could know that I should know all philosophy. You may know it, you may know it at least in parts, and you may proceed from one part to another. Revelation is progressive; moral education adds to itself increment by increment until the final topstone is put on with the acclaim of the universe. I could tell you where you could begin: 'Thou shalt not curse the deaf, nor put a stumbling-block before the blind'. Is that religion? Yes; you thought religion was talking an unknown language, but the mistake is yours, not the Bible's; you thought that religion was an act of clasping hands and turning up eyes into the immeasurable heavens and speaking into an infinite void in the hope of getting some blessing out of it. Nothing of the kind: 'Thou shalt not curse the deaf, nor put a stumbling-block in the way of the blind'. The further and implied Hebrew meaning of the word is, Thou shalt not curse the absent, and therefore by so much the deaf—that is to say, by so much deaf, because the absent cannot hear you; you shall not be slanderers, you shall not be critics of those who cannot speak to you for themselves; you shall not make anonymous attacks upon the absent and the deaf or those who are known by reputation; you shall not hide yourselves behind a hedge and sling stones at those who are walking in the open highway.

III. But this was all said by Moses, there is nothing of the kind said by Jesus Christ, some persons may insinuate. But they are utterly wrong in their sophistical if not their ignorant and criminal suggestion. Jesus Christ said every one of these things in His own way; He did not destroy the law, He fulfilled it; the law came by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ, and grace and truth are law at its best, law in blossom and in autumnal fruition. The Sermon on the Mount is the new Leviticus; the Sermon on the Mount is the nineteenth chapter of Leviticus written or spoken in Christian language. No man can fulfil the moral obligation imposed upon him by the Sermon on the Mount without repeating in solid visible conduct the whole Decalogue as written by Moses. We must, therefore, again and again insist upon the moral quality of the Gospel; that is to say, upon the moral meaning of the most abstract doctrines.—Joseph Parker, *City Temple Pulpit*, vol. vii. p. 50.

THE MESSAGE OF MICAH

'He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?'—Micah vi. 8.

I. The simplification of religion has always been the Prophet's vocation. These were the men of brains, the men of conscience, the men of power. They were the thinkers of their age. True, they differed in social position. Isaiah was a courtier, Micah a yeoman farmer voicing the grievances of his class. The one thing common to the man of the court and the man of the field was the faculty to see that the salvation of their times was not to come from princes but from God. Micah is a grand example of the way these heroes faced the community. At the opening of this chapter the Prophet pleads for man to use his reason. The priest seeks to suppress reason and fall back on authority, but Micah asserts God challenges us to use our reason.

II. Religion is not in the treadmill of duties, nor in the bewilderment of ritual, costly though it may be. If not in these things it is natural they should ask in what does it consist. The Prophet appeals to two things for his reply. The first is history, the second is reason. He turns their thought to the incidents of their great national history (vv. 4, 5). It told of the God who delivered them from Egypt, whom they had forgotten; then he directed them to the prophecy of Balaam.

III. Micah does not turn their thought to philosophy for relief of the people's problems. Neither does he go to Samuel or some other outstanding Prophet of the past. He went to an outsider. He went to one who even did not belong to the Church at all. Very often God gives some great truth to a messenger outside the Church rather than within. From that strange utterance against Israel they might gather the Lord had shown them what was good, not the round of their ritual, but the justice, mercy, and humble walk with God.

IV. The thing God wants before all else is not form, but qualities of the heart. These are set forth in this programme, which is good both in itself and in its results. These qualities of life are given in their right order. It is first justice. It is the fundamental principle of all great lives. The first word in heaven and earth is justice. But justice is not enough; you must also have mercy. These two qualities are things which make men Godlike. But there is one step farther. I can imagine a man saying, why bring the religious element in it at all? If a man does justice, loves mercy, what need is there for the humble walk with God? This is necessary as the inspiration and power for the two.

V. The solution of our modern problems, as those of Micah's day, will not be found in legislation or machinery, but in realizing the sufficiency of God. No great and permanent solution of social problems has ever been reached without religious influence. The only way is to get back to God, to go to the house of the Lord and there find the power to do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with our God. Then will be found the true bond of brotherhood.—S. Chadwick, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxvii. 1905, p. 317.

THE PERFECT IDEAL OF RELIGION

'He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?'—Micah vi. 8.

I. Social Justice.—Consider the three requirements of the text; and first of all, God requires us to 'do

justly'. The highest welfare of society depends upon its observance. The laws, for example, which are framed for the peace of the nation and the prosperity of the community, must be just—such as are equal and reasonable, useful and beneficial; and it was to this latter—or to social justice—that the Prophet specially referred. The immense majority of our people consider themselves the victims of social wrong—believe that their lot is much harder than it need be, than it ought to be, and are finding ways and means whereby they may be released from the galling fetters which bind them and the depressing conditions in which they are compelled to live and work. There is much to be said in favour of the social movement; but it must be remembered that in order to help the toiling millions there must be no injustice done to those who are privileged. What is wanted is not legislation, although that would help considerably, but true Christian justice, not the justice of Shylock, who pertinaciously insisted upon his pound of flesh, not the justice of Rob Roy, who maintained that 'They should take who have the power, and they should keep who can'; but the eternal justice of the Lord Jesus Christ who said, 'As ye would that men should do unto you, even so do ye also unto them'.

II. Compassion.—God requires us to 'love mercy'. This is a far higher quality than mere justice. It postulates greater goodness, for while justice implies a debt, this means favour and kindness. It means pity and compassion towards the poor and needy, the fallen and oppressed. The mercy which God requires is not necessarily confined to mere charity in the commonest acceptance of the term, to mere giving of alms. It is not so much your money that is wanted, your doles of charity, though these are needful and will come in due course as God prospers you, as your mercy, your love, and sympathy; not so much, in short, yours as you.

III. Walking with God.—This third requirement of the text—the 'walking humbly with God'—alone enables us 'to do justly and to love mercy'. But how are ordinary mortals 'to do justly and to love mercy' unless and until we walk humbly with God. The Prophet Micah realizes this, as his language clearly and manifestly shows; and we realize it even more fully than he, for the sun of the Saviour's revelation which he only dimly foresaw strikes full and free upon us, and we know—for we have often tried it and failed—that it is not in human power alone and unaided to be just and merciful and all that the moral law of the New Testament requires. The best of men are but men at the best. But 'walk humbly with thy God'. Surrender your heart—therein lies the secret of power—and your all to Him, and He will work in you both to will and to do of His own good pleasure.—J. Cameron, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxxii. 1907, p. 22.

'Walk humbly with thy God.'—Micah vi. 8; Proverbs iii. 34; xvi. 19; Psalm cxxxviii. 6.

The absolute freedom of the Christian man is absolute allegiance to God: his independence rests in utter dependence. His freedom is from the tyranny of partial claims, individual desires and objects, from the halfnesses and weaknesses of our nature: and it is won by identification with the universal. It is, in short, here that there comes in what is called humility. To define it exactly is difficult, if not impossible; for, like all goodness, it has the defect of its quality, and to be precious it must never part with its correlative independence. Humility is the sense of solidarity and community: the controlling and regulating power of the consciousness that we are not our own, that we are God's and our neighbour's. Humility is the attitude of an individual who recognizes his individuality, his partiality, his dependence, his immanence in the whole, and his conformity with all the parts, and yet of an individual who knows himself his own, and not another's, a free man of God, a son and heir. To be genuine, it must go hand in hand with the good conscience and the faith unfeigned.—Prof. W. Wallace, *Gifford Lectures*, pp. 50-57.

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CHASTISEMENT AND MERCY

'Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy; when I fall, I shall arise; when I sit in darkness, the Lord shall be a light unto me. I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned against Him.'—Micah vii. 8, 9.

When Christians have gone wrong in any way, whether in belief or in practice, scandalously or secretly, it seems that pardon is not explicitly and definitely promised them in Scripture as a matter of course; and the mere fact that they afterwards become better men, and are restored to God's favour, does not decide the question whether they are in every sense pardoned; for David was restored and yet was afterwards punished. It is still a question whether a debt is not standing against them for their past sins, and is not now operating or to operate to their disadvantage. What its payment consists in, and how it will be exacted, is quite another question, and a hidden one. It may be such, if they die under it, as to diminish their blessedness in heaven; or it may be a sort of obstacle here to their rising to certain high points of Christian character; or it may be a hindrance to their ever attaining one or other particular Christian grace in perfection—faith, purity, or humility; or it may prevent religion taking deep root within them, and imbuing their minds; or it may make them more liable to fall away; or it may hold them back from that point of attainment which is the fulfilment of their trial; or it may forfeit for them the full assurance of hope; or it may lessen

their peace and comfort in the intermediate state, or even delay their knowledge there of their own salvation; or it may involve the necessity of certain temporal punishments, grievous bodily disease, or sharp pain, or worldly affliction, or an unhappy death. Such things are 'secrets of the Lord our God,' not to be pried into, but to be acted upon. We are all more or less sinners against His grace, many of us grievous sinners; and St. Paul and the other Apostles give us very scanty information what the consequences of such sin are. God may spare us, He may punish. In either case, however, our duty is to surrender ourselves into His hands, that He may do what He will. —J. H. NEWMAN.

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ANGER CHANGED TO COMPASSION

'He retaineth not His anger for ever.'—MICAH VII. 18.

I. We might have Expected that God would have Retained His Anger for Ever, for consider:—

(*a*) *The nature and malignity of sin.* Sin includes unbelief, rebellion, ingratitude. Does not unbelief give the lie to God? Is not ingratitude a libel on His goodness?

(*b*) *The character of God, absolute perfection;* sin has made a demand on His justice; sin must be punished, or moral equity is at an end.

(*c*) *The demands of God's righteous law.*

(*d*) *The disinclination of man to listen to any terms of reconciliation.* Man stands in the way of his own pardon and recovery.

(*e*) *The incompetence of man to make any sufficient reparation to God.*

(*f*) *The awful example of righteous displeasure in the penal condition of the fallen angels.* Thus it appears that we might have expected that He would have retained His anger for ever.

II. How is it that the Divine Anger is Reversed? —'He retaineth not His anger for ever.'

(*a*) *Because of the infinite compassion and clemency of the Divine Redeemer.* There is mercy with God.

(*b*) *Because of the arrangements of the covenant of grace and the council of peace* (Is. LIV. 10; Ezek. XXXVII. 26; 2 Tim. I. 10).

(*c*) *Because of the effects of the undertaking of the Redeemer* in assuming our nature and satisfying the demands of justice.

(*d*) *Because of the almighty influences of the Holy Spirit* by which the dispositions hostile to our recovery are subdued.

Here we see the display of the merciful character of God. How should our love be called out to that Saviour Who hath so loved us?

THE GRACE OF GOD TO SINNERS

'Who is a God like unto Thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of His heritage? He retaineth not His anger for ever, because He delighteth in mercy. He will turn again, He will have compassion upon us; He will subdue our iniquities; and Thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea.'—MICAH VII. 18, 19.

I. The Sinner's Astonishment.—What is the first thing that brings out this astonishment in the Prophet's heart, and makes it heard in this eloquent way from his lips? His wonder is he has to do with a God who forgives iniquity like his. It is that that gives an everlasting freshness to the pulpit. It is when a man has an everlasting sense of God's unspeakable grace to his own soul that his message comes straight from his heart and comes hot to the heart of his people. Let our pulpits be filled with men overwhelmed with a sense of God's grace to their own souls, and you will not need to advertise singular subjects; you will fill your churches to the doors when the minister's own heart is filled as Micah's was with downright amazement at God's long-suffering and patience with the preaching Prophet himself. He begins with the very A B C of the Gospel, the offer of pardon for sin. The first thing that amazes him even to seventy and eighty years of age is that God is still forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin; and it is that that holds together his congregation in Jerusalem, that makes his own heart burn with freshness and power because of the memory and present experience of God's unspeakable salvation and adorable patience to himself a sinner.

And what makes good preaching makes good hearing. But you must go back into the past and bring a broken heart out of it again to receive afresh the ever new and ever blessed Gospel of the grace of God in Jesus Christ.

II. Remnants.—He passeth by for His own reasons the transgressions of the remnant of His heritage; He retaineth not His anger for ever for He delighteth in mercy. He retaineth it not. It does not say He delights in anger; He delights in mercy; therefore if we need a great mercy let us comfort our hearts with this, that He delights in the thing we need. Mercy and misery are made for one another. There would be no mercy in God if there was no misery in man. God is love, and His love becomes mercy in presence of my misery. He delighteth in mercy, and will cast all your sins in the depths of the sea—that mystical, spiritual, wonderful sea, the sea of the grace of God.—ALEXANDER WHYTE, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. LXVII. 1905, p. 337.

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NAHUM

NAHUM

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HABAKKUK

HABAKKUK

'Art thou not from everlasting, O Lord my God, mine Holy One? We shall not die. O Lord, Thou hast ordained them for judgment; and, O mighty God, Thou hast established them for correction.'—Habakkuk i. 12.

Bishop Daniel Wilson chose this passage as the text of his last sermon in Calcutta. He died six months later, on 2 January, 1858, in his eightieth year.

References.—I. 12.—G. Matheson, *Moments on the Mount*, p. 46. I. 16.—G. Brooke, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 170.

LENT—TEMPTATIONS TO SIN

'Thou makest men as the fishes of the sea,' etc.—Habakkuk i. 14, 15.

Our Lord commissioned His Apostles to become fishers of men. But if Christ, by His priests, is fishing for souls, Satan, the ape of God, is doing the same.

I. Satan's Baits.

(*a*) Job, robbed of his land, of his cattle, of his children, and of his health, has one consolation left—his wife. But what does she advise? Curse God and die—commit suicide to end your woes. The point of the hook peeps through the bait.

(*b*) Christ, hungry in the desert, what does Satan offer Him? Stones for bread. See the kingdoms of the world, all this will I give Thee! that is the bait. Where is the hook? If Thou wilt fall down and worship me.

(*c*) Satan tries his baits, one after another, till he lights on one to which you will rise.

II. The Hook.

(*a*) David, exalted to be king, has a goodly palace, abundant means, numerous servants. How is Satan going to angle for him? With a pretty woman, the wife of another man.

(*b*) Judas grasps at the thirty pieces of silver. The bait is flung and he seizes. Oh! the anguish as the barb cuts into his soul!

(*c*) The anguish that follows sin, the horror and shame in this world and in the next.—S. Baring-Gould, *Sermon-Sketches*, p. 140.

THE FREE-THINKER AMONG THE PROPHETS

'I will stand upon my watch, and set me upon the tower, and will look forth to see what He will speak with me; and what I shall answer concerning my complaint.'—Habakkuk ii. 1.

Tradition has much to tell of Habakkuk the Prophet, but history has nothing. He belongs to a class who have made history; he is the kind of man whom God sends to usher in new stages, and launch new epochs of knowledge and action. Look at the spirit of his questioning.

I. It was a temper which, with all its daring, was always reverent, and in its utter frankness was completely sincere. This man never rails against God; he is never irreverent, much less blasphemous. But he is always unmuzzled. His questions are not against God, but to God. This man cannot square his belief in a good and righteous God with the facts of life as he sees them, and he feels that he has right of inquiry when he thus finds his faith baffled by his experience. God counts no question heterodox which comes out of an orthodox life.

II. It was a temper which, amid its questionings, was steadied by a sense of personal responsibility. He feels that he is a man with a responsibility to discharge and only from the standing-ground of his own faithfulness does he feel that he has a right to ask and expect light. 'I will stand to my post.' There is no better vantage-ground for a man who watches for the dawn.

III. This is a temper which seeks the highest truth in the highest spirit. Divine verities are only revealed to the gaze of the uplifted life. High truth is not to be found on a low plane of thinking and feeling. Character is the chief condition of illumination; lofty conduct is the kindler of the light. The only house of life which can stand against storm and tide is a building whose every stone is squared to the plummet of righteousness.—T. Yates, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxxiv. 1908, p. 321.

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vol. ii. p. 177. II. 2.—J. P. Chown, *Old Testament Outlines*, p. 275. II. 3, 4.—J. Vaughan, *Sermons* (9th Series), p. 229.

THE NECESSITY OF FAITH TO MORALITY

'The just shall live by His faith.'—Habakkuk ii. 4.

Is not this a singular statement? Is not the just man—the man of practical morality—the last man in the world whom we should expect to live by his faith.

I. There are classes of men whom we should expect to live by their faith. The poet lives by his faith, for he aspires after an unearthly ideal. The painter lives by his faith, for there floats before him a superhuman beauty. The musician lives by his faith, for his inner ear catches melodies which his instruments cannot express. Even the husbandman lives by his faith, for he commits the seed to a life underground. But the just man—the man of practical morality—how can he be said to live by his faith? Is he not building his trust upon definite outward acts, on obedience to a command? Yes, but whose command? To a command which is inaudible to the outer ear.

II. The voice of conscience is not uttered by anything within the world. It is not uttered by beauty; you may gaze on the woods and fields without hearing it. It is not uttered by prudence; you may study your own interests for days without meeting it. It is not uttered by law; you may be condemned by a criminal court without receiving its message. This mysterious voice is independent of places and times. It comes at the most unlikely moment; it fails to come at the most likely. It may be absent during the most solemn religious service; it may be heard in the whirl of the dance and in the vortex of gay society. The Garden of Eden may be deaf to it; the haunts of corruption may ring with it. It may elude the thunder, the earthquake, and the fire; it may breathe in the still small sound of a human word. The stars of night may fail to declare it; the streets of the garish day may resound with its solemn refrain. The man who listens to it is walking by faith. It has no mandate from the world; it has no reward from the world; it has no promise from the world. It is a message from an unearthly sphere sent for an unearthly reason and accompanied by the offer of an unearthly recompense. No poet or painter or musician lives more by faith than the man of outward virtue.—G. Matheson, *Messages of Hope*, p. 15.

References.—II. 4.—J. Keble, *Miscellaneous Sermons*, p. 428. C. Kingsley, *Village Sermons*, p. 34. F. D. Maurice, *Prophets and Kings*, p. 360. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxix. No. 1749. T. Hammond, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xx. p. 246. II. 20.—J. Vaughan, *Fifty Sermons* (8th Series), p. 225. III. 2.—J. N. Norton, *Every Sunday*, p. 129. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xii. No. 725.

A PRAYER FOR MIDDLE LIFE

'In the midst of the years make known.'—Habakkuk iii. 2.

What we commonly call a revival of religion is the conversion of the young on a large scale. But when youth, with its energies and hopes, is delivered from this present evil world and translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son, this is not revival. It is the access of life to life. But when those who have known life—of nature and of the spirit—find it sinking in the midst of the years, to have it restored by the Divine breath—this is indeed revival.

I. *In the midst of the years make known* is a prayer not for a change of surroundings, but for lordship over them. And this mastery comes to us only in one way. God in Christ must disclose Himself. We must return to the Lord, and receive from Him the deep and vital power we have lost. If we seek Him we shall find Him, and all in Him. He meets us and shows us what we are, and what in Him we may be. More than the vanished splendour of the heavenly vision which quickened our youth comes back to us, and with it the spring returns.

II. To do more we must be more. To be more we must see more of God. It is the Divine Appearing that liberates and reveals the forces of the soul. It breaks the chains which bind the spirit, whatever they may be. To many the deliverance is from intellectual indolence. They have for years learned nothing and forgotten much. To look round on their books is to see that they no longer care to comprehend the difficulties of their times. To preachers this is fatal. Nor will Christian laymen, as they are called, ever do the work they ought to do for Christ in this country till they are willing to become serious students of the Bible and of theology. A beginning of days to many preachers would be to take possession of some new province of literature, as Robert Hall did when, after sixty, he studied Italian to read Dante; as Arnold did when, two years before his death, he began Sanskrit, pleading that he 'was not so old as Cato when he learned Greek'. How many weary and starved congregations listen hopelessly to a dejected preacher who will never give them a word, a phrase, or a thought they have not heard hundreds of times. An appearing of God to such a man would send him to his desk and keep him there. Even among those who by conscientious toil keep their service on a high level, many shrink too soon from the effort to face and comprehend the thought and purpose of the new time. They need not subject their hearts to this as to a thing inevitable. Those who have fresh visions of God will never lose their grasp over young minds, or their power to deal with new problems. While the promise of the young should be, and ever will be, hailed with ardent affection, there is something greater and more beautiful even than that—a spirit revived in the midst of the years—compelling those who judged it and thought themselves done with it to revise their verdict, and entering, though late, into its heritage of power and peace.

III. For others this making known means the snapping of some chain of habit. Some indulgence, some selfishness, some sin not clearly recognized by conscience, is keeping out the light. Freed from it,

the soul enters into the great liberty of a new life. Perhaps it is taught for the first time the secret of Christian love. Nothing but the Divine enlargement will ever teach us this. Only the life in God makes us rich and interprets that saying, 'All things are yours'. The enlarged experience of God's love as we, 'being rooted and grounded in love,' look into the Father's face and the Saviour's heart, makes us love one another, and to him who loves all things become new.—W. Robertson Nicoll, *Ten Minute Sermons*, p. 131.

REVIVALS—THEIR NECESSITY

'O Lord, revive Thy work.'—Habakkuk iii. 2.

I. In What Does Revival Consist?

(*a*) In quickening believers to a higher life.

(*b*) In awakening the Church to her Divinely appointed mission.

(*c*) In leading sinners to Christ.

II. The Absolute Necessity for Revivals.

(*a*) They heal breaches and restore harmony.

(*b*) They call out all the strength of the Church.

(*c*) Churches must perish without converts.

(*d*) A real revival brings out the character of the wicked—they yield or rebel.

(*e*) Influence on communities.

III. How Revivals may be Secured.

(*a*) By the study of God's Word.

(*b*) By self-examination and forsaking of sin.

(*c*) By meditating on the condition of the unsaved.

(*d*) By united and persevering prayer.

(*e*) By faithful preaching of the gospel.—C. Perren, *Revival Sermons*, p. 104.

THE HIDING OF THE DIVINE POWER

'He had rays coming forth from His hand, and there was the hiding of His power.'—Habakkuk iii. 4.

These words are part of a hymn on the self-revelation of God. They contain one of those flashes of insight and profound understanding which so often mark the utterances of Hebrew Psalmists and Prophets. The writer beheld a sudden unveiling of the glory of God, a glory the very light and splendour of which became the hiding-place of the Divine Power.

I. This fact is writ large in the physical universe. We do not usually realize the might behind what we see. Things are so serenely still and steady that we but vaguely apprehend the greatness of the power that holds and sustains them. If the power that silently pervades the universe were let loose without the restraints and direction of wisdom and goodness, confusion and destruction immeasurable and beyond imagination would at once ensue. And yet, even the greatest upheavals give but a faint indication of the reality behind.

II. On the field of history the same truth is illustrated. Every attentive reader recognizes the presence of a power that makes for righteousness, and against which nothing can ultimately prevail. Yet this power is usually hidden from the actors on the stage, so much so that they often imagine themselves masters of affairs. Statesmen and soldiers conceive that they are the arbiters of national and world destinies, but what is all the skill of men compared with that Unseen Power which works in silence age after age, and eventually disposes of men and nations?

III. God consistently conceals His power. What then has this well-attested fact to suggest to us? It brings home God's supreme regard for character. He could not have made Himself known by displays of might such as would have compelled submission, for that would have been contrary to His spirit and character. He would have been Master without any self-revelation, and His purpose would thus have been defeated. It was far more important that man should know Him as good, true, and loving than as infinitely powerful. By this method all that is best in the human heart is touched and called out. By concealing His power He gives scope for our freedom and thus provides for the proper discipline and development of character.

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CHRIST, THE DESIRE OF NATIONS

'Thus saith the Lord of hosts: Yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land; and I will shake all nations, and the Desire of all Nations shall come: and I will fill this house with glory, saith the Lord of Hosts.'—Haggai ii. 6, 7.

The time when our Lord was to come is here predicted.

I. This prophecy was uttered about five hundred years before the coming of our Saviour. How, then, can it be said to be a little while?

(*a*) It was a little while when compared with the time the people of God had already been kept waiting for the Messiah.

(*b*) It was short in the Almighty's own sight. It is not man's word, for things are measured in it by a standard which man never uses.

II. What is this mighty shaking? This language has been interpreted as pointing out those political convulsions and changes which agitated the world between the uttering of this prophecy and the time of our Lord's birth, one great empire giving way to another, and that in its turn yielding to a third. There may be a further reference in it to those moral and spiritual effects which have ever attended and followed the Gospel in its progress through the world.

III. Our Lord Jesus Christ is described as 'The Desire of all Nations'. This name is justly applied to Him.

(*a*) It may signify that He is desirable for all nations—all need a Saviour.

(*b*) All would desire Him if they knew the excellence, love, and mighty power which He possesses of blessing and saving.

(*c*) This title may imply that some of all nations have desired Him.

IV. How was this promise fulfilled? At God's own appointed time, an Infant comes to that Temple, brought there from a stable and a manger. As a youth He listens and replies there to the learned teaching of scribes and doctors. As a man He often frequents the Holy Place. But here, in this second Temple, was that God Himself manifest in our mortal flesh, and we may perceive wherein consists the chief glory of any assemblage or congregation of worshippers.—E. J. Brewster, *The Shield of Faith*, p. 163.

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THE MAN WITH THE MEASURING LINE

'I lifted up mine eyes and saw, and behold a man with a measuring line in his hand. Then said I, Whither goest thou? And he said unto me, To measure Jerusalem, to see what is the breadth thereof, and what is the length thereof.'—Zechariah ii. 1, 2.

The vision.—This vision is really the protest of the Prophet against the attempt the Jews were making to narrow down the Divine purposes to the limit of their own paltry plans. In his vision the Prophet sees a young man, who stands for the Jewish people, with a measuring line in his hand. The Prophet hails the young man, and asks him whither he is going, and what is his errand. The young man answers, 'I go to measure Jerusalem, to see what is the breadth thereof, and what is the length thereof'. The young man's notion of Jerusalem was of a city strictly limited, compassable, and measurable, whose dimensions could be stated in so many yards and feet. But that was not God's Jerusalem at all. God's Jerusalem was vast, illimitable, boundless. That is the truth set forth in the angel's reply. 'Run and speak to this young man,' says the one angel to the other—'run and speak to this young man. Tell him he is attempting the impossible. Tell him he is trying to measure the immeasurable. Tell him he might as well try to count the stars in the midnight sky, or the grains of the sand on the sea-shore, or the drops of water in the vasty deep, as seek to measure the Holy City with his tape. Run and speak to this young man—tell him Jerusalem cannot be measured; tell him it is to be no narrow, paltry, mountain fortress; tell him it is to be inhabited as villages, without walls, by reason of the multitude of men and cattle therein; tell him it is to be a spacious, vast, illimitable city, so that no measuring line on earth is sufficient to compass it.'

The amplitude, the vastness of God's design, and the impossibility of compassing it by any human measurement, that is the superficial and obvious lesson of the text.

I. Let me illustrate the text with reference to the *kingdom of God.* There is need still to insist upon the wideness of the kingdom, for men are busy still trying to narrow its boundaries.

II. Next let me illustrate it with reference to the *love of God.* In all ages, men have been applying the measuring line to the love of God. Go back eighteen centuries, and you find the Pharisees and Scribes busy with the measuring line.

And yet, in spite of the life and witness of Jesus, men have not ceased to think God's love can be measured. They have tried to limit it by theological theories. Men preached a hateful theory of election, asserting there were some whom God loved and saved, and some on whom He visited His wrath and damned. They have preached a 'limited atonement,' as if Christ died only for a section of the race, and His blood availed to cleanse but a few. And I do not hesitate to say that that doctrine of election and that doctrine of a limited atonement are a slander and libel upon the love of God.

I know nothing of love for an 'elect few'. My gospel says, 'God so loved the world'. I know nothing of a limited atonement. My gospel says, 'He is the Propitiation for *our* sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world'. The love of God knows no limit—it is vast, boundless, infinite. It embraces every man—it endures to all eternity.

III. Let me illustrate it further with reference to *man's destiny.* Man's destiny is beyond the reach of any earthly measuring line. 'Beloved, now are we children of God, and it doth not *yet appear what we shall be.*' It doth not yet appear what we shall be; the splendour of our destiny is beyond the utmost reach of our imagination and thought, for we know that when He shall appear, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.

IV. We tax our imaginations to try and picture to ourselves the glory and bliss of heaven. But the measuring line of the human mind is not equal to the task. It exceeds our utmost stretch of thought. John has given us a glowing picture in the Apocalypse. But heaven is better even than John's sketch of it. Even his soaring imagination could not take in all its splendour and beauty. Heaven's glory baffles description, defies every measuring line. 'Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath entered into the mind of man the things which God hath prepared for those who love Him.'—J. D. Jones, *The Elims of Life*, p. 202.

A MAN WITH A MEASURING LINE

'I lifted up mine eyes again, and looked, and behold a man with a measuring line in his hand. Then said I, Whither goest thou? And he said unto me, To measure Jerusalem, to see what is the breadth thereof, and what is the length thereof.'—Zechariah ii. 1, 2.

It was a difficult time in Jewish history. People were coming back from the captivity. They had to rebuild Jerusalem, to restore the Temple, to make a

new nation, as it were, out of the old fragments that were left. No wonder that hearts failed on all sides. Zechariah rises to meet these evils, vision after vision passes before his eyes, and among these visions there is this man of the measuring line, the cautious man, the prudent man, the calculating man. 'What is the good? You can do nothing. What can you poor people do to build a city like the old Jerusalem—to guard it, to fence it round, to make its ramparts strong? You must be cautious and careful, you must take heed what you are about lest you fail.' Very useful are such counsels in life, but they may be over-done. Prudent worldliness has not much room in the household of God. Small is the company of those who have begun and not been able to finish compared with those who have been scared back at the outset. As an old proverb says, 'The best is often the enemy of the good'. Because we cannot do at once in a moment all that we want to do, because we cannot always see our way to accomplish anything at all, or very little, because the task seems too much, and our abilities too small, those are the sort of feelings that unman us, that bar all progress.

I. What Faith has Done.—Take the case of the Apostles, when Jesus said unto them, 'Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature'; or when He added, 'beginning at Jerusalem'. I can fancy the man with the measuring line there saying, 'What can you do here in Jerusalem among the learned Scribes and righteous Pharisees, you poor Galilean fishermen? What can you do? You had better hold your tongues. You will not succeed.' Or afterwards, 'What! Do you think you will capture Rome, the greatest power in the world, the capital of the greatest empire that was ever seen? Better try humbler things, my friends, than that.' But the Twelve went on calmly, quietly, facing the odds, content to do little so long as they did it, satisfied if only they were walking in the Master's steps, laying foundation-stones for others to build on after they were gone. On they went, because all the while they felt that God was with them, and that He would not fail. Just as Zechariah the Prophet was sustained by the recollection of what God had done for Israel, so the Apostles, with the whole history of the past before their eyes, recollecting what the history of Jerusalem had been, went on calmly, quietly, just doing the work that lay straight before them, attempting no great things, hoping no great things, but just trying to fulfil their Master's command.

II. What Faith can Do.—How many of us are disposed to say, 'Well, what can we do?' We want, perhaps, to achieve a character, we would like to be good people. We want to be men of faith, like St. Paul; men of zeal, like St. Peter; men of love, like St. John, but we feel we never can attain to it. We are so ill-tempered, unbelieving, unconcerned and indifferent. What can we do? What is the use of our trying? We have not the power, the opportunities that others possess. It seems to us as if we never should win our way upwards. We want to begin at the top of the ladder and not at the bottom. We want to soar instantly to the heights without having to tramp the weary way, but God's way is not our way, nor His thoughts our thoughts. The man with the measuring line, our own doubting hearts this time, our own prudence, perhaps, suggests how little we can do, how useless it all is. Why should we attempt more? Nevertheless it is good for us to remember that the history of the saints has been the history of small things, small efforts, small hopes, of small prayers. Every prayer tells, every hope is answered, every act of faith becomes a victory, if not for ourselves for those who come after. Go on struggling, and by and by when a great crisis comes, as such crises come in every human life, when you have to be tried for what you are, before God and man, you will find that strength, and faith, and zeal are abundant, and love cannot fail. You have won without knowing it the topmost rung, you have built the tower stone by stone.

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THE WALL OF FIRE

'I, saith the Lord, will be unto her a wall of fire round about, and I will be the glory in the midst of her.'—ZECHARIAH II. 5.

THIS prophecy, as you read it to-day, might seem to have been enthusiastic and sanguine and doomed to disappointment. The young man's vision was not fulfilled in the literal sense which he probably expected. That great city, Jerusalem, the city of his dreams, was never built. But remember, if we bring to the interpretation of it that which grew out of Jerusalem—the Christian religion—this prophecy of Zechariah becomes singularly beautiful and accurate. How could the Christian religion be better described than by saying that it is a wall of fire round about, and the glory in the midst? And as that new faith came out of the old, the nations of the earth were gathered to it as Zechariah saw.

I. Let us take this vision for a moment as it applies to every country, and especially to our own. Measure not the walls. Forbid that reed by which you estimate a city's strength or a nation's pride. A nation's greatness does not consist in its size, nor in the multitude of its people, nor in the strength of its battlements or its defences. There is no security in great armies, no defence in warships. A nation that depends upon them cannot prosper. There is but one security for a nation—it is God. There is but one defence to our life, whether personal or family or national—it is the wall of fire round about, and the glory in the midst.

II. Apply these words to yourselves, to your personal life. The wall of fire round about represents the transcendence, and the glory in the midst represents the immanence of God. The belief in Jesus

Christ is nothing if it does not bring an experience with it. And it is not true unless the experience it brings is precisely this: An inward life which is the glory in the midst resulting in an outward protection which is the wall of fire round about. The inward life is of this character: that by the faith of Christ your inward being becomes filled with God. The Spirit of God dwells there. Harmony, purity, and love are within you. And that inward light becomes a guidance and a power in every action of the day. That glory in the midst is the secret of the Christian life. And from that glory in the midst of you, that is to say, from the rightness with God within, and only from that, comes the wall of fire round about you.

III. The wall of fire round about you means that there is warmth within and light shining out around. All the piercing cold of unbelief and the chilly fogs of doubt have been dissipated by that wall of fire round about you. The man who has religion and the one who has not is largely represented by warmth. The one who is aglow, the love of God is shed abroad in his heart and it is a sacred warmth of fire. And as the wall of fire is warmth for you within, it is light shed far and wide upon the world around. For such a soul is as a city set upon a hill, and as a light of the world.—R. F. Horton, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. LXXIII. 1908, p. 24.

References.—II. 5.—H. Rose Rae, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xlv. 1894, p. 170. II. 8.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. viii. No. 452. B. Wilberforce, *Following on to Know the Lord*, p. 85. II. 12.—C. Leach, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxxviii. 1891, p. 310.

FROM DARKNESS TO LIGHT

'Be silent, O all flesh, before the Lord. . . . And he shewed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the Lord. . . . Is not this a brand plucked out of the fire? . . . Joshua was clothed with filthy garments. . . . I will clothe thee with change of raiment.'—Zechariah II. 13 and III. 1-4.

These verses illustrate the steps through which God brings a soul out of darkness into His marvellous light, and from the power of Satan unto God. We have here the simile of a Court of Justice. The prisoner is Joshua the high priest, standing as the typical man. And what position does he take up in that dock? He takes up the position of the guilty one. He is described as standing arrayed in filthy garments. The Bible never makes light of sin; the Bible never speaks of sin as an accident or a peccadillo; the Bible always speaks of sin in plain unmistakable language; and the sinner here is represented as standing clothed with filthy garments.

I. The First Step must be Conviction.—You must take your place by the side of Joshua in the dock, you must acknowledge the justice of God's sentence against you; you must make the words in the Epistle to the Romans your own: 'All have sinned and come short of the glory of God'. This verse, then, shows us that the first step in salvation is conviction.

II. The Second Step is Cleansing.—When a man takes the place of the guilty one, when a man acknowledges his own sins, what does he hear proceeding from the Master's lips? He hears the language of the fourth verse, 'Take away the filthy garments from him. Behold, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with change of raiment'. The question may arise in the minds of many, How can God, Who is a righteous God and Who only can act righteously, how can He say to a soul, 'I have caused thine iniquities to pass from thee'. I will tell you in a moment; I say it with the deepest reverence, God can only utter those words because of the finished work of Jesus Christ on the Cross of Calvary. If you and I will come to the foot of that cross, taking the place of the guilty one, we shall hear the voice from the glory saying to us, 'I have caused thine iniquities to pass from thee'.

If any of you have ever been in America you may possibly have witnessed that very remarkable, never-to-be-forgotten sight of a prairie fire. I dare say you know that, when the prairie catches fire, if the wind is blowing very strongly, the prairie fire will travel faster than a horse can gallop. Those who have settled on the prairies see the devouring flames come, and they know they cannot run away from them. What do they do? They burn a large space in the vicinity of their home; in a short time a very large piece of ground is absolutely cleared and blackened. What do they do then? For purposes of safety they go and stand on the ground where the fire has been already. When the great devouring prairie fire comes up it stops there—it can go no farther—there is nothing to burn.

May I use that simile? There is but one place where the fire has already been, and that is the Cross of Calvary, the Cross of the Lord Jesus Christ.

III. The Third Step is Clothing.—'I will clothe thee with change of raiment.' Joshua is first represented as clothed with filthy garments, standing in the dock. Filthy garments were not at all inappropriate to his position there; but now his position is changed. He is no longer the prodigal, the suppliant, seeking for salvation; he has taken his right place before God; he has heard the words of pardon and rejoiced in them, and now the filthy rags are no longer suitable to his changed condition; and he hears that same voice that spoke pardon to him saying, 'I will clothe thee with change of raiment'. With what raiment are you and I clothed when we come as suppliants to the foot of the Cross?

IV. The Fourth Step is Crowning.—In the fifth verse we read, 'Let them set the fair mitre upon his head'. Whenever in Old Testament Scripture you find the mitre used it is always in connexion with the office of the priesthood. The high priest had the mitre placed upon his forehead, and in that mitre there was a plate with the words 'Holiness to the Lord'.

V. There is one Step More.—Joshua needs counsel. Although his position is about as changed as it is

possible to be, from being a convicted felon in the dock to a crowned priest unto God, he is still in the world, subject to the same difficulties and temptations; he still wanted daily and hourly guidance. We find guidance and counsel are given to him in the ninth verse: 'Behold the stone that I have laid before Joshua,' etc. All commentators agree that the stone there means Jesus Christ the Lord.

A MESSAGE TO YOUNG MEN

'Run, speak to this young man.'—Zechariah II. 24.

It is an angel who speaks. And he addresses the charge to another angel.

I. The Divine Message to young men is an Individual Message. The angel is bidden speak 'to *this* young man'. God's heart has always gone out towards the individual.

1. This young man was interested in the Church. He has 'a measuring line in his hand,' and his avowed purpose was 'to measure Jerusalem, to see what is the breadth thereof, and what is the length thereof'. It is not often you meet a reflective young man who has not 'a measuring line in his hand'. Young men will take the measure of everything, and as of everything so of the Church of God. The danger is lest a young man forget to measure himself. Do not neglect to use your 'measuring line,' your reason, your judgment, your conscience. The more you apply your measuring line to the *Bible*, the more you will be satisfied of its intrinsic Divinity. The *Christian Religion* is not in fear of your measuring line. As to all these things measure the spiritual city with your 'measuring line'. We do not fear the decision you will arrive at if you measure with a steady hand and a true heart.

2. There are some who use the 'measuring line' in a wrong spirit. Your measurement will be wrong if your motive be wrong. There is much contemptible measuring of the holy city. Some apply their 'measuring line' to the creeds and institutions of the Church in a fault-finding spirit. Reverence is a wise interpreter. Love measures truly.

3. This young man was religiously candid. When the Prophet interrogated him he avowed his deliberate intention 'to measure Jerusalem, to see what is the breadth thereof, and what is the length thereof'. He had not already made up his mind as to its dimensions. Many have decided as to Jerusalem's dimensions without having themselves ascertained them. Some are infidels on trust. They are sceptics by hearsay. He measures Christianity best who endeavours to live it.

II. This young man was taught of God. The angel declared to him the future which awaited Jerusalem. And God will teach every young man who sincerely desires to be taught by Him.

III. The Divine message to young men is imperatively urgent. The angel is bidden '*Run*, speak to this young man'. No time is to be lost. With urgency, too, we bring the word of exhortation to every Christian young man. It is ours, in God's name, to delegate you with the solemn yet gladsome duty of seeking for Christ every young man who is not yet His.—Dinsdale T. Young, *Messages for Home and Life*, p. 3.

PURIFICATION

(An Old Testament Vision)

Zechariah III. 1-7.

I. Cleansed.—Joshua was clothed with filthy garments (v. 3). What an anomaly is here; a priest clothed with filthy garments; a believer indulging in known sin, is this possible? But mark well Joshua's conduct; sin-stained as he was, he stood there still, 'he stood before the angel'. Happy for him that he did so; Satan might attack, conscience might condemn, yet would he stand still before Jehovah Jesus. Not one inch would he remove. Was he sin-defiled, then he would know it, that the filthiness might be cleansed away.

II. Clothed.—What was this? 'He answered and spake unto those that stood before Him, saying, Take away the filthy garments from him. And unto him He said, Behold, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with change of raiment.' God's purpose in electing us was that we should be holy (Eph. I. 4); and shall we by our unbelief do what He will not permit the devil to do, 'frustrate the grace of God'? But again—the Lord appeals to what He has done for Joshua already. 'Is not this a brand plucked from the burning?' Have I not already, He seems to say, snatched him from destruction; and shall I not deliver him from sin? I have done the greater, shall I not do the less? What can Satan answer? He is speechless. What can he say? He is overcome by the blood of the Lamb.

III. Crowned.—One thing alone remained, and Joshua's restoration to favour was complete. The mitre was the sign and token of high priestly service, and Joshua knew as it was placed upon his head that he was once more 'a priest in function,' and that he was free to serve.

I believe that as in temporal so in spiritual things there come crises in our lives—crises when God opens up before our eyes a path that mounts the higher table-lands of Christian experience, a path illuminated by His own most gracious smile, fanned by the ever-present breezes of His Spirit. We may take it if we will; the responsibility is ours, but if we do, the cost must well be counted. The path is steep, the last and least weight must be thrown aside if we are to tread it.

IV. Charged.—And now what follows? Grace had triumphed, Joshua was restored — Cleansed, Clothed, and Crowned. But do we part from him here? Nay, there must be first a solemn charge . . . never was Joshua in so responsible and solemn a position as now. The angel of the Lord protested unto Joshua, saying, 'Thus saith the Lord of Hosts, *If* thou wilt walk in My ways, and *if* thou wilt keep My charge, then thou shalt also judge My house, and

shalt also keep My courts, and I will give thee places to walk among these that stand by'. Honours unspeakable, but for whom? For the faithful servant.—E. W. Moore, *Life Transfigured*, p. 129.

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Zechariah vii. 9; Micah vi. 8.

Besides various maxims of renunciation and wisdom written from top to bottom of the stele, Confucius has left to this sanctuary certain thoughts on literature which have been engraved in letters of gold in such a way as to form pictures hung on the walls. Here is one which I transcribe for young western scholars who are preoccupied with classification and inquiry. They will find in it a reply twice two thousand years old to one of their favourite questions: *The literature of the future will be the literature of compassion.*—Pierre Loti's *Last Days of Pekin*, Describing temple of Confucius.

Reference.—VIII. 4, 5.—J. G. Simpson, *Christian Ideals*, p. 75.

WORK AND PLAY

'And the streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing in the streets thereof.'—Zechariah viii. 5.

I shall set play in a threefold light: I. In the light of work. II. In the light of the Gospel. III. In the light of heaven.

I. **Play in the Light of Work.**—What is the difference between work and play? It is not in the things we do so much that the real difference between work and play is found: it is in the spirit in which the thing is done. And can we distinguish that difference of spirit? I do not suppose that it was ever better done than by that great thinker and poet, Horace Bushnell. 'Work,' he said, 'is activity for an end, and play is activity as an end;' and if we think of that we shall find the depth of it. In other words, back of our work is duty, back of our work is hunger, back of it is constraint. But back of play there is no force like that. It is labour, but in the labour there is liberty.

II. **Play in the Light of the Gospel.**—I think we will all admit that we owe to Christ the dignity of labour. Did you ever think of this, that the Gospel of Jesus has dignified our play? Yet the one is just as true as the other. I mean that, in the Gospel view of man, there is such compass, there is such wisdom, there is such compassion, that the element of play comes to its own again. I have read of that great saint Borromeo, that while engaged with some friends in a game of chess, the question was started what they would do if they knew that they were to die within the hour. 'I would go on with my game,' replied Borromeo. And that is the true spirit of the Master. Even a game of chess can be illumined, brought into line with the great purpose of life, and made to echo with the praise of God.

Do you think it a mere figure of speech that we talk of the waters playing on the shore, or of the wind playing among the trees, or of the sunlight playing on the grass? These words are real, penetrative. For the creative work of the Infinite is play. It is not task-work. It is the outcome of love, of liberty, of superabundant, everlasting life. And hence the irresistible conviction witnessed in human speech, of the play-element in the handiwork of God.

III. **Play in the Light of Heaven.**—What is your first thought of heaven. The first thing that we think of heaven is rest. Do you really think it will be that? And do you really think that you will *want* that? Consider.

For us all there comes the Friday night. Our week of school is done. God's discipline is over. We lay aside our pencils and our books. And we are wearied with the stress of it, and we cry out, 'O God, to be at rest!' And so we fall asleep. Then dawns the Saturday, the everlasting Sabbath, and we awake, and Jesus Christ is there. And every faculty is full of being, and every part is wondrously expanded; and we are quivering, inspired with life, and we do not want to rest: we want to serve, and the service of eternity is play! For here we must be driven to service, but yonder to serve will be our very joy.—G. H. Morrison, *Flood-Tide*, p. 115.

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CONFIRMATION

'He that is feeble among them in that day shall be as David.'
—Zechariah xii. 8.

There are two great senses in which we may take the verse; both equally true: both very, though not perhaps equally, comforting.

I. 'He that is feeble among them shall be as David.' The promise is to you; and so it had need to be. You, in all your infirmity—you, so unequally matched with the prince of the power of this world—a feeble soldier on one side, on the other, principalities, and powers, rulers of the darkness of this world, spiritual wickedness in high places—you, to resemble the most glorious Victor of all? You to be like Him in the time of His greatest victory? Even so: and in one particular of that victory you must more especially resemble Him. How did He conquer? Not with Saul's armour: not by the outward show of defence and attack; but by the commonest of all weapons, the five smooth stones, and by the sling which he had so often used in the little incidents of his shepherd's life. So of you: in and by little things you must achieve this conquest; by the ordinary circumstances of your life, for the most part, and not in great and out-of-the-way efforts or trials.

II. 'He that is feeble among them shall be as David.' But of that same David I read in another place, 'David waxed faint'. And it was with no common faintness, no common exhaustion that He Whom we love was faint for our sakes. When the darkness of death was closing over His eyes, and the damp of death was resting upon His forehead, and His tongue had spoken the last words of earthly love, 'Behold thy Mother!' David waxed faint with that faintness which needed the three days' rest in the grave to turn it into everlasting strength. Then the promise is, He that is feeble among you, shall, in that weakness, by that weakness, not in spite of it, but by means of it, be as David. But here we must take in three little words that we have hitherto left out. It is not every weakness that will make us like Him, any more than it is all pain which will make us like Him. We may suffer with the impenitent thief, as well as with Christ: we may be weak like Reuben—'Unstable as water, thou shalt not excel'—as well as like Christ. So, to look at the text again: 'He that is feeble among them at that day shall be as David'. What day? When Jerusalem shall be on the one side, and the banded world against it on the other: when there is no thought of peace, no offer of quarter between the clean and the unclean, between the holy and the unholy: when the battle shall be as persevering and lengthened as it is earnest, *then*, 'he that is feeble among them shall be as David'. Now, take the condition, and you have the promise. Let your battle be like that of which the Prophet speaks.—J. M. Neale, *Occasional Sermons*, p. 96.

References.—X. 11, 12.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons on the Prophets*, vol. ii. p. 192. X. 12.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxx. No. 1805. XI. 2.—P. M'Adam Muir, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxxi. 1907, p. 68. XI. 12, 13.—W. Hay M. H. Aitken, *Mission Sermons* (2nd Series), p. 204. XII.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. l. No. 2901. XII. 1.—J. Leckie, *Sermons Preached at Ibrox*, p. 21. XII. 8.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons on the Prophets*, vol. ii. p. 201.

CONTRITION

'I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications.'—Zechariah xii. 10.

We are to offer to God the sacrifice of broken and contrite hearts. Where shall we gain this offering? Here, as ever, this is true: we can only give to God what God first gives to us; and the answer comes in the words of our text. In it there is given to us the revelation of the genesis of contrition. In a day of religious indifference Zechariah is privileged to look upon a vision that kindles hope. He sees the people turning from their sins to God with deep contrition.

I. Contrition must be learned at the foot of the Cross.

Contrition is the breaking of the sinner's heart in union with the broken heart of Jesus. All contrition flows from the vision of the Crucified. Our Lord's death upon the cross was the expression of a perfect contrition. He sorrowed with a perfect sorrow for the sins of men. He condemned those sins with a perfect condemnation. He bowed Himself down under the Father's hand, and bore the penance of those sins with a perfect conformity of will. His is a meritorious contrition.

II. Whence is it that there is this power in the vision of the Crucified to awaken and develop contrition in the penitent's heart?

1. There is an assimilating power in the vision of Jesus in His Passion.

2. There is an illuminating power. We see our sin, and we see the love of God, and we see the path of duty.

3. There is an attractive power. Sin loses its attractions.—George Body, *The Sermon Year Book*, 1891, p. 355.

References.—XII. 10.—R. A. Suckling, *Sermons Plain and Practical*, p. 15. J. Henderson, *Sermons*, p. 240. G.

Body, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxvii. 1905, p. 185; see also *Church Times*, vol. xxix. 1891, p. 240. F. E. Paget, *Helps and Hindrances to the Christian Life*, vol. i. p. 135. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. x. No. 575; vol. xxiii. No. 1362; vol. xlvi. No. 2683; vol. l. No. 2901. XII. 10, 11.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxxiii. No. 1983. XII. 10-14.—*Ibid.* vol. xli. No. 2431. XII. 10-14; XIII. 1.—A. Whyte, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lix. 1901, p. 387. XII. 12-14.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xliii. No. 2510. XIII. 1.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xvii. No. 971. XIII. 1, 2.—*Ibid.* vol. xli. No. 2431.

THE INCENTIVES TO WORSHIP

(*For Ascensiontide*)

'And one shall say unto Him, What are these wounds in Thine hands? Then He shall answer, Those with which I was wounded in the house of My friends.'—Zechariah xiii. 6.

The Prophet is anticipating the first Ascension Day, the day the Church observed last Thursday; a day which, for the importance of the event it commemorates, ranks with Christmas and with Easter. He is looking on to the first Ascension Day. Think what the picture is that floats up before him: The Passion is over; the Cross is ended; the forty days after the Resurrection are completed; and, at last, the great and final day has come, and from the mountain's summit the conquering Saviour is preparing to return to His Throne. The battlements of heaven are lined with the angel hosts ready to do Him welcome. The golden gates of heaven have swung back to receive Him, and from out those gates runs the chorus of the heavenly choir, 'Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors, and the King of glory shall come in'. And as they watch and wait, the question passes along those angel ranks: In what shape, in what appearance will He come? Will He come as they saw Him leave His Throne before He took human flesh, or will He come as they saw Him last when they spread their wings around the Cross? How will He come? And as they ask, He enters in at the open door, and they see at once that He comes not as He went, for in His hands and feet and side are the wound-marks of His suffering. The question runs through the astonished angel host, 'What are these wounds in Thy hands?' And He answers in the tones that are so familiar on earth and in heaven, 'The wounds with which I was bruised in the house of My friends'.

I. What does the vision of the Prophet say to us to-day? It tells us of the eternal measurements of sin; it tells us of the eternal assurances of love; it tells us of the eternal measurements of prayer; but does it not tell us something else? Surely it tells us, and in moving, pathetic tones of its own, the eternal incentives to worship. You and I are slow to worship God. You and I are apt to be careless and neglectful of the worship of God. I cannot think of any picture in the Bible which will come to us with more force than this, 'What are those wounds in Thy hands?' 'Those with which I was wounded in the house of My friends.' For see what the vision has to do with worship. What is the ground, the real ground, upon which all worship rests? Surely it is belief in a living Christ. You do not worship a dead Christ upon the Cross, you worship a living Christ upon the Throne. God forbid that you and I should ever lose sight of the picture of the Christ upon His Cross; but if we are to worship God with all earnestness, with all reverence, with the devotion of all the best powers that we have, it is not a Christ upon the Cross that we must look to, it is a living Christ upon the Throne: 'I am He that liveth eternally'. You hear Christ say those words, and there is only one thing for you and me to do: to fall down and worship Him that liveth for ever and ever.

II. And what is the motive power of worship? Is it not just gratitude for mercies received? I cannot think of any more beautiful description of worship than that which the Psalmist gives us: 'I love the Lord, because He hath heard my voice and my supplications'. But directly he says, 'I love the Lord,' what does he go on to say in response to that love? He goes on to declare his intention to worship: 'I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the Lord. I will pay my vows unto the Lord now, in the presence of all His people.' What makes the neglect of God's worship so terrible to-day is that it reveals the want of grateful hearts. There cannot be a man or woman living on God's earth who is able to say, 'I love the Lord, because He hath heard the voice of my supplication,' who must not perforce go on to say, 'What can I render to the Lord? This, at any rate, I can render, poor sinner though I am, "I will take the cup of salvation . . . I will pay my vows unto the Lord". I will worship the God to whom I owe my all.'

III. And, last of all, what is the characteristic of worship? Where does it find its noblest feature? Is it not in this: Not in what I receive, but what I give? The very motto of all true worship is this: 'It is more blessed to give than to receive'. What is the true, the highest feature of worship? I tell you it is the consecration of the best of everything to God. It is the dedication of every human power, of every human talent, of every human faculty.

'WHAT ARE THESE WOUNDS IN THINE HANDS?'

'And one shall say unto Him, What are these wounds in Thine hands? Then He shall answer, Those with which I was wounded in the house of My friends.'—Zechariah xiii. 6.

I. When our Lord appeared to His disciples after the Resurrection, He showed them His hands and His side. By this time He was on the other side of death. From the Resurrection to the Ascension was a short step compared to that between Good Friday and Easter. That step had been taken, and He was revealed as the Conqueror. Henceforth the note of power—the power of His Resurrection—rings loudly through the New Testament. The strength that God set at work in Christ when He raised Him from the dead is the theme of believers from now to the end of time. But that strength

was the power of victorious and accepted sorrow. He carried through the grave the strong and full and everlasting indications of His sorrow. His wounds were no more burning, but their record remained, and will remain, in the scars that are the seal of victory.

II. He came through the grave with the life whole in Him. It is not enough to say that after the Cross, the suffering, the blood, the patience, there came the life and power. The life and power were there through all the endurance, though they blazed forth in their glory at the Resurrection. So Good Friday and Easter are not so far apart as they seem. He carried Good Friday into Easter, and there was Easter in Good Friday. He showed them His hands and His side. It was as much as to say to them, 'In this new land, where all is peace and triumph, you are safe with Me. These wounds are fountains of grace, the titles of My glory, and the seals of My power to save. For you the rains will descend a little while, and the winds beat, but I have not forgotten the storm that burst on Me.'

III. In heaven, where He and His redeemed are together, and at rest for ever, He appears to them as a Lamb as it had been slain. They, His people, have the marks of wounds. They have come up out of the great tribulation of earthly life. The angels have never known a wound, but He is a Lamb as it had been slain. Nothing has dishonoured Him or shamed Him. It is not of the suffering that impoverishes, but of the suffering that enriches that He bears the traces. It is the power and the witness of victorious and availing sorrow that are His through the eternal years. He has offered up one sacrifice for sins for ever, and the memory of that sacrifice is green, and its tokens are never out of the eyes of those it has brought home to God.—W. Robertson Nicoll, *The Garden of Nuts*, p. 133.

References.—XIII. 6.—W. C. E. Newbolt, *Counsels of Faith and Practice*, p. 264. C. H. Wright, *The Unrecognized Christ*, p. 112. C. G. Clark-Hunt, *The Refuge of the Sacred Wounds*, p. 25. J. I. Blackburn, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxvii. 1905, p. 302. R. Mackintosh, *ibid.* vol. lxviii. 1905, p. 147.

PURIFICATION

'I will bring the third part through the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined,' etc.—Zechariah xiii. 9.

Consider the purpose of God in asking His children to live with Him the life of contrition. God is seeking our personal purification. The great work God is doing within us is the separating of the pure from the impure.

I. Life is a purgatory, and is intended to be purgatorial. God's penances here are not punitive, but remedial. Our sorrows form the mystic fire in which God wills to separate between us and our sin. Why does character sometimes determinate under God's discipline of life? Because the suffering is not looked upon in its true light nor submitted to in a true spirit.

II. If there had been no sin, there would have been no intermediate state, and hence it follows that it is a penitential discipline, for the purifying of the spirit. The vision of Jesus seen by us coming out of the sinful past, and carrying into His presence a marred nature, how can that vision be anything but one that develops contrition even to the limit of perfection?

The intermediate state is a state of joy, because it is a state of purgation.

III. Sweet communion. You could not bear the purification but for this—'They shall call upon Me, and I will answer'.—George Body, *The Sermon Year Book*, 1891, p. 357.

Reference.—XIV. 6, 7.—W. M. Taylor, *Outlines of Sermons on the Old Testament*, p. 287.

'I will bring the third part through the fire.'—Zechariah xiii. 9.

A favourite text of Charles Wesley.

'But it shall come to pass, that at evening time it shall be light.'—Zechariah xiv. 7.

The Prophet is speaking of the last times—the period after 'that day' when the 'feet' of the Lord 'shall stand upon the Mount of Olives'.

Whether 'that day' refers to the occasion when our Lord made His public entry into Jerusalem, and, pausing on Olivet, 'wept' over the doomed city, or whether it refers to His future Second Coming, when He shall 'reign in Mount Zion, and in Jerusalem, and before His ancients gloriously,' one thing is certain, that after that day a period follows, which is described as being 'neither clear nor dark: but it shall be one day which shall be known to the Lord, not day, nor night'.

I. 'At evening time it shall be light.' There are two principles in this promise which, for the most part, regulate all the dealings of God. There is—

1. A principle of surprise. God delights to frustrate human speculation. The day seems passing; the darkness deepening; night falling, when, in a moment, the light kindles into meridian lustre; 'at evening time it shall be light'. Thus human pride and reason is humbled, and God's glory and love stand out alone and supreme.

2. The principle of patience. The blessing waits till the 'evening'. You look for it in the morning watch, or you seek for it at midday, but it is nowhere to be found; it is 'evening' now; soon it shall be night, when—lo! it is here. Do not doubt but that the morning's gifts, be they what they may, are as nothing to the evening's blessing. The sun may have been shining on you throughout the day, but still, 'at evening time it shall be light'.

II. Consider how true the text is of old age under certain conditions. The old age of a purely worldly man or woman is one of the most distressing and abject of all sights. One cannot be surprised that such dread to be even thought old. The very power to please or to derive pleasure, as they understand it—all gone. Boon companions, where are they? A solitary being, with very uncomfortable thoughts of the past, looking back on sin and folly—forward, to a dark unknown. But mark the Christian man.

He, too, has reached the verge of life's pilgrimage. He has had his share, perhaps more than the average, of cares and trials by the way; his physical powers, too, are waning fast, many a loved object has passed from his sight; but all along he knew full well that this world is no resting-place, and that there is nought abiding; and therefore he did not set his affections on things below, but on things above. Now in such a man there are things—sweet memories of the past, confidence in that Arm which has supported him throughout his pilgrimage, hopes of the future, 'sure and certain'; and the old man's 'mouth is filled with praises, and his tongue with joy'. His old age is the happiest and brightest period of his life; while others are nearing the tomb in darkness and uncertainty, his last words will be the triumphant cry, 'At evening time it shall be light'.

References.—XIV. 7.—T. De Witt Talmage, *Sermons* (1st Series), p. 16. T. A. Gurney, *Nunc Dimittis*, p. 10. T. L. Cuyler, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxi. 1902, p. 121; see also vol. lxxii. 1907, p. 94. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. iii. No. 160. XIV. 8, 9.—W. Green, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xlvii. 1895, p. 315. XIV. 9.—F. E. Paget, *Helps and Hindrances to the Christian Life*, vol. i. p. 14. XIV. 20.—J. Pulsford, *Infoldings and Unfoldings*, p. 58. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. vii. No. 399. J. Stalker, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lv. 1899, p. 118. G. T. Candlin, *ibid.* vol. lxi. 1902, p. 396. XIV. 20, 21.—C. Brown, *ibid.* vol. xliv. 1893, p. 373.

MALACHI

MALACHI

REFERENCES.—I. 2, 3.—H. M. Butler, *Harrow School Sermons* (2nd Series), p. 12. Rawnsley, *Sermons in Country Churches*, p. 64. I. 13.—J. Norton, *Golden Truths*, p. 455. I. 18.—R. W. Evans, *Parochial Sermons*, vol. ii. p. 315. II. 2.—J. Keble, *Sermons for the Saints' Days*, p. 133. A. K. H. Boyd, *Sunday Afternoons in the Parish Church*, p. 109. II. 7.—J. Keble, *Sermons for Advent to Christmas Eve*, p. 341. II. 17.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxiv. No. 1415.

THE COMING OF THE LORD

'Behold, I will send My messenger, and he shall prepare the way before Me: and the Lord whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to His temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, He shall come, saith the Lord of Hosts.'—MALACHI III. 1.

HERE is a twofold prediction: we have a forerunner of Christ announced in it and then Christ Himself.

I. This tells us two things of this forerunner.

(*a*) It points out his mission from God. Our Lord Himself refers to this passage, and says that it points to John the Baptist and the ministry of the Baptist.

(*b*) The work this forerunner was to perform. The very appointment of a messenger to precede Jesus, even in His Humiliation, was a foresight and evidence of Christ's royal dignity of his being King over His believing people.

II. We have in this passage two statements of Christ's Divinity:—

(*a*) He is called the Lord. It is most important thus to observe the Divinity of Jesus, not only where it is directly but even where it is incidentally stated in Scripture, for the Deity of Christ supports the very substance of our religion.

(*b*) The end of the verse tells us, it is the Lord of Hosts. The Lord Jesus and the Lord of hosts are one and the same. Thus constantly throughout Scripture we meet with this same truth of the Deity of Jesus.

III. He is also called—

(*a*) 'The messenger of the Covenant.' The covenant is the gracious term used by Jehovah in regard to the promises which He makes to His people to bless and save them.

(*b*) A messenger. For it is He who has made known the glad tidings of salvation, and through the Holy Spirit He reveals and offers to us the blessing of the Gospel. In these two names we observe the happy blending together of our Lord's majesty and lowliness. He is the Lord of the temple, and at the same time a Messenger, the Lord of hosts and yet a servant.

IV. Observe the place, He shall come to his Temple; and about this temple the last three Prophets frequently spoke telling the Jews that they polluted and profaned it, but that the Lord Jehovah would one day honour it and come to it.—E. J. BREWSTER, *The Shield of Faith*, p. 174.

THE GLORY OF GOD'S HOUSE

'The Lord whom ye seek shall suddenly come to His temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, He shall come, saith the Lord of hosts. But who may abide the day of His coming?'—MALACHI III. 1, etc.

I. We may trace four stages in Messianic prophecy:—

(*a*) From the Fall to the Exodus.

(*b*) From the time of Moses to Saul.

(*c*) The period of the earlier kings.

(*d*) From Isaiah to Malachi.

II. Malachi tells of the coming of the Lord to His temple, and calls attention to the unexpectedness of that coming and to the misapprehension of its purpose. They had expected him to come and judge the heathen. But the Prophet warns them that they themselves shall be first judged.

III. The purpose of the temple was twofold. A house for God to dwell in among His people, and a place where acceptable sacrifices might be offered. We may notice three stages in the development of the sacrificial idea:—

(*a*) The building of altars of sacrifice.

(*b*) The building of a tabernacle in the wilderness to be a dwelling for the ark with which was associated God's abiding presence.

(*c*) The temple planned by David and built by Solomon was but a development of the tabernacle, linked in the same way with God's presence.

IV. The temple reached its glory when Christ entered it. The two ideas connected with the Temple blend into one in the Holy Eucharist, the presence and the sacrifice.—A. G. MORTIMER, *One Hundred Miniature Sermons*, p. 181.

REFERENCES.—III. 1.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons Preached in Sackville College Chapel*, vol. ii. p. 268. *Ibid.* vol. iv. p. 126. H. Melvill, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 2611. III. 1, 2.—Bishop E. H. Browne, *Messiah as Foretold and Expected*, p. 30. III. 1, 3.—C. Stanford, *Symbols of Christ*, p. 175. III. 2.—F. B. Woodward, *Sermons* (2nd Series), p. 73. III. 3.—F. D. Maurice, *Sermons*, vol. v. p. 205. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxvii. No. 1575.

THE LIGHT OF OTHER DAYS

'As in former years.'—MALACHI III. 4.

IT seems as if we heard God's own voice in these words and the words that accompany them. This is not a man talking about the light of other days; it is, in the person of the Prophet, God Himself speaking, and saying, in effect, O that it were as it used to be! what times we had together in the long ago, in the former years, in the days of old! Things have

gone wrong since then; the house is not what it used to be: O if these people would only return, repent, and give Me the opportunity of saying, I forgive you all, we should bring back the centuries we have lost, we should make new time, we should make forty-eight hours instead of twenty-four in the day; and by My grace and power we should accomplish the miracle of living our lives over again.

I. You remember some of the former days; the days, you know, when our love saw no difficulties. Love has always been blind; in that sweet sense may love never get its eyesight! To be blind is sometimes to be right and happy and secure. When love begins to see difficulties you may close the windows, and turn the key, and send in the man who will buy up wrecked happiness for bronze. If love should give way the mother has given way, and we always said that as long as mother was there we need not trouble about grate or cupboard or bed to sleep on. But when love gives way, sell your house, go out into the wilderness, and by accident drop in the sea if you can.

II. And who cannot recall those happy years when the soul was absolutely without a suspicion? Once we believed everybody; of course it never occurred to us that anybody could be saying anything that was not true. 'Let your yea be yea, and your nay nay.' That is the very soul of the kingdom of God—sincerity, simplicity, directness, emphasis, and candour. I long for the days when we never suspected anybody, when we thought there were no wrinkles in any heart, when we were perfectly sure that what was said to us was said in truth and innocence, simplicity and love, and might be relied upon to the last tick and syllable of the speech.

III. I sometimes want the days to come back when my confidence was absolutely strong, when I rose with a simple creed and worked it out all day, and then laid my head upon it at night and slept well. There was a time when I thought that everything would come right, when I was quite sure that everything was right because God was in it.

Now we are glad when any man arises to give us an excuse for giving up our old ways; if he will hint that there is something wrong in this page or on that page, enough, we are quite willing if he can prove that, then we are away to serve the devil. Not that we care for criticism or archæology or any verbal difficulties, but we are glad that men have arisen to point all these out, because it gives us chance to go with an easier conscience to redouble our social iniquities. Will the enthusiastic days of faith ever return, when men are battling at the church gates and saying, Open to me the gates of Zion; I will enter in and be glad and shout the Lord's song? I wonder.—Joseph Parker, *City Temple Pulpit*, vol. iv. p. 69.

References.—III. 6.—J. Vaughan, *Fifty Sermons* (9th Series), p. 236. III. 7.—J. Keble, *Sermons for Christmas and Epiphany*, p. 236. III. 8.—W. Baird, *The Hallowing of our Common Life*, p. 23. J. Foster, *Lectures* (2nd Series), p. 339.

FAITH IN DARKNESS

'Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another: and the Lord hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him, for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon His name.'—Malachi iii. 16.

The internal state of Jerusalem was bad beyond all former example. The crimes of those men who one after another filled the high priest's office, and the general wickedness of the people, were quite enough to prevent them from expecting those blessings which had been promised as the reward of their faithful obedience.

I. To what then could a good man look with hope in such a time of darkness? Outward signs of God's favour to His people were nowhere to be seen; their condition was in no respect better, and in some it was worse, than that of the heathen nations around them. Had God then cast them off utterly, and was there nothing more to be hoped from trying to serve Him? Many of them did not scruple to say that it was so.

II. For those who looked only on the surface of things, there was nothing that could support their faith. But the more thoughtful, and those who loved God better, sought to find whether there was not some ground of comfort yet left them. They turned over the volume of the law and the prophets; they found trust in God urged as a duty which would never be practised in vain.

III. We must live by faith; that is, we must take much upon trust; we must sow in patience, believing that the harvest will come. All our practice in common life is founded upon belief, not upon certainty: we cannot be sure that a single plan we form will answer; we cannot be sure that a single step we take will lead to our good. So then we may believe or not, as we choose; and herein lies our trial.

References.—III. 16.—J. Baldwin Brown, *The Sunday Afternoon*, p. 20. III. 16, 17.—J. C. M. Bellew, *Christian Life: Life in Christ*, p. 249. C. D. Bell, *The Name Above Every Name*, p. 85. III. 18.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxiv. No. 1415. III.—Canon Jelf, *Sermons for the People*, p. 152.

THE END OF THE CHRISTIAN YEAR

'The day cometh.'—Malachi iv. 1.

The end of a Christian year and the approach of another bring, like all endings and new beginnings in our frail and brief life, solemn thoughts. The Church in her services encourages them, and impresses them upon us.

I. The Day of Change and Ending.—Life, if you think of it, is so made that it seems stable, settled, permanent, and yet it is liable always to interruption and shock. It moves incessantly towards some day of change and ending. Both things are true—both, no doubt, are meant for us by God. Without the appearance—call it the illusion if you will—of quiet and of security, we could not live our lives heartily or do our work effectively. To that appearance we owe all our happiness. If life be but a stage, it has a look

of home. You could not act a drama as you moved along down a road. God knows the real value of the moment and the day, and knows that it is perhaps through the feeling of their being safely our own that we are able either to enjoy or to use them, or that they can do their true work of probation for us. But if that is true, it is also true that He means us to take to heart the certainty of change. If we get settled in security, we deceive ourselves. Blind and self-satisfied, we grow careless and rash. 'In my prosperity I said, I shall never be removed.' 'To-morrow shall be as this day, and much more abundant.' And so to the man in the Gospel, who has wrapped himself round with security of his possessions, saying, 'I will pull down my barns and build greater,' comes the word, 'Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee, then whose shall these things be?' Therefore, for our good, life is always full of signs and warnings of change. Sometimes they come suddenly, sometimes gradually. The death at our side by the quick stroke of accident or after a few days' illness, the break-up of a home, a bereavement which darkens our sky, a physician's word, or look, which gives the verdict of incurable and mortal disease, these are the common examples of sudden catastrophe which make our best security insecure.

II. The Appeal to the Conscience.—It is not only that the change will come, whether gradually or in an instant, but that when it comes, it will wind up a time of opportunity; a chapter will be closed, accounts will be cast up, and judgment will be passed. The day, when it comes, will test our value and the use that we have made of the days that are gone. The conscience of man, like the words of the Prophet, forebodes the day, which may be a day of hope, but must be a day of judgment. We may look for it, like Haggai, as a day which will bring some triumph of the right, some better state than this in which we live, with all its trials, sufferings, and sin—some glory and some peace; but, being the poor, sinful creatures that we are, we must think of it as a day when, under the searchlight of God, all that is in use is seen for what it really is; all the evil that is hidden by our respectability is revealed; all the faults that we will not own, even to ourselves to be faults, are exposed in their true character—a day when we shall see ourselves as we might have been, and as we are, and shall be mightily ashamed.

III. And behind Conscience is God.—'Who may abide the day of His coming? and who shall stand when He appeareth?' for He shall bring every secret thing into judgment, whether it be good or whether it be evil. Well for us if the judgment be 'Well done'. There is time to purge away the dross and to give us the opportunity to do better, but can we reckon that it will be always so? or will the fire find in us only what it must consume? Will there be a last day after the different days of warning and of trial, a last day winding up our opportunity after the many warnings that have gone before?

MALACHI IV.

I. WE are studying the very last words in the Old Testament. The prophecies of Malachi. The oracle is about to cease. Malachi is about to resign the pen. What are his last words? There shall no Prophet arise after him until John come, and John the Baptist was not coming for four hundred years. What is to be done in the meantime? Does God provide for the interstices of history? Here is the word—verse 4: 'Remember ye the law of Moses My servant, which I commanded unto him in Horeb for all Israel with the statutes and judgments'. For four hundred years the people were to remember the law of Moses. So the Jewish Church was not left without oracles during the four centuries of so-called silence. If the law of Moses had prevailed it would have given life, if lovingly accepted and obeyed. All truth gives life, all truth brings life. But is it the law of Moses? that is only part of the description. The full description is 'The law of Moses My servant'. There is the supremacy of God, 'which I commanded unto him'; there is the foundation of law. God commands, Moses communicates. All that men can do is to act instrumentally. The fountain, the origin of law, we find in God.

II. Is there, then, no touch of prophecy? Is there no widening horizon before that view of the Church? Is it simply the law, the law—iron, dogmatic, positive, unchangeable? Is there no sky above this poor earth of law? God never made earth without making sky. So in this instance we find the sky, the horizon, the far away hint and promise; Behold, I will send you Elijah the Prophet, not Elijah the Tishbite. What shall this Elijah do when he comes? 'He shall work out the great reconciliation, and he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children.' This is not a family reference. The Prophet is not speaking, or God is not speaking through the Prophet, merely of the father of a family and the children of a family. He is speaking of fathers in the sense of leaders, teachers of the world and children. The populations and the flocks of the earth. And this Prophet, when he comes, will be known by his desire to promote, and his power to promote reconciliation. God's Prophets always bring music, harmony, rest. If any man bring aught else except in an official and temporary sense, he is no Prophet of God.—J. PARKER, *British Weekly Pulpit*, vol. III. p. 196.

THE ILLUMINATING POWER OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

'The sun of righteousness shall arise with healing in His wings.'—MALACHI IV. 2.

I. THERE is nothing which illuminates this world like the vision of righteousness, and therefore there is nothing which heals doubt like that vision. The reason is that only in the vision of righteousness do I learn my superiority to nature. Every other vision dwarfs me. The glory of the natural sun makes me pale. The vastness of the mighty firmament makes

me humble. The flash of the lightning makes me tremble. The height of the mountains makes me shrink. The depth of the ocean makes me feel shallow. The sight of disease and death makes me identify myself with the flower that fades and the bird that dies. But when I see a righteous man I see something at variance with natural law. Professor Huxley himself tells me so. The law of nature, the law of evolution, is the survival of the strongest. But the law of righteousness is the refusal of the strongest to survive at the expense of the weakest. It is the insistence of the strong to share the life of the weak—to appropriate their burdens, to wear their infirmities. It is a law which never could have been made by physical nature, which in this sense is supernatural. My vision of a righteous man is fitted to heal all my scepticism. It tells me that human life is something unique, something revolutionary, something above the common clay. It tells me that the human soul can do what even the stars cannot do, make a new law which will override the old. It tells me that, with all its seeming insignificance, the little stream in the heart of a man has outweighed the wonder of the whole ocean—has turned the downward into an upward current and led the way to a higher plane.

II. The righteous man is no longer a cipher. He was born a cipher like the leaves and the grass. But he has reversed the order of science. He has made a new law—the death of the strong for the weak. He has arrested the first course of Nature. He has said: 'You shall no longer live for self-preservation, but for the preservation of others'. He has made the winds his missionaries, the mines almoners, the seas his road to brotherhood, the stream his flag of union, the electricity his voice of fellowship, the light a framer of his neighbour's image, the heat a warmer of his neighbour's hearth, the herb a soother of his neighbour's pain. The sacrificial man is the man that has conquered nature. The vision of righteousness heals my despair.—G. MATHESON, *Messages of Hope*, p. 157.

REFERENCES.—IV. 2.—C. Bosanquet, *Tender Grass for the Lambs*, p. 113. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xvii. No. 1020; *ibid.* vol. xxv. No. 1463.

THE CESSATION OF PROPHECY

'Remember ye the law of Moses My servant, which I commanded unto him in Horeb for all Israel, with the statutes and judgments. Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord.'—MALACHI IV. 4, 5.

THESE are almost the last words of the Old Testament; they come in their place not by accident, but because it is really the last word of the prophecy uttered before the Gospel was declared. Of Malachi himself we know nothing but his name; when he lived we can only guess. After him there arose not any like him. Malachi died and no other took his place. No man arose who came to Israel and said, 'Thus saith the Lord'. They were not left ignorant of the will of God, but they had to learn it, not from a living voice speaking among them, but from the books already written. They were indeed to learn something more some day, but not yet. It was enough for the present if they would keep what they had. 'Remember ye the law of Moses My servant, which I commanded unto him in Horeb for all Israel, with the statutes and judgments:' if they remembered that, all would be well. And they did remember it. The Jews henceforth would stick to their law and to the name of their God, whom before they had always been so ready to forsake. They were persecuted by the heathen that ruled over them, as Daniel foretold: 'They shall fall by the sword, and by flames, by captivity, and by spoil many days;' but in one way they did not fall—they would not fall down and worship the images which the kings of the Gentiles set up: their fall was only 'to try them, and to purge them, and to make them white, even to the times of the end'. Yet all this time they had no Prophet among them. Four hundred years at least went by and no Prophet came. Yet the People did not cease to look for one: they remembered the law of Moses the servant of the Lord, how he had said: 'A Prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto thee out of thy brethren, like unto me'; that promise had not been fulfilled yet, and they knew was to be. And there was another Prophet also to come, of whom the latest of the old Prophets speaks: 'Behold, I will send you Elijah the Prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord'. The four hundred years did pass, and Elijah came; not indeed as the Jews seem to have expected, Elijah himself; descending from heaven, whither he had been carried up alive by the chariot of fire: but one in the spirit and power of Elijah, turning the children of Israel to the Lord their God. And then only a few months passed and the other Prophet came; a Prophet like, not only to Elijah, but to Moses; yea greater than Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face, for He knew the Lord even as the Lord knew him. And so the gift of prophecy was restored, while by the very restoration all the old prophecies began to be fulfilled. This found its great perfection and fulfilment in the Person of the Lord Jesus; who was, even in His human nature, filled by God with the Spirit, and called to the work of a Prophet to make God known to men.—W. H. SIMCOX, *The Cessation of Prophecy*, p. 1.

REFERENCE.—IV. 4, 5.—F. J. A. Hort, *Village Sermons* (2nd Series), p. 28.

THE GIFT OF PROPHECY THE SUPREME NEED OF OUR AGE

'Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord. And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse.'—MALACHI IV. 5, 6.

WHATEVER spiritual gifts may have been necessary or profitable to the Church in other times, I am sure that the gift of prophecy is the most necessary and profitable now. 'Christ sent me not to baptize,' says the Apostle—others with lower gifts could do that—

'but to preach the Gospel,' and he adds, 'I preached it, not with the enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power'. Men felt the power and acknowledged the teaching; their listening to him was the Apostle's higher credential.

I. Man may well pray for a portion of this power, and for grace to use it in the noblest cause. It is not eloquence, it is not popularity, it is not the power of attracting the crowd. It is a spiritual power which can bow the hearts of a multitude as of one man, swaying them with a charm of strange, mysterious potency; a power which we feel though we cannot describe it. This age is prepared to receive, not the priest but the prophet, not the man who claims to stand between souls and God, but the man who can teach them the truth, and help them in their blindness and waywardness and ignorance, to discover the way of peace and righteousness—for men do feel their ignorance and are thankful for light, and are not indisposed to truth. It is marvellous to me and yet most encouraging to see how few of what the world calls 'gifts' are needed to fill a church and to work wonders in the lives and conduct of a people. A preacher acquires the truest eloquence by daily contact with his flock. Like the Chief Shepherd whom he is trying to follow, 'he knows his sheep and is known of them'. Not only do they know his voice but his life also.

II. The Prophet must be in earnest or men will not receive him as a Prophet; must himself believe his message or he will carry no conviction to his hearers. Is it not because we are so cold and rigid that your hearts are so seldom reached; that we preach and you are not edified; that great opportunities are given and missed; that even in the best cases ears often are tickled rather than lives improved? And yet we have a message, able to stir the most phlegmatic feelings, and to arouse the dullest conscience, if only we know how to deliver it. If our hearts have found the secret, we can speak of present peace and joy in believing; of the kingdom of God standing in righteousness; of the nearness of a Father to us in our dangers, difficulties, and troubles; of the no harm that shall happen to us if we are followers of that which is good; of the love of Christ and the comfort of the Holy Ghost; of the sweetness that can be got from the life that now is if only we go the right way to seek it; of the strength that comes of faith, and the satisfaction that rewards obedience. There are those who can speak of these things with a strange and moving power, and their arguments will rise high above the clouds of doubt and speculation till they seem to bring me almost face to face with God. Such men are in truth the Lord's Prophets. They are sure and trustworthy guides, for they are leading men to God, through Christ, by the way of holiness.—J. Fraser, *University Sermons*, p. 225.

Reference.—IV. 5, 6.—J. Fraser, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxi. p. 401.

ST. MATTHEW

ST. MATTHEW

REFERENCES.—I.—R. Stier, *The Words of the Angels*, p. 37. I. 1.—Archbishop Alexander, *Leading Ideas of the Gospels*, p. 1. J. Farquhar, *The Schools and Schoolmasters of Christ*, p. 15. I. 1-16.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—St. Matthew I.-VIII.* p. 1. I. 5.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons on the Blessed Sacrament*, p. 159. I. 18.—Archbishop Alexander, *Verbum Crucis*, p. 1. J. Farquhar, *The Schools and Schoolmasters of Christ*, p. 28. I. 18-25.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—St. Matthew I.-VIII.* p. 6. R. F. Horton, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxvi. 1904, p. 393.

JESUS THE SAVIOUR

(For Christmas Day)

'Thou shalt call His name JESUS: for He it is that shall save His people from their sins.'—MATTHEW I. 21.

CHRISTMAS comes to us with both light and shade. There is the glorious light of the Christ, the long-looked-for Messiah, the Morning Star of prophecy, the Dayspring from on high. But the very fact that Jesus comes as Saviour also speaks to us of sin. There was need for Him to come, and that is the shadow athwart the glory of this day. It is true we need not look so much at the shading as at the glorious colours of the picture, 'the glory as of the only-begotten'. His name is Jesus, Saviour.

Consider two points.—I. What we mean by sin. II. In what sense it can be said that Christ our Lord is a Saviour from sin.

I. What is Sin?—It has a twofold meaning, (1) inherent corruption, and (2) actual transgression.

1. From the full penalty, consequences, and inbeing of sin we are not delivered whilst in the body of our humiliation. But we are saved in anticipation, and all that baptism signifies is secured for us in Christ Jesus. As regards the second meaning, St. John tells us, 'Sin is the transgression of the law'. Look at it in various aspects.

2. (*a*) Sin is *trespass*—breaking bounds. 'Forgive us our trespasses.'

(*b*) Sin is *shortcoming*. Not full-measure—not coming up to standard. The former aspect (1) is doing the things we ought not to have done; the latter (2) leaving undone what we ought to have done.

(*c*) Sin is *iniquity*, inequitableness—not plumb—not straight, not equal. Failure of equilibrium, lack of balance implied.

(*d*) Sin is *defilement*, uncleanness, disease, leprosy. 'There is no health in us.'

But dropping these metaphors, we must look upon sin *as actual rebellion against God*, 'I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against Me'. 'All day long have I stretched out My hands to a wicked and rebellious people. Sin is trespass upon God's rights, shortcoming in regard to His standard, iniquity—opposed to His law of equity, defilement against His purity. 'Against Thee, Thee *only* have I sinned,' said David when confessing a sin which was a deep wrong done towards his neighbour. Yet the *sin* was only against God.

II. How does Christ Save? And Whom?—He saves 'His people' from their sins. The people of Israel first—then all the world, 'To the Jew first,' etc.

(*a*) *From their sins.* Their special sins. The sin of each, the easily besetting ('well-circumstanced') sin. Experience and history prove that the Christ Whose coming is to-day celebrated can save the greatest of sinners from their sins—the drunkard from drink, the debauchee from uncleanness, the Sabbath-breaker from robbing God, and the thief from robbing man. He can also save the worldling from his worldliness, the proud from his pride, the unbelieving from his doubts. He saves from the sins themselves, not from the penalty merely.

(*b*) *He saves from the love of sin.* Sin is not only to be avoided but to be abhorred. Like Lot's wife, some bewail the idols they are called upon to leave, but such have not realized the meaning of Christ's salvation.

(*c*) *'He it is' who thus saves* (R.V.). Not self in any form, not any other, not formal services or rites, although these may have their uses if they are transparencies to reveal the Christ and not thick curtains to hide Him. The personality of the Christ is the central Christmas doctrine, Immanuel, God with us. He is the Rock—the Light, the Life, His salvation the tree of life. As represented by Noel Paton's great picture 'Lux in Tenebris,' death itself through Him bursts into Light.

(*d*) *The name of the child Jesus works miracles of grace.* Illustration: Norfolk Island beautiful in itself, healthy, charming. Made a convict settlement for worst class of criminals, became a hell on earth, and the establishment had to be broken up. Succeeded by another body of men, brought up in a secluded island of their own in the love and fear of God, *they* made it a paradise.

The name of Jesus, as it is our joy and inspiration in life, will be our solace and strength in the hour of death.

JESUS SAVIOUR

'And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call His name JESUS: for He shall save His people from their sins.'—MATTHEW I. 21.

I. The Saviour from Sins.—I ask your careful attention to this expressed purpose and intention of

Christ. I may call it His regnant and supreme purpose to save His people from their sins. He teaches men that He may save from sin; heals and serves men; asks for their obedience and love; suffers Himself to be put to death on the cross, that He may save from sin.

The greatest thing a man can do in this world is not making a fortune or a reputation, or carrying out some great work of genius at which the world may wonder. It is not even feeding the hungry or clothing the naked, though these may be parts of it. It is to master sin in himself and others.

And as it is the greatest, so also it is the most difficult. It is such a complicated business. Sins of the past reach forward to the present, and those of the present to the future.

II. There is another element in the case, the saddest and strangest of all, which is that *people do not want to be saved from their sins.* You know that the very last thing that people want to hear about is their sins. It was precisely this difficulty that met our Lord. Men wanted everything else but this, and were willing to take everything else save this from His hands. And it is perfectly clear to any candid and careful reader of the New Testament that it was this very purpose of our Lord, persisted in, that led to His death. We all want to be saved from the disagreeable consequences of sins; but as for the sins themselves we will defend them and excuse them and do anything rather than acknowledge and hate them, and turn from them.

III. And there are *people who doubt the possibility of being saved from their sins.* There is a refreshing dogmatism about the prophecy, 'He shall save His people'. His own people who follow Him. It is the thing that He can do. He is not called Saviour as a mere courtesy title, but because He saves from the dominion of the lusts of the flesh and of the mind, from the grip and fascination of evil. He is able to save to the uttermost all them that come unto God by Him. It will not be done by our struggles, but by the union of our lives with Him.
—C. Brown, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxxii. 1907, p. 406.

'He shall save His people from their sins.'—Matthew i. 21.

The cardinal question is that of sin. The question of immanence or of dualism is secondary. The Trinity, life to come, paradise and hell, may cease to be dogmas and spiritual realities, the form and the letter may vanish away—the question of humanity remains: What is it that saves?—Amiel.

WHY A YOUNG MAN SHOULD BE A CHRISTIAN

(*Because Christ Saves His People from Their Sins*)

'Thou shalt call His name JESUS: for He shalt save His people from their sins.'—Matthew i. 21.

Let us open this sermon with a quotation. 'The cardinal question,' says Amiel, 'is sin.' The question of humanity remains. What is it which saves? How can man be led to be truly man? 'The cardinal question,' I repeat the words, 'is sin,' and the writer who lays down this truth with such solemnity, who was he? He was not a clergyman, and I am not sure that he would have called himself a Christian. Certainly he was not a member of the Christian Church, and did not hold the Christian creed. He was a man of letters and a profound thinker, who corresponded at Geneva to what Green of Balliol was in Oxford. He stood on the bank, and looked upon the stream; he thought at large and was free from all bonds. He had no traditions, he kept no conventions, he lived at equal distance from the rant of shallow unbelief and the cant of unreal religion; and this man, with one of the calmest, most penetrating minds of last century, said, 'The cardinal question is sin'. Contrast this profound statement of Amiel with Renan's light-hearted reply: 'Sin. I believe that I have abolished it.'

Which of the two, both very brilliant and very attractive men, came nearer to fact? Wherever it came from, or whatever it is, there is something called sin, working in our life and damaging our souls; and it is a big, hard, masterful, undeniable fact.

I. Well, over against that fact which we have all discovered, let us put another fact which we may also all verify. There have been a number of religious teachers of the first order in the world who not only have had multitudes of disciples, but have founded schools. Confucius, for instance, whose influence for good in China is felt to this day; Buddha, who set so fine an example of sacrifice; Mohammed, who has raised savage tribes several degrees in civilization; and Socrates, who taught men the eternal glory of the mind. But only one Teacher faced the fact of sin, and dealt with it in a thoroughgoing fashion. Jesus had many tasks. He proposed to teach men about His Father, to show them their duty in the world, to lift them above the bondage of the senses, and to give them the hope of immortality. But He also proposed to deliver them from their sins, and He set himself, by His life and death, by His word and Spirit, to save men from their worst and most degrading enemy.

II. You may place yourself with confidence in our Master's hands for two reasons. 1. The first is that He is too wise a Physician to use the old-fashioned treatment, which was to expel the evil by violent medicines. Before Christ began, if I may so say, to practise in this sad hospital of humanity, the only way of curing a man was to forbid and to threaten. No doubt there is a function for such means. It is well that a man should be reminded of the consequences of sin; that, whatsoever he soweth, that shall he also reap; that, if he ruins his constitution in his youth, he will have a bad time in his manhood. It is well also to have the commandments written on the memory and on the conscience, to have them before one's eyes, and to use them as a light for the path. But forbidding has not prevented men sinning, and

threatening has not delivered them from their sins. Moses is the great practitioner in this system, and we have cause to be grateful to him, but no one has ever yet confounded a lawgiver and a Saviour.

2. This is the second reason why you may trust Jesus as your Saviour, because He uses the one perfect treatment, which is not to forbid anything, but to command good things, not to threaten any one with punishment, but to promise to every one blessing. Consider this difference between Moses and Christ. Christ did not say to men: 'You must not kill'; 'you must not steal'; 'you must not lie'; 'you must not live uncleanly'. One may say roundly, He never forbade His disciples to do anything. He took the Ten Commandments and re-wrote them, and handed them back. This is how they read when they come from Jesus' hands, 'Love God and love your neighbour'. But is there nothing which I am forbidden to do against God? Nothing. Do anything you please towards God, provided first you love Him. Is there nothing against my neighbour forbidden? Nothing. Do anything you please to your neighbour if first you love him. Christ gave His commandments, and they are contained in the Sermon on the Mount; but they are not called commandments, they are called beatitudes. He undertook to save men from being sinners by making them in a true and manly sense saints; by possessing them with good thoughts, pure feelings, kindly intentions, high endeavours. He proposed to keep them so busy with goodness that they would have neither time nor tendency to sin; to keep them in so high a state of health that, though like other men they were subject to infection, the microbes settling upon them could find no home. This is the positive system of treatment, and this is the way in which Jesus conducts His spiritual practice, and does His saving work.—JOHN WATSON, *Respectable Sins*, p. 163.

REFERENCES.—I. 21.—J. Monro Gibson, *A Strong City*, p. 103. W. J. Butler, *Sermons for Working Men, The Oxford Sermon Library*, vol. ii. p. 26. George Macdonald, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xli. 1892, p. 385. Lyman Abbott, *ibid.* vol. lvi. 1899, p. 186. C. Perren, *Revival Sermons in Outline*, p. 290. J. Farquhar, *The Schools and Schoolmasters of Christ*, p. 2. A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—St. Matthew* I.-VIII. p. 12. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxiv. No. 1434.

AHAZ'S REJECTION OF GOD'S MERCIES, AND WHAT IT PICTURES TO US

'All this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying,' etc.—MATTHEW I. 22, 23.

I. IN His immense pity, the God of love not only promised His people this wonderful sign of Christ's coming in the flesh, which they were to look on to in faith, but He confirmed it also, as to other times, by something which was shortly to happen before their eyes. In the course of ten years, a shorter time than would be required for a young child to grow up so as to know right from wrong, 'to refuse the evil and choose the good,' the land which Ahaz abhorred, which he was so grievously wronging and ill-using, as if he could not do it too much harm, that land should be forsaken of both her kings. And so indeed it came to pass, for the King of Syria and the King of Israel both of them fell by the sword, and the land had rest.

II. Great was this indulgence and merciful care of God for His people at this time; and, like all His tender mercies, it was to be taken by them and by us as a pledge and sample of infinitely more to come, even of all that is meant by the blessed name Emmanuel. That name means, not only that He is present with us and in us as our Preserver and Watcher, to keep us in the life and being in which He at first created us. He is now 'God in us,' because He is really Incarnate, very man, man indeed; perfect God and perfect man. He became our Second Adam, the Fountain of life and grace to all who are grafted into Him. He would have a soul and body like ours that He might fulfil His love by dying for us, dying the death which we had deserved. Excepting only that there was not in Him the least spot or taint, or slightest beginning of sin, He was made Himself like unto us in all things, all the infirmities of the body, all the anxieties and feelings of the soul.

And so He became our Intercessor, offering up our prayers and other unworthy services, and pleading for us continually, in such a feeling of our infirmities as none but He can have. For as God He knoweth them all, and as man He is touched with all.—J. KEBLE, *The Contemporary Pulpit* (2nd Series), vol. IV. 1890, p. 363.

'Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the Prophet, saying, Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son.'—MATTHEW I. 22, 23.

'CHRISTMAS Day,' says Alexander Smith in *Dreamthorp*, 'holds time together. Isaiah, standing on the peaks of prophecy, looked across ruined empires and the desolation of many centuries, and saw on the horizon the new star arise, and was glad.'

REFERENCES.—I. 22, 23.—H. P. Liddon, *Christmastide in St. Paul's*, p. 89; see also *Expository Sermons on the New Testament*, p. 1. W. C. E. Newbolt, *Church Times*, vol. xxxiii. 1895, p. 20.

THE INTERPRETER

'Which being interpreted is.'—MATTHEW I. 23.

I. WE need the interpreter. We shall always need him. The great reader will always have his day, come and go who may. We want men who can turn foreign words, difficult languages, into our mother tongue; then how simple they are and how beautiful, and that which was a difficulty before becomes a gate opening upon a wide liberty. We need a man who can interpret to us the meaning of confused and confusing and bewildering events; some man with a key from heaven, some man with Divine insight, the vision that sees the poetry and the reality of things, and a man with a clear, simple, strong, penetrating voice who will tell us that all this confusion will one day be shaped into order, and all this uproar will fall into the cadences of a celestial and endless music.

II. In life there is a great place for the interpreter; in all life there is a sanctuary in which such a man can exercise his ghostly ministry. This house called Nature needs an interpreter. The grass is more than grass, herbage is more than herbage; it is beauty, it is fruit, it has a mission to man and beast, and nature needs a man who can understand her mutable appearances, her ever-changing voices, her silent but progressive and inevitable processions, so that she never halts long at one place, but is continually moving on to the old age of completion and the youth of a new beginning. We want some men who can read Nature to us religiously, who can find tongues in trees, books in the running brooks, sermons in stones, good in everything—a wondrous parable interwrought with all that is visible and mutable and measurable.

III. The interpreter is the sent of God. Interpretation is not a universal gift. Nearly every man can go to the dictionary for the meaning of words, but the dictionary is always poorest when we want it most. The dictionary cannot explain any word right into the heart. It can give you equivalent words, or words that grade into one another, or words that help one another to some higher definition than themselves; but interpretation is a Divine gift: it is genius, it is a Divine trust. Few men can read. All men within the compass of practical civilization can read words, but that is not reading in the true and deep sense. We must read the soul out of the words, and read the soul into our souls, and catch the higher meanings and be struck dumb with rapture and with ecstasy.

IV. When the interpreter abuses his gift he loses it. That is the law of God, that is the law of righteousness. When does the interpreter abuse his gift? When he becomes offensive in his interpretations, when he ceases to be philosophical and becomes fantastical, and wants to find meanings where there are none, and turn that which is inanimate into that which is only galvanically vital; then the man has begun to fritter away his gift, and God will soon see that he loses it altogether. When does the interpreter abuse his gift? When he turns it to self-seeking purposes, when he would make a livelihood by it, when he would keep the secret of God to himself and sell it to some Simon Magus; then God will see that His gift is soon lost, and lost for ever.—Joseph Parker, *City Temple Pulpit*, vol. I. p. 40.

GOD WITH US

'They shall call His name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us.'—Matthew I. 23.

This glorious statement is made on the basis of a glorious prophecy which Isaiah uttered at an important era in Jewish history (Is. VII. 14). But this glorious prophecy had a far more important and magnificent fulfilment in relation to the Incarnation.

The name of Jesus was exceedingly wonderful—'Emmanuel'. As St. Matthew uses it, it means a double nature—that of God and that of Man.

I. Jesus is God with us in Human Form.—This is a mystery which no created mind can explain; yet it is no myth soever: it is a fact as sublime as it is mysterious. 'Without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: He was manifested in the flesh.' And there was absolute necessity for this. Man is 'a religious animal,' and hence naturally craves for a God. In Emmanuel, however, there is all that man yearns for (Exod. XXXIII. 18; John XIV. 8, 9). Thus the infinite Jehovah has subjected Himself to finite laws for this essential purpose; and he who believingly looks at Jesus as 'the brightness of His glory, and the express image of His person,' will feel that he is put in possession of all that his heart can possibly desire. 'This is life eternal, to know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, Whom Thou hast sent.'

II. Jesus is God with us in Divine Sympathy.—And sympathy is that which man needs next to God Himself. This also is to be found in Jesus; indeed, this was one prime reason why He became Incarnate (Heb. II. 16-18). His path in life was accordingly made as rough as ours; His foes were as many as ours; His temptations were as fierce as ours; and for three-and-thirty years His cup of sorrow was as full and bitter as ours. All this became Him (Heb. II. 10-13). Wherefore He showed His Divine sympathy with all manner of human suffering; and in all instances He demonstrated that He was truly 'Emmanuel, God with us'.

III. Jesus is God with us in Redeeming Love.—All men are sinners, and no man can redeem his own soul. God must provide Himself a lamb for a burnt-offering; and He did this by sending Jesus, and Jesus was willing to do His Father's will. What led the Divine Father and the Divine Son to unite in this greatest of all great works? Love—love as amazing as it was undeserved!

IV. Jesus will be God with us in Heavenly Glory.—His own words, spoken to His disciples during the last days of the Incarnation, overflow with consolation and hope: 'In My Father's house are many mansions'. And then there are those other golden words which He spoke in prayer to His Father: 'Father, I will that they also, whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am; that they may behold My glory, which Thou hast given Me: for Thou lovedst Me before the foundation of the world'. Whatever He is in person, and whatever in bliss, His redeemed will share with Him.

References.—I. 23.—S. Baring-Gould, *Village Preaching for a Year*, vol. i. p. 57. G. W. Herbert, *Notes of Sermons*, p. 12. H. J. Wilmot-Buxton, *Sunday Sermonettes for a Year*, p. 15. J. F. Kitto, *Religion in Common Life*, p. 9. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxi. No. 1270. I. 24.—'Plain Sermons' by contributors to the *Tracts for the Times*, vol. viii. p. 285.

JESUS AND JOSHUA

'And he called His name Jesus.'—Matthew I. 25.

He called His name Jesus—Joshua—the Lord our Saviour. Two men above all others in old time bore

the name, and bearing it were permitted by God to present some traits of the Saviour of the world. One appears at the beginning and the other at the close of the Divine history of the earthly Canaan. We first read of Joshua, the son of Nun, the great captain; and then of Joshua, the son of Josedech, the great high priest.

I. '*And Moses called Oshea, the son of Nun, Jehoshua.*' Such are the pregnant words with which the sacred historian closes the first notice of the future leader of Israel—the Jesus of the Exodus. Faithful among the faithless, Joshua saw the terrible sons of Anak in the promised land without dismay; and when the people wept he said, *Fear them not, the Lord is with us.* In the strength of that faith he led their sons across Jordan. A noble repose closed a course of valiant action. *The land rested from war;* and *the people said unto Joshua, The Lord our God will we serve, and His voice will we obey.* The great captain won peace by conflict, and confirmed faith by deeds of might.

And is not all this an image of the work of Jesus, the Captain of our Salvation? He too is leading a great host, in which we all have been solemnly enrolled, to a heavenly country. Giant passions and ancient prejudices, foes without and weaknesses within, threaten our progress; but in all our trouble and terror, when we approach a task which we have no adequate forces to fulfil, when we face an enemy by whom we have been foiled before, He still says, *Fear not: the Lord is with you.* He has seen the land towards which we are struggling. In token that we should not shrink before our adversary or faint in the hour of battle, *His name was called Jesus*—the Lord our Saviour.

II. This is one picture: Jesus the great Captain. But there is another: Jesus the great High Priest. *I lifted up mine eyes again, and looked . . . and, behold, the angel showed me Joshua the High Priest standing before the angel of the Lord, and Satan standing at his right hand to resist him.* But this new Joshua, the Jesus of the Return, was no champion of a youthful nation marshalled for active strife. He was the representative and mediator of a nation burdened with long guilt and suffering.

This is the second picture: and so we also have Jesus, as a great High Priest at the right hand of God, ever ready to make intercession. At the outset of life we think, perhaps, that we need guidance only and mercy. With us as with the Jewish nation the fashion of our contest changes with advancing years. As we look backward we see the gathered sins of the past rising like a mountain to overwhelm us. We are alone, desolate, conscious of sin, strangers in our former homes. Alone and yet not alone, for Christ is with us; desolate, but not forsaken; conscious of sin, and yet children of a Redeemer; strangers on earth, and yet heirs of a glorious kingdom. For in token that we should not sink beneath the burden of past guilt or despair in the dark valley, *His name was called Jesus*—the Lord our Saviour.—Bishop B. F. Westcott, *Village Sermons*, p. 59.

References.—II.—R. Stier, *The Words of the Angels*, p. 61. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xlii. No. 2497.

'Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judæa, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem.'—Matthew II. I.

See, on the earlier part of this chapter, Mrs. Browning's striking poem, 'Christmas Gifts'.

Savonarola, after quoting verses 1 and 2 in one of his sermons, proceeds to harangue the Florentines as follows: 'Mark the words and observe the mysteries. Behold then that He by whom all things were made is this day born upon earth. Behold He that is above all things begins by having a native land; He begins as the compatriot of men, the companion of men, the brother of men, and the son of man! Behold the wise men; behold the Chaldeans; behold those who were not born among Christians; behold those that were not baptized; behold those who were not instructed in the law of the Gospel; behold those that did not receive the numerous sacraments of the Church; behold those who heard not the voice of preachers. Behold the wise men from the East, from the midst of a perverse and evil nation, from distant and remote regions, shrinking from no expense, from no weariness, from no danger. *They came.* And when was it they came? When Christ was a babe, when He lay upon straw, when He showed nought but weakness, when He had as yet done no miracles.' And so on. Professor Villari adds that 'this description of the wise men coming from distant lands and through many perils to seek the infant Jesus, while Christians remain indifferent to Christ the Man, even when He has risen to the splendour of His glory, and opens His arms invitingly to them, was undoubtedly one of the appeals that acted most magically upon the people.'

THE STAR OF THE WISE MEN

(*Epiphany*)

'Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judæa in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem, saying, Where is He that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen His star in the east, and are come to worship Him.'—Matthew II. 1, 2.

The lessons which we may learn from these wise men:—

I. The Way in which They were Brought to Seek for Christ.—This is pointed out in the Collect, 'O God, Who by the leading of a star didst manifest Thy only begotten Son to the Gentiles'. It was through their own common and proper occupation of watching and studying the stars that God led them in the right way to behold His Son. This is an example of the way in which He always works. We are very apt to think that any occupation rather than our own is the best and easiest for serving God. This is the greatest delusion. The one great truth which we must hold fast at starting and never let go is that God is really Himself our leader and our

teacher wherever we are, and whatever we may be doing.

II. Consider the Gifts which the Wise Men Brought.—They were offerings of love and worship, signs of the devotion within their hearts rather than presents intended for His use: for, whatever may be thought of gold, one sees not what He could do with frankincense and myrrh. And, secondly, they were just the things, the most precious things, found in their own country. Here surely is a lesson to ourselves of the kind of sacrifices with which God is well pleased.

III. These Wise Men are to us an Example of Faith.—They are presented to us as such in the Collect, which says, 'we, who know Thee now by faith'. It needed much faith first to care for a King of the Jews at all, then to leave their own home and take a long journey to see Him, and then more than all not to be staggered when they found Him: through faith they were not dazzled by the earthly greatness of Herod or withheld from worship by the low estate of Him Whom they found lying in the manger.

It is the same when God would fain lead us to His Son and to Himself. We must learn to love goodness for its own sake, and to recognize it even when it is naked and seemingly weak, and to trust in its undying strength. Every day almost may show us how easily without faith we may come to reject that which has the mark of God upon it, and is strong with His everlasting strength, because we deceive ourselves with outward appearances.

IV. But the Collect points out a higher goal which may be reached in this way, and in no other: 'Mercifully grant that we which know Thee now by faith may after this life have the fruition, that is, the enjoyment, of Thy glorious Godhead'. The wise men sought and found the King of the Jews because they believed in a King of heaven.—F. J. A. Hort, *Village Sermons* (2nd Series), p. 48.

THE WISE MEN FROM THE EAST

'Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judæa,' etc.—Matthew II. 1, 2.

The visit of the wise men furnishes us with the following topics for consideration:—

I. An Insight into the Method of Divine Revelation.—'We, *being in the East*, have seen His star.'

God adapts His method to the mental capacity and ordinary circumstances of men. To the Jews prophecies were given. To shepherds, accustomed to stories about angelic visitors, an angel was sent. To astrologers a meteor appeared.

II. A Recognition of Christ's Royal Dignity.—'Where is He that is born King of the Jews?'

'We are come to worship Him;' i.e. pay Him homage.

III. An Indication of the Extent of Christ's Kingdom.—In His infancy He received the adoration of *Gentiles* (Is. lx. 3-6).

IV. The Reward of Persevering Faith.—A long weary journey was repaid with the sight of Christ.—F. J. Austin, *Seeds and Saplings*, p. 12.

References.—II. 1.—S. A. Tipple, *The Admiring Guest*, p. 60. H. J. Wilmot-Buxton, *Sunday Sermonettes for a Year*, p. 22. II. 1, 2.—H. P. Liddon, *Christmastide in St. Paul's*, p. 348. F. C. Blyth, *Plain Preachings for a Year*, vol. i. p. 103. H. C. Beeching, *Sermons for the People* (2nd Series), vol. ii. p. 1. H. Scott Holland, *Church Times*, vol. li. 1904, p. 80; see also *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxv. 1904, p. 24. H. Hensley Henson, *ibid.* vol. lxxi. 1907, p. 33. Trench, *The Star of the Wise Men* (commentary on the second chapter of Matthew). F. W. Robertson, *Sermons* (2nd Series), No. 2. Cecil's *Sermons*, p. 123. Cox, *Expository Essays*, p. 264. Parker, *Inner Life of Christ*, vol. i. p. 30. *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. ii. p. 401; vol. iii. p. 36; vol. iv. p. 97; vol. xviii. p. 392; vol. xxvi. p. 159. *Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. i. pp. 52, 381, 557. Kitto's *Daily Bible Illustrations*, vol. vii. pp. 91, 110, 118, 133. Fairbairn, *Expositor* (1st Series), vol. vii. p. 161, and Gibson, *Expositor* (2nd Series), vol. iii. p. 116. *Biblical Things not Generally Known*, pars. 2, 354, 798. Hall's *Contemplations*. Matheson, *Moments on the Mount*, p. 125. A. Whyte, *Contemporary Pulpit*, vol. i. p. 339, and vol. vi. p. 28. II. 1-3.—H. Scott Holland, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lvii. 1900, p. 33. P. H. Hall, *The Brotherhood of Man*, p. 52. II. 1-4.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxxix. No. 2325. II. 1, 2, 11.—H. C. Beeching, *Faith*, p. 12. II. 1, 2, 9, 10.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxix. No. 1698. II. 1-12.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—St. Matthew I.-VIII.* p. 19.

THE WITNESS OF THE CHILDREN

(Holy Innocents' Day)

'Where is He that is born King of the Jews?'—Matthew II. 2.

I. The Lambs Sacrificed for the Sake of the Lamb of God.—The Holy Innocents were martyrs in deed but not in will, spotless lambs who were fit to be folded in the fold of God, spotless and innocent flowers fit to be planted in the gardens of Paradise.

The festival of the Holy Innocents was observed by the Church from very early times, though at first it would seem to have been joined to the Feast of the Nativity, which was also combined with the Epiphany.

II. The Story of the Holy Innocents.—As the gallows which Haman had erected for Mordecai became his own place of execution, so the sword which Herod sent forth against the Innocents slew his own child and touched not the Child Jesus. These little ones of Bethlehem died as silent witnesses to Him Who, like them, was born in Bethlehem. Thus early in His earthly life Jesus called little children unto Him, as though He said already, 'Suffer the little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of God'. He had come to set up the kingdom of God, and the very first to be called to it were the children; the Holy Innocents were the first flowers transplanted to the Paradise which the Lord had come to open to all believers.

III. Christ's Dwelling-place.—'Where is He that is born King of the Jews?' In the hearts of little children. In the pure shrine of an innocent

child's soul.—H. J. Wilmot-Buxton, *Notes of Sermons for the Year*, pp. 47-50, part i.

WORSHIPPING CHRIST

(For Christmas)

'We . . . are come to worship Him.'—Matthew ii. 2.

Jesus Christ Himself did not often use the word worship, but He did once use it with striking and continual effect. 'The Father seeketh such to worship Him.' What is the meaning of 'such' in that relation? It indicates people who worship God in spirit and in truth, people whose hearts are altars, whose lives are tabernacles which the Lord hath chosen as His abiding places. They offer acceptable worship, whatever it be, how poor soever, who really mean it.

I. We know what it is to worship. Let us for the moment drop the word worship, regarding it as having become too narrowly a church word that has upon it a kind of religious symbol. The spirit of worship is in us all. It may not be directed to the right end, but the spirit or instinct of worship is in us, though, mayhap, we may be atheists. Instead of saying 'worship' let us say *homage*.

We advance a step, and come to the idea of deliverance, redemption, answered expectancy. We live in expectation. There are those who would not use the word prayerful hope, and yet they are living in expectation of a coming Christmas, they have a Messiah of their own; they say, The right man has not yet come, but he is coming, and he will come; for we have seen his star, and we have heard voices of silence, the sublimest eloquence, the spiritual grandeur of speech. All men live in expectation of their own Christmas. They may cast out the dear Son of God, the Babe of Bethlehem, they may deride Him, but they have a cradle of their own, a Bethlehem Ephrata out of which is to come the delivering soul, the mighty man whose garments are red as with the blood of victory. It is a political messiah or a commercial or some kind of intellectual messiah, it is a great Humanity or a splendid ideal. What talk is that? It is Christian speech, turned from the directly Christian line, yet full unknowingly of Christian meaning. Man must have a Christmas, a born Christ, a Babe, a Root, a Branch, a germ out of which will come the whole kingdom of reconciliation and righteousness and final peace.

II. We find our Christ in Bethlehem. We believe that He will make the whole world right. He claims time in which to carry out His great ministry. He comes in the flesh; He vanishes from the body that He may send the true Paraclete, the abiding Spirit, the true inward Personality—the personality that is a Trinity in itself. He will convict the world of sin, of righteousness and of judgment to come—that other trinity that rules from a throne unseen.

III. We have come to worship the Son of God. Worship is not a mere sentiment; worship is a great practical force. Do not be afraid of the word sentiment; it is a softening, healing, comforting word. Without sentiment much energy would be simply lost. We are indebted to the sentiment of the dew for the richness of the literal flower. Only Christ can make things go right, and He is very slow about it, as we count slowness.—Joseph Parker, *City Temple Pulpit*, vol. v. p. 2.

THE VISIT OF THE MAGI

'We have seen His star in the east, and are come to worship Him.'—Matthew ii. 2.

To-day we commemorate the visit of the wise men to the infant Jesus. These wise men offered to the Lord Jesus Christ the very best they possibly could; they gave Him the homage of their hearts. They were sincere in worshipping Him, and they also offered gold, and frankincense, and myrrh. I would ask you all to do as the wise men did, and accept Jesus as your own personal Saviour, not merely by assenting to the general religious doctrine that Christ is the Saviour of the world, but by offering yourselves to Him.

I. True Wisdom.—We know next to nothing about these wise men. A good many people think they were kings, and it seems certain they were men of substance. The only thing I would ask you to note is this, that they were wise men, and the way in which they showed their wisdom was in going, at great trouble and expense, and perhaps peril, in order to give the homage of their hearts to Christ. They had the wisest wisdom, the spirit of the Holy Ghost, to guide them by means of the star to where Christ, the new-born King, was to be found. We do not know from what kingdom they came: they might have come from Persia, or some of those ancient cities in the East, or possibly from where Israel was carried away captive. They must have heard something of the coming of the Christ, the Jewish Messiah, of the King of Kings, of the Lord of Lords, Who was to appear in Judæa, for these Eastern countries were not left without warning as to the truth of God. We have the striking prophecy uttered by Balaam, and there were other prophecies that had been uttered, not only in the Jewish language, but in the Chaldean, one of the common languages of the East.

II. Little Knowledge.—The wise men had very little to help them, but they made the best use of what they had. When the extraordinary star appeared, which was always connected with the coming of a new king, they felt confident that the time had come, and they set forth upon that difficult and dangerous journey in order to go and worship Christ. They had no gospel, and in this respect they put us to shame. Here we are, with our complete Bible, and Church services and meetings, and yet some of us have not even yet given our hearts to Christ. Jesus is not very far from us; we have not a long journey to take; we have no difficulties to contend with; we have nothing to do but to go to Jesus, and we know He invites us again and again: think of His loving words, 'Come unto Me . . . and I will give you rest,' and yet we have closed the door against Him.

III. Much Faith.—These wise men triumphed over

the difficulties which stood in their way. They had so little to guide them from the world's point of view. They went in speculation, as it were; they might have been disappointed, and have had all their trouble in vain; but they were not to be deterred by any consideration of that kind. When they got to Jerusalem there came a very great difficulty and a disappointment. They were told there was no new king there, they were told that Herod was king; and, added to this very great disappointment, their guiding star had disappeared. We do not read that in Jerusalem the star was shining over any particular portion of the city. They might have considered that they had made a mistake, and have turned back. But no, they were thoroughly in earnest. We want to be in earnest; we want not only to think of these things in church, but to do them day by day, and labour in all earnestness. If you will put Christ in the forefront of your life He will give you help. Even when the wise men saw the star again that did not finish their disappointment. The star went on to Bethlehem, and took them to an inn. But there was no Christ in the inn. And at length the star stood over a very humble building—a mere shed, a stable. Then surely they might have given up the search altogether, but faith enabled them to triumph over every difficulty. When they got inside they did not even see a costly fur on which the infant Christ lay; there was only straw, and there were oxen lying close behind, and there was a manger and in it lay the new-born King.

IV. **Whole-hearted Adoration.**—At once these men fell down before Him, and they laid at His feet not only their hearts, but also the most expensive things they had brought with them. The best things they gave were their hearts.

'We are come to worship Him.'—Matthew II. 2.

These men, for their own part, came—I beg you very earnestly again to note this—not to see, nor talk—but to do reverence. They are neither curious nor talkative, but submissive.—Ruskin, *Fors Clavigera*, xii.

Follow you the star that lights a desert pathway, yours or mine,
Forward, till you see the highest Human Nature is Divine.—Tennyson.

Human learning well improved makes us capable of Divine. God would never have bestowed any gift that should lead us away from Himself.—Bishop Hall.

'We have seen His star in the east.'—Matthew II. 2.

Claudius Buchanan, as Dr. Eugene Stock tells us, took this text for his great missionary sermon at Bristol on 26 February, 1809, which, said a paper of the day 'kept the minds of a large auditory in a state of most lively sensation for an hour and twenty-five minutes'. He said: 'While we are disputing here whether the faith of Christ can save the heathen, the Gospel hath gone forth for the healing of the nations. A congregation of Hindus will assemble on the morning of the Sabbath under the shade of a banyan-tree, not one of whom, perhaps, ever heard of Great Britain by name. There the Holy Bible is opened, the word of Christ is preached with eloquence and zeal; the voice of prayer and praise is lifted up; and He who hath promised His presence when two or three are gathered together in His name, is there in the midst of them to bless them, according to His word. Those scenes I myself have witnessed, and it is in this sense in particular I can say, "We have seen His star in the East".'

In his *Postilla*, Melanchthon quotes the opinion of Chrysostom that the star was an angel, and adds that this view does not displease him, although it might have been a real star which an angel guided or led. There may have been 'both an angel and a star'.

References.—II. 2.—A. G. Brown, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xlix. 1896, p. 40. Lyman Abbott, *ibid.* vol. lviii. 1900, p. 392. H. Scott Holland, *ibid.* vol. lxiii. 1903, p. 33. A. H. Moncur Sime, *ibid.* vol. lxxii. 1907, p. 381. J. A. Alexander, *The Gospel of Jesus Christ*, p. 21. B. Wilberforce, *The Hope that is in Me*, p. 52. 'Plain Sermons' by contributors to the *Tracts for the Times*, vol. vi. p. 15. *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxxiv. 1908, p. 403. G. Tyrrell, *Oil and Wine*, p. 76. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xvi. No. 967.

'In Bethlehem of Judæa.'—Matthew II. 5, 6.

Jesus entered into the world with all the circumstances of poverty. He had a star to illustrate His birth: but a stable for His bedchamber and a manger for His cradle. The angels sang hymns when He was born; but He was cold, and cried, uneasy and unprovided.—Jeremy Taylor.

'They departed; and, lo, the star went before them.'—Matthew II. 9.

I see no man either of the city or the court to accompany them. Whether distrust or fear hindered them, I inquire not; but, of so many thousand Jews, no one stirs his foot to see that King of theirs which strangers came so far to visit. Yet were not these resolute sages discouraged with this solitariness and small respect, nor drawn to repent of their journey, as thinking, 'What, do we come so far to honour a King whom no man will acknowledge? What mean we to travel so many hundred miles to see that which the inhabitants will not look out to behold?'—but cheerfully renew their journey. And now, behold God encourages their holy forwardness from heaven, by sending them their first guide; as if He had said, 'What need ye care for the neglect of men, when ye see heaven honours the King whom ye seek?'—Bishop Hall.

References.—II. 9.—A. Young, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lii. 1897, p. 302. G. Matheson, *Moments on the Mount*, pp. 3 and 125. J. C. Jones, *Studies in St. Matthew*, p. 26. Parker, *Hidden Springs*, p. 306. Liddon, *Sermons Selected from the Penny Pulpit*, vol. i. 'Plain Sermons' by contributors to *Tracts for the Times*, vol. ii. p. 292; vol. vi. p. 15. Parker, *Inner Life of Christ*, vol. i. pp. 29, 40, 50. F. W. Robertson, *Sermons* (2nd Series), p. 17. J. Vaughan, *Sermons to Children*

(3rd Series), p. 98. H. Melvill, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 1634. Bishop Barry, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xvii. p. 17. Bishop Boyd Carpenter, *ibid.* vol. iii. p. 36.

STARS THAT LEAD TO CHRIST

(For Epiphany)

'When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy.'—MATTHEW II. 10.

THE festival of the Epiphany has a great deal of teaching to bring to us, and this account of the visit of the wise men to Bethlehem is one of the incidents of which it puts us in mind. They saw His star in the East. A great many theories have been advanced to account for the appearance of this star, but what God tells us in the Bible is all that we need to know.

I. The Leading of the Star.—The star led them to Jesus Christ, and so, too, may we be led to Him in some such way. Astronomy is a very fascinating study in itself, and it can hardly fail to make us realize something of the vastness of God, the Maker of heaven and earth and of all things visible and invisible. The distances from our earth to some of these stars are known to be inconceivably great. The light from the nearest star outside the system of our own sun and the planets is known to take some four years to reach our earth, and light can travel a distance of eight times round the world in a second. Surely facts like these may do something to lead us to know God's infinite greatness and our own insignificance, humbly to cry to Him for mercy and for grace, and to remember that to please Him is really the only aim in life that is worth our attention.

II. Stars as Types.—The star was the sign that led the wise men to seek Jesus, and we may think too of the stars as types of some of those lights, as it were, in the darkness that may guide us if we will to His feet. Christian friendship shining like a beacon light in the darkness is often the star that has led to Christ. We may imagine how the wise men on their journey were a comfort one to another. They may not have said much about the object of their journey, but each one wanted to find Christ, each one had gifts to offer to Him, and so they cheered each other on their way. So, too, in our own life there are many of us who can think of some to whose quiet influence we owe very much. A quiet, steady, gentle light shone from them as if from a star that told of powers hidden away that were the strength and force of their character. They may not have said much to us; their lives were to us an open Bible that told us of God's laws. They may not have been at first sight the most attractive people, but soon we learned that the meek and quiet spirit that adorned them was far more beautiful than anything else. They were those whom we really loved and trusted. Let us then be careful in choosing which spirit is to guide us, who is to be our most intimate friend. While we must be careful not to wound the feelings of the sensitive, we must be careful that our friendships are a means to help us and our friends nearer to our Lord Jesus Christ. Let us take care also that our own star is shining, that by God's grace our lamps are alight to show others the way to God.

III. Other Stars that Lead to Christ.—And the circumstances of life may be stars that lead us to the Lord Jesus Christ. The wise men left their country and their homes, all that was dear to them. There were dangers and hardships on the road for them to bear, but when they saw the star they rejoiced with an exceeding great joy. There were many disappointments for them. When they found Christ Himself all was so different from what they expected. They found the child cradled in a manger stall, but they had faith enough to see God's plans through it all. They worshipped Christ and they offered Him their gold, incense, and myrrh, as to their King and their God, and to Him Who would conquer by the sufferings of the Cross. And others besides the wise men have been led by hardship and disappointment to find joy and peace in Christ. At the beginning of a new year we may perhaps feel how uncertain is the future that lies before us. Let us try to welcome whatever God may see fit to send. Hardship and disappointment are perhaps more likely to be the stars that lead to Christ than anything else. Let us look for the stars that will lead us to Christ, let us follow whither they lead. We give the incense of prayer, the gold of loyal obedience, and the myrrh of thanksgiving. There is still in our Saviour Christ a welcome now and for ever for all who truly turn to Him.

THE GUIDING STAR

(Epiphany)

'When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy.'—MATTHEW II. 10.

ST. AUGUSTINE tells us in one of his sermons the reason for observing Epiphany as a separate feast. 'On this day we celebrate the mystery of God's manifesting Himself by His miracles in human nature; either because on this day the star in heaven gave notice of His birth; or because He turned water into wine at the marriage feast at Cana in Galilee; or because He consecrated water for the reparation of mankind by His baptism in the River Jordan; or because with five loaves He fed five thousand men. For each of these contains the mysteries and joys of our salvation.' The reverence for Epiphany grew and increased in the Church as time went on; on the vigil it was the custom for sermons to be preached, the Holy Eucharist was celebrated, and slaves had a holiday. The feast itself was known as the Day of Lights, and on it was consecrated the water to be used in baptism during the year.

I. Our Guiding Stars—the Church.

In early times, before the mariner's compass was discovered, sailors steered their course by the stars. We all have our Epiphany stars if we would but see this, and they all guide us to our Lord, teaching us how to steer our course over the waves of this troublesome world. First among them, I place *the Church*. It was the custom in the early days to mark the Feast of Epiphany or day of lights, with many glowing

lamps and tapers in church. It is still the custom in some churches to have a lamp burning perpetually before the altar, and in some Sanctuaries the lamp has not been extinguished for hundreds of years. These things are an allegory, the light of the Church never goes out; the Guiding Star of Epiphany never sets, but stands over against the place where the Holy Child is.

II. Our Guiding Stars—the Conscience.

God not only gives us a guiding light in His Church, but He places a light within us. 'The Lord shall light my candle.' As long as we follow the light, walk in the light as children of the light, all is well. When the light shines through the church windows we know that God's service is taking place inside. When no light appears, the church is cold and forsaken. We are only serving God and keeping spiritually alive as long as the light of conscience shines like a star, and guides us to Jesus. In a certain old castle of former days, a beacon fire was always kindled at night, and when men saw its light shining forth, they knew that all was well with the castle. One night no beacon fire shone from the tower, and all men knew that ruin and disaster had fallen on the garrison.

III. Our Guiding Stars—the Bible.

In the darkness of the night ships at sea signal by means of lights. We, in this world, are all 'as ships that pass in the night,' our course is often a dark and dangerous one, and we need a guiding light to point us to the haven where we would be, and that home where Jesus awaits our coming. The Bible gives us such a guide. 'Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.' If we steer by this light, we are safe. So many people lose their way in the fogs and darkness of men's devising, because they will not look for the light of God's Word. —H. J. Wilmot-Buxton, *Notes of Sermons for the Year*, pp. 56-61.

References.—II. 10.—W. J. Butler, *Sermons for Working Men, The Oxford Sermon Library*, vol. ii. p. 62. II. 11.—G. H. Morrison, *The Unlighted Lustre*, p. 257. Morgan Dix, *Sermons Doctrinal and Practical*, p. 54. W. J. Dawson, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xl. 1891, p. 403. S. Baring-Gould, *Village Preaching for a Year* (2nd Series), vol. i. p. 58. G. W. Herbert, *Notes on Sermons*, p. 29. G. Tugwell, *Church Times*, vol. xliii. 1900, p. 105. A. G. Mortimer, *One Hundred Miniature Sermons*, vol. i. p. 89. W. Howell-Evans, *Sermons for the Church's Year*, p. 31. R. C. Trench, *The Star of the Wise Men*, etc. Dr. Arnold, *Sermons* (3rd Series), No. xvii. F. W. Robertson (2nd Series), *Sermon* 2. Liddon, *Three Hundred Outlines on New Testament*, p. 3. *Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. i. pp. 381, 511, 537. 'Intellect, Power, Wealth, etc., Offering Itself to Christ,' *Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. i. p. 52. Hall, *Contemplations*, vol. iii. Dr. Whyte, *Contemporary Pulpit*, vol. i. p. 339. Bishop of Ripon, 'The Lesson of the Epiphany,' *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. iii. p. 36. *Ibid.* p. 97. Bishop Barry, *Epiphany Offerings*, vol. xvii. p. 17. Parker, *The Inner Life of Christ*, vol. i. pp. 30, 40, and see his *Homiletic Analysis. Pulpit Analyst*, vol. i. p. 30; vol. iii. p. 699. Cox, *Expository Essays and Discourses*, p. 264. E. White, 'Gospel of the Infancy,' etc., *Mystery of Growth*, etc., p. 66. Kitto, *Daily Bible Illustrations*, vol. vii. pp. 110 and 118. *Biblical Things*, etc., paragraphs 2, 354, and 798. R. C. Trench, *Poet's Bible*, p. 49. II. 13.—C. Silvester Horne, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lvii. 1900, p. 74. II. 13-15.—A. G. Mortimer, *The Church's Lessons for the Christian Year*, part i. p. 132. II. 13-23.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—St. Matthew I.-VIII.* p. 28. II. 14, 15.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxviii. No. 1675. II. 15.—J. B. Brown, *The Soul's Exodus and Pilgrimage*, p. 28. G. Trevor, *Types and the Antitype*, p. 155.

INNOCENT'S DAY

'Then Herod, when he saw that he was mocked of the wise men, was exceeding wroth.'—Matthew ii. 16.

The Festival of the Innocents dates as far back as the third century. Its celebration has been universally observed from the first. Dying so early, these little ones are called Innocentes, or Innocui—harmless babes, incapable not only of doing the least wrong to any person, but of defending themselves from their cruel persecutors. They were slain for Christ's sake; hence we keep this holy day.

I. The Disappointment Experienced by Herod.—Herod, surnamed the Great, was reigning as king over Judæa when Christ was born in Bethlehem; but he had often to struggle hard, both by craft and sword, to keep his throne; so that when he heard of the Magi from the Orient inquiring in Jerusalem for the new King of the Jews, the sceptre seemed already to have fallen from his aged hands. Warned of God in a dream, the Magi went back to their own country without revisiting Jerusalem; and when Herod heard they had done so, his wrath burned like fire, and he felt more determined and vengeful than ever.

II. The Merciless Edict Issued by Herod.—As he could not dispose of the young King as he intended, the plan of a general massacre suggested itself to him. So he issued his fiat. Strange that he could find anyone to execute it, for it was a barbarous piece of work; but his soldiers were Romans, who hated the Jews. Inhuman monsters these men! but he was the greatest of them all who was their chief. So all the centuries have regarded him. He was verily the incarnation of cruelty, and blood was his delight! But he was foiled a second time. Jesus was then in Egypt, safe and happy, and they who would touch the Lord's Anointed must first strike through the Lord's omnipotence!

III. The Bitter Sorrow Caused by Herod.—This is forcibly expressed by three touching words—'lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning'—which had original fulfilment when Nebuzar-adan, after destroying Jerusalem, brought all the prisoners to Rama, and there disposed of them for the sword or captivity (Jer. xl. 1); then the lamentation in Rama was so voiceful that it was heard in Bethlehem, where Rachel was buried, the two cities being not far from each other. But the prophecy had its complete fulfilment in connexion with the slaughter of the Innocents; the lamentation, however, in this latter case was not borne from Rama to Bethlehem, but from Bethlehem to Rama.

References.—II. 16.—'Plain Sermons' by contributors to the *Tracts for the Times*, vol. ii. p. 292. A. G. Mortimer,

One Hundred Miniature Sermons, vol. i. p. 74. II. 16-18.—J. Clifford, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xlviii. 1895, p. 385.

'Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet, saying, . . . Rachel weeping for her children.'—Matthew ii. 17, 18.

It is indeed true that peace has its moral perils and temptations for degenerate man, as has every other blessing, without exception, that he can receive from the hand of God. It is, moreover, not less true that, amidst the clash of arms, the noblest form of character may be reared, and the highest acts of duty done; that these great and precious results may be due to war as their cause; and that one high form of sentiment in particular, the love of country, receives a powerful and general stimulus from the bloody strife. But this is as the furious cruelty of Pharaoh made place for the benign virtue of his daughter; as the butchering sentence of Herod raised without doubt many a mother's love into heroic sublimity; as plague, as famine, as fire, as flood, as every curse and every scourge that is wielded by an angry Providence for the chastisement of man, is an appointed instrument for tempering human souls in the seven-times heated furnace of affliction, up to the standard of angelic and archangelic virtue.—W. E. Gladstone.

In his *Levana and our Ladies of Sorrows*, De Quincey describes the eldest of these three as 'Our Lady of Tears. She it is that night and day raves and moans, calling for vanished faces. She stood in Rama, where a voice was heard of lamentation—Rachel weeping for her children, refusing to be comforted. She it was that stood in Bethlehem on the night when Herod's sword swept its nurseries of Innocents, and the little feet were stiffened for ever, which, heard at times as they tottered along floors overhead, woke pulses of love in household hearts that were not unmarked in heaven.'

References.—II. 18.—S. Baring-Gould, *Village Preaching for Saints' Days*, p. 47. II. 23.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxvii. No. 1632. III.—*Ibid.* vol. xli. No. 2409; vol. xlvi. No. 2704.

THE PREACHING OF THE BAPTIST

'In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judæa.'—Matthew iii. 1.

And what did he preach? This chapter in St. Matthew's Gospel tells us pretty plainly what was the burden of his message.

I. He Spoke Plainly About Sin.—He taught the absolute necessity of 'repentance' before anyone can be saved; he preached that repentance must be proved by its 'fruits'; he warned men not to rest on outward privileges, or outward union with the Church. This is just the teaching that we all need.

II. He Spoke Plainly About our Lord Jesus Christ.—He taught people that One 'mightier than himself' was coming among them. He was nothing more than a servant: the Coming One was the King. He himself could only 'baptize with water'; the Coming One could 'baptize with the Holy Ghost,' take away sins, and would one day judge the world. This, again, is the very teaching that human nature requires. We need to be sent direct to Christ. We need to be told the absolute necessity of union with Christ Himself by faith: He is the appointed fountain of mercy, grace, life, and peace; we must each have personal dealings with Him about our souls.

III. He Spoke Plainly About the Holy Ghost.—He preached that there was such a thing as the baptism of the Holy Ghost. He taught that it was the special office of the Lord Jesus to give this baptism to men. This, again, is a teaching which we greatly require. We need to be told that forgiveness of sin is not the only thing necessary to salvation. There is another thing yet, and that is the baptizing of our hearts by the Holy Ghost. There must not only be the work of Christ *for* us, but the work of the Holy Ghost *in* us; there must not only be a title to heaven purchased for us by the blood of Christ, but a preparedness for heaven wrought in us by the Spirit of Christ. Let us never rest till we know something by experience of the baptism of the Spirit.

IV. He Spoke Plainly About the Awful Danger of the Impenitent and Unbelieving.—He told his hearers that there was a 'wrath to come'; he preached of an 'unquenchable fire,' in which the 'chaff' would one day be burned. This, again, is a teaching which is deeply important. We need to be straitly warned that it is no light matter whether we repent or not. We are fearfully apt to forget this; we talk of the love and mercy of God, and we do not remember sufficiently His justice and holiness.

V. He Spoke Plainly About the Safety of True Believers.—He taught that there was 'a garner' for all who are Christ's 'wheat,' and that they would be gathered together there in the day of His appearing. This, again, is a teaching which human nature greatly requires. The best of believers need much encouragement: they are yet in the body; they live in a wicked world; they are often tempted by the devil. They ought to be often reminded that Jesus will never leave them nor forsake them: He will guide them safely through this life, and at length give them eternal glory.

References.—III. 1.—H. Jones, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xliv. 1893, p. 405. G. Jackson, *ibid.* vol. lxvii. 1905, p. 171. III. 1, 2.—J. E. C. Welldon, *The Spiritual Life*, p. 69. J. H. Thom, *Spiritual Faith*, p. 245. III. 1-3.—H. Scott Holland, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xliii. 1893, p. 56. III. 1-12.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xlix. No. 2818. A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—St. Matthew I.-VIII.* p. 37. III. 2.—C. Gore, *The Permanent Creed and the Christian Idea of Sin*, p. 27; see also *The New Theology and the Old Religion*, p. 231. H. Jones, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xliii. 1893, p. 124. G. A. Chadwick, *ibid.* vol. liv. 1898, p. 357. S. Baring-Gould, *Village Preaching for a Year*, vol. i. p. 85. III. 3.—W. Llewelyn Williams, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxvi. 1904, p. 74. G. W. Herbert, *Notes of Sermons*, p. 230. III. 4.—F. C. Blyth, *Plain Preaching to Poor People* (7th Series), p. 5. III. 5, 6.—H. Ward Beecher, *Sermons* (1st Series), p. 44.

'O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?'—MATTHEW III. 7.

As his raiment was rough, so was his tongue; and if his food was wild honey, his speech was stinging locusts. Thus must the way be made for Christ in every heart. Plausibility is no fit preface to regeneration.—BISHOP HALL.

REFERENCE.—III. 7.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xlvi. No. 2704.

'And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees.'—MATTHEW III. 10.

'SUCH as I am', said Ruskin in 1875, 'to my own amazement, I stand—so far as I can discern—alone in conviction, in hope, and in resolution, in the wilderness of this modern world. Bred in luxury, which I perceive to have been unjust to others, and destructive to myself; vacillating, foolish, and miserably failing in all my own conduct in life—and blown about hopelessly by storms of passion—I, a man clothed in soft raiment; I, a reed shaken with the wind; have yet this message to all men again entrusted to me. Behold, the axe is laid to the root of the trees. Whatsoever tree bringeth not forth good fruit shall be hewn down and cast into the fire.'

'I HAVE a great regard,' said Dr. John Duncan once, 'for the Humorists, for they are generally men of a tender heart. Both Charles Lamb and Thomas Hood were great men, especially the author of "The Song of the Shirt". He had a good head and a fine heart. That song of his is better than many a sermon I've heard. *Punch*, too, is an acute censor, generally right in his castigations; a censor, but not censorious. When those who should lay the axe to the root of the tree won't do it, Providence raises up a buffoon, who preaches many a most rememberable sermon.'

REFERENCE.— III. 10.—C. Houghton, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xliv. 1893, p. 36.

THE FINAL BAPTISM

'I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but He that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire.'—MATTHEW III. 11.

'HE that cometh after me.' Christianity has always some further man or truth or vision or poem in reserve. You never hear God's final word. This is the very secret, as it is also the joy and the security of eternity.

The point of this text is the One coming after: always coming, always come; a great fact and a great prophecy is the Christian idea or the Messianic prediction and forecast. My Lord is always coming: What I say unto one I say unto all, Watch. He came this morning, He came at noonday, He will be here with the evening star, or we may be called out to see Him under other conditions, but the kingdom of God is unseen but ever-coming, invisible but ever-descending; and where the kingdom comes the King is never absent.

I. Now let us illustrate this text upon levels with which we are all familiar. 'He that cometh after,' the fuller teacher, richer, riper, gentler, the teacher who we know must come. There is a prophecy in the very soul of man. No man was ever yet contented with the spring as sufficient and final; when he saw the green blade he was right glad in his heart; he said, I have been waiting for this, here is the promise of God realized up to this visible and calculable degree. Will not that green blade satisfy you? No. What want you? The fruit, the full corn in the ear. Are you sure it will come? Certainly! Why so sure? Because the blade has come, and God never sends the beginning without also sending the end, He never sends the promise, without sending the fulfilment of the promise; inasmuch as He has given one little violet this February day or one snowdrop, He means to give a whole summerful of flowers, and He will not fail of His word. And so it is throughout all life. The teacher we have to-day will give place to a larger teacher to-morrow.

II. 'He that cometh after Me.' That is what Jesus Christ Himself said. Jesus Christ did not remain long; who would remain long under these grey skies if he could honourably get away? Jesus Christ was not long here; He was always young and always old, He was always the child and always the Everlasting Father. He returned to the Father, not that He might enjoy immunity from suffering, but that He might help us on a larger and surer scale.

Christ comes by the Spirit; Christ returns in the power of the Holy Ghost.

III. Nothing has been finally settled until we receive the baptism of fire.

Under the power of the Holy Ghost we shall not need any new teachers. The Holy Ghost will give us new vision, new perception, new capacity, new sensitiveness; not some original speaker, but some clearer realization of the Holy Ghost is the security, the assurance, and the completion of our progress.—JOSEPH PARKER, *City Temple Pulpit*, vol. i. p. 94.

THE BAPTISM OF FIRE

'I baptize you with water, . . . He shall baptize you with fire.—MATTHEW III. 11.

WATER and fire! Our two great cleansing ministrants! Which is the more searching, the more powerful agent, water or fire? Fire is our most effective purifying minister. A powerful and relentless enemy of disease.

I. When the 'Word became Flesh,' piety became transfused with passion; water was changed into fire. 'I baptize you with water,' says the Prophet John. The revelation which I have proclaimed has made you penitent, humble, and obedient, and this, indeed, has helped to cleanse and save you. But my baptism has only been the cleansing of water. The Christ who comes will reveal God in Himself, in His own person; and the revelation which He will make will be so full of unspeakable glory as to create in men a cleansing energy like fire, for their hearts shall become inflamed with an enthusiastic love.

II. Passionate religious enthusiasm attaches itself

to a person; and the more near and real our intercourse with the person, the more beautiful will be our holiness, and the more fiery-hearted will be our service and devotion. Just think for a moment what magnificent import this revelation in the person of Jesus had for those Jews who became His disciples. The religion of the Jews had become an obedience to precept and laws. Christ lifted God out of abstraction, out of dead regulations and traditions, and presented the image of the eternal glory in His own person. God was no longer a burdensome law, but a great, near, and loving personality. And what happened to those disciples who received the revelation? Cold obedience to law was changed into enthusiastic obedience to a person. Cold and lukewarm water was changed into hot and cleansing fire.

III. Is this in any way significant of the need of the Church to-day? Has she put on her beautiful garments, the garments of a holy and sanctified life? By cold obedience the Church can never be holy. If the Church would be pure the Church must be passionate. Why, the very heart of the word 'pure' is suggestive of fire. It is significant of an end which has been reached through the ministry of flame. You cannot have purity without burning; you cannot have holiness without the baptism of fire. When devotion burns low, and personal piety smoulders down into a cold spiritual obedience, the 'beauty of holiness' becomes an impossible attainment. But when devotion is fiery, when religion is enthusiastic, when piety is passionate, then you have the very fire from the altar of God, in which all uncleannesses are purged away.

IV. But this is not all. An enthusiastic religious life is not merely the only saving religious life, it is the only religious life that is safe. The defensive energy of character is born out of its own heat. Lukewarmness is never safe. A man's defences are gone when he loses his zeal. A chilling and benumbing worldliness steals in upon the Church when she loses her vesture of fire. The only safety for you and for me and for all men is that we be baptized with fire.

V. How is this baptism of fire to be attained? How is this spiritual enthusiasm to be kindled; and, when kindled, how is it to be kept burning? We shall have to make time to contemplate God. The spirit of meditation must be re-introduced into our fruitless feverishness and our passion for things transformed into a thirst for God. The Church must give herself time to kindle and time to pray. We must give ourselves time for visions, if we would worthily accomplish our task. Let us muse upon the King in His beauty, let us commune more with His loveliness, let us dwell more in the secret place, and the unspeakable glory of His countenance shall create within us that enthusiastic passion which shall be to us our baptism of fire, a fire in which everything unchristian shall be utterly consumed away.—J. H. Jowett, *Apostolic Optimism*, p. 209.

References.—III. 11.—A. Martin, *Winning the Soul*, p. 81. J. H. Jowett, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xlix. 1896, p. 181. A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—St. Matthew I.-VIII.* p. 48. III. 11, 12.—T. Chalmers, *Sermons Preached in the Tron Church, Glasgow*, p. 75. III. 12.—J. Clarke, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lx. 1901, p. 349. F. D. Maurice, *Lincoln's Inn Sermons*, vol. iii. p. 231. T. M'Crie, *Sermons*, p. 382. III. 13-17.—A. Morris Stewart, *The Temptation of Jesus*, p. 2. J. Bannerman, *Sermons*, p. 84. A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—St. Matthew I.-VIII.* p. 64. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xlv. No. 2613.

CHRIST'S ADVENTS

(*An Advent Sermon*)

'Comest Thou to me.'—Matthew iii. 14.

Our thoughts turn at this season of the year to our Lord's second coming to judge the quick and the dead. There are two aspects of the second advent: the one relates to the whole human race—for we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; the other relates to each one of us separately—for every one of us shall give an account of himself to God.

I. Christ's Advent to Judgment.—It is an awful thought—all the thousands, all the millions of our race who have lived since time began, to be assembled on that great day to receive their eternal doom. And it is a still more awful thought that we shall each one of us have a separate place in that great scene. We sing together in the *Te Deum*, 'we believe that Thou shalt come to be our judge'. Let us then, in this Advent season and in our private prayers ask, 'Comest Thou to me?' Let us picture ourselves as placed before His bar, the record of our deeds proclaimed to ourselves and the assembled universe, out of the books of God's remembrance; our hidden works of darkness made manifest, our thoughts and deeds no less than our words and actions all made visible to ourselves and others, and each of us in our separate identity alone by himself, waiting to hear the awful sentence in which is our everlasting happiness or everlasting, never-ending misery and punishment.

II. Christ's Invisible Advent.—There is the invisible advent of Jesus Christ, which is probably nearer to us than these. His invisible advent or coming at the hour of our death. It is appointed unto men to die and after that the judgment. We all acknowledge death to be a universal necessity, but how few of us regard it as a personal necessity. We think that everyone must die—except ourselves. One after another our companions, our friends in life who are nearest and dearest to us, are summoned from our side, and laid in the cold grave. We see in the failing strength and whitening hair of one and another of our friends and neighbours that their time of departing hence is not far distant, and as, sooner or later, we gather round their dying beds we tell them that the Master has come and calleth for them. But although His approaching footsteps may be just as plain to ourselves, we promise to ourselves many years to come and lay our plans for the future as if our life had a long time to run. Would it not be far wiser and better to think and meditate on our

death, and its possible speedy approach, and say to our Lord, 'Comest Thou to me?' Is not this the way to follow and obey our Blessed Lord's oft-repeated warning: 'Be ye therefore ready, for at such an hour as ye think not the Son of Man cometh'.

III. Christ's Present Advent.—Lastly, there is yet another advent of Christ. Our Lord said of old that the day should come when we should desire to see the days of the Son of Man, and should not see them. This day is, for all of us, a day of the Son of Man. By His Cross, by His Spirit, by His Holy Sacraments, by the reading and the preaching of the Word, by the dispensation of His providence, He comes amongst us and visits us. May He never have cause to say over any of those mournful words He sighed over Jerusalem of old, 'thou knewest not the day of thy visitation'.

References.—III. 15.—Hugh Black, *University Sermons*, p. 233. III. 16.—G. Matheson, *Voices of the Spirit*, p. 91. S. A. Tipple, *The Admiring Guest*, p. 60. A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—St. Matthew I.-VIII.* p. 66. III. 16, 17.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xvi. No. 909.

THE MESSIANIC CONSCIOUSNESS OF JESUS

'This is My beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased.'—
Matthew iii. 17.

There are many ways of approaching the life of Jesus. No other theme has produced so many books, and the steady stream flows on. The knowledge of Jesus is indeed the most excellent of the sciences. And yet no one has written an exhaustive or comprehensive discussion of Christ. It has always been so. No one of the Gospels gives a complete picture of the Master, nor do all four Gospels tell us all that we should like to know, nor, in fact, all that was once known of Jesus. Herein lies a strong argument for the deity of Christ, His inexhaustibleness. 'The riches of Christ' are 'unsearchable' and past finding out.

I. The Problem of Jesus.—He is a constant challenge to men, to the greatest of men. It was so at the first and is true to-day. Men have grappled with the universe under the spell of a great theory of development. Orderly development has been found in the various spheres of human knowledge. But what about Jesus of Nazareth? Is He the product of the narrow ceremonialism and ecclesiastical bigotry of Palestinian Pharisaism? No connexion can be traced between Christ and Plato, Socrates, Buddha, or any of the great thinkers outside of Judaism. Here is universal and absolute truth that sprang out of an atmosphere of intense racial pride and hate. Here is the man who laid most stress on the spiritual and moral aspects of religion in the midst of teachers who tithed mint, anise, and cumin.

But this is not all. Here is One who led a sinless life in the face of malignant enemies, whose character is the unapproachable ideal of all men who have ever read His story. Here is One who made the greatest claims for Himself, who put Himself on a par with the living God, according to the testimony of the Gospels which bring us the story of His career. Here is One who asserts His right to the allegiance of all men, who offers to rescue all that come to Him from sin and its effects. His perfect life and His lofty teachings give a serious aspect to what would otherwise be absurd claims.

II. The First Glimpse of Jesus.—When the boy Jesus comes to Jerusalem at twelve years of age, He knows that He is the Son of God in a sense not true of other men. 'Wist ye not that I must be in My Father's house?' His parents were astonished at the ease and powers He showed in such a place of dignity, teaching and amazing the doctors of divinity in the rabbinical theological seminary. But none the less is He astonished at their ignorance of the fact that this is the place of all the world for Him. Who can tell a boy's golden dreams of the future till some day the sun bursts out in full glory? The boy has gone for ever with the revelation of the man, and the manly purpose has come to fill the heart and life. The word 'must' throws a long light back into the boy's quiet years at Nazareth. Modern theologians speculate learnedly on the time when Jesus first became conscious of the fact that He was God's Son and had a Messianic mission to perform. That is idle speculation. We only know that at twelve years of age Jesus is aware that God has laid His hand upon Him. He is at home in the Father's house and rejoices to discuss high and holy themes.

The whole problem of the person of Jesus is brought before us by this incident. By the side of this early Messianic consciousness lies the other fact that He grew in wisdom and in stature. He was a real boy for all the Divine element in Him, and an obedient one, too, for He was subject to His parents gladly after this event. The one boy that really knew more than His father and mother was a model of obedience.

III. The Father's Sanction of the Son.—The news came to Jesus in Nazareth that strange things were going on down by Jordan River. He was a man now, the man Jesus, and the news had a fascination for Him. It was not the call of the wilderness, but the call of His Father that He heard, though He must go to the desert.

Clearly the baptism of Jesus had a wonderful personal significance. It has been variously interpreted. Some imagine that now for the first time Jesus became aware of the fact that He was the Messiah, the Son of God, but that interpretation is not justified by the facts. His protest to John just before the baptism was no disclaimer of the Messiahship. His whole bearing with John was that of one who had faced His destiny and had settled it. Some of the Corinthian Gnostics imagined that Christ as an Aeon or Emanation of God came down on Jesus at His baptism like a dove, and that it was this Aeon Christ that was Divine, while Jesus was Himself a mere man. His baptism was, however, the beginning of the public Messianic work. Jesus was now stepping out into the open. He had crossed the Rubicon and there was no turning back. He had put His hand to this plough and He must follow it to the end and sink the plough

in deep. It was the coming of the Holy Spirit that constituted the anointing of Jesus, and not the baptism. —A. T. Robertson, *Epochs in the Life of Jesus*, p. 1.

References.—III. 17.—J. Wright, *The Guarded Gate*, p. 133. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xli. No. 2409.

THE TEMPTATION OF JESUS

Matthew iv.

Whether the devil appeared objectively to Christ or not, it was in the realm of spirit that the temptation took place. Mark even says that Jesus was led of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil. This is at first a hard saying, but probably it only means that God wished His Son to meet the tempter at once and have it out once for all. Not that the devil would not try again, but the line for future conflict would be clearly defined.

I. The devil has an evident allusion to the approval of the Father at Christ's baptism when he said 'if Thou art a son of God,' as God had said. Not that the devil denies that this is so; in fact, the form of the condition implies that it is true, and he says 'a son of God,' not 'the Son of God,' as God had said. But he suggests to Jesus that it would be just as well for Him to test what God had said. That would do no harm. He would then have personal experience to sustain him. He was very hungry, and, if He was God's Son, surely He could do creative work as God did. It was a subtle appeal. Jesus would work miracles for others. Why not begin by working one for Himself? In a word, shall Jesus be a selfish Messiah? But the temptation would have been no temptation put in that form. That is the peril with a temptation, that its real character is at first concealed and difficult to see. There was here concealed distrust of God.

The Jews expected the Messiah to come with a great spectacular display. They will often ask Jesus to do a sign, not merely work miracles, but some great portent in the heavens, for instance. The devil suggests that Jesus accommodate Himself to the popular expectation and let them see Him come sailing down from the pinnacle of the temple, right out of heaven. They would hail Him with acclaim. But Jesus was to be no mere performer of tricks, no balloon or parachute aeronaut. The devil grows pious and quotes Scripture, not misquotes it as some good people do, but he misapplies it. In that also the devil has no monopoly. But Jesus saw that He would be presumptuous and not trustful if He dared such a feat. Besides, He might as well settle now as later whether He was to be the kind of a Messiah that the people wished or the one that the Father had planned. Every preacher in a humbler way has to meet a similar problem. It is so easy to fall in with the drift of things, so easy as to fall over a great height when nervous and afraid.

II. But the devil was not done. He appealed to the ambition of Jesus. He would help Him to be king of the world. The devil was an old hand at it. He would not exactly abdicate; he and Jesus could run it together. That would be better than open war. He offered Jesus all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them. It was a fascinating picture as it passed before the mind of Jesus. He only asked in return that Jesus bow down before him up there on the mountain. Nobody else was there, and it would be merely a recognition of the facts of the case. The devil *did* have the kingdoms of the world in his power, the great Roman Empire, for instance. Was it not better to make peace and be friends than to fight it out? He could turn this great Roman Empire against Jesus, who had no disciples as yet, and, if He should win some, he could use this empire against the kingdom of Jesus. This was the heart of the temptation. Jesus wanted the world. In fact, He had come to win the world, but He was to win the world from the devil, not take the world on the devil's terms and with the devil as dictator. Christ was not confused by the issue. He knew what His decision meant. But he loved the world too well to betray it in that fashion. He would not have a mixture of the kingdom of heaven and the kingdom of the world. He would die for the world. Strange to say, the devil did fight Jesus with the Roman Empire, and did graft much of the world on the Church of the Middle Ages. But Jesus brushed aside all compromise and surrender and ordered Satan to go hence. He did go, cowed for the moment, but he will bide his time and wait for another chance. Death then faces Jesus at the very beginning. He must be willing to die for men before He can save men. So Jesus chose the high and stony path that led to Calvary, a lonely way and a weary one. His decision meant eternal conflict with Satan till He has conquered and the kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ.—A. T. Robertson, *Epochs in the Life of Jesus*, p. 1.

TEMPTATION

'Then was Jesus led up of the spirit, into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil.'—Matthew iv. 1.

In temptation there are three factors: God, the power of evil, and the tempted man himself.

I. The first of these is *God*. I suppose that looking at temptation in the abstract this is easily acknowledged. It is indeed asserted in many passages of God's Word. And yet in the concrete experience, in the very grip and breath of the temptation itself, this is the hardest thing of all to believe. We are rushed and blinded. The heart feels left to itself and cruelly forsaken. Universal as temptation is, we go into it as we go into death, each of us for himself and absolutely alone. A besetting sin, a strong passion will suck the reality out of all else: out of love and truth and honour and God. Like our Lord we draw into the wilderness. The grass and the flowers cease, comradeship and sympathy are gone. God Himself seems gone, and we are 'alone with wild beasts'.

1. The first rally, which it is possible to sound to our hearts under this awful loneliness of temptation, is that which is also the first to be sounded under

those other solitudes, which await us all, of pain and death—that they are universal and parts of the appointed order of things. Temptation, too, is part of the destiny of man. Suddenly though the assault surge upon him, it is no accident. Solitary as he feels in his battle, he does not in fact fight alone. He is one of an innumerable army of warriors.

2. See how all this general belief is heightened and enforced upon us by the sight of Jesus Himself in our battle. That even He did not escape the strife, how infinitely more sacred must it make our own position there. We take temptation not as the curse of our individual wills, too worthless for a higher fate, but as the debt and obligation of our manhood glorified in Him.

II. Though led by the Spirit into the wilderness Jesus was led up to be tempted of the *devil*.

To Jesus evil was a force and an intention outside of man, though it had its allies within him. In the earthly life of our Lord there are no moments so intense as those in which He felt the attempts of evil upon Himself. And it was out of this horror, that, in spite of all His illustrations of the necessity and Divine uses of temptation, He bade His disciples pray not to be led into it.

Temptation however much employed in the Divine Providence is not only from God; not only an examination set by the Great Master to His pupils: a problem and exercise in morals. It is a real encounter with a real foe.

III. There is a third agent: *the tempted man himself*. I do not mean that there are three personages in the drama; of whom God and the devil set the problem, and man has got to solve it. But I mean that all three have the setting of the problem: that man himself has, in his own degree, the determining of his temptations; that, to what may be deliberately called an awful extent, each of us is his own tempter.

For temptations, broadly speaking, are of two kinds. They may be little short of penal; pursuing us from our past, the results of old indulgences, and never coming upon us but with that added force to them, and weakness to us, which springs from the recollection of our former defeats of them. Or like Christ's they may be not punishments but discoveries, opportunities, and tests: the vision to us of our greatness, that two worlds are in contest for our souls; the proof that we are trusted and called of God; the obligation to some higher task; the signals of a growing and a destined nature.—George Adam Smith, *The Forgiveness of Sins*, p. 51.

THE INTERRUPTIONS OF LIFE

(*Lent*)

'Then was Jesus led up of the spirit, into the wilderness.'—Matthew iv. 1.

The Son of Man Who 'came eating and drinking'—why did He make this break in His life? Why did He forsake its innocent gaieties, the companionship in which He delighted for the dreary solitudes of the Dead Sea?

Our only answer can be that He felt the need of an interruption to His ordinary life. It was the greatest and longest, the most impressive and solemn of all those breaks in His ordinary life which from time to time He was making. He felt the need of these interruptions, of these temporary surrenderings of things lawful in themselves, of the sacrifice of the good for the better, of the losing of the life that He might find it more abundantly.

I. And it is just this that Lent comes to remind us of—the perils which may be in things lawful and good in themselves; and the danger is all the greater because it is so much less obvious and more subtle than many more dangers which face us. There is a peril to the fibre of character. And this may be true either of a nation or of an individual. A nation with trade advancing by leaps and bounds, with wealth increasing, with the standards of life rising, may be a nation gradually but surely becoming more and more incapable of heroism and self-sacrifice. And it is for that reason that moralists have sometimes defended war.

I would contend that what war sometimes does for a nation, interrupting its even, ordinary pursuits, shaming its quiet selfishness, stirring it up to see the sterner and more heroic sides of life which calm prosperity may hide or obscure, this is what such a period as Lent does or may do for the individual. It calls upon us to have something of the soldier's spirit of self-denial, of freedom and detachment from those things which may interfere with the supreme end of life, to be more daring, more venturesome, more unworldly, than we are apt to be in our everyday career.

II. What are likely to be its benefits:—

1. We shall learn to depend less on things which, though harmless or excellent in themselves, are not necessary to a true life.

2. By going into the wilderness readily and voluntarily we may be, as it were, ourselves anticipating the inevitable work which the swiftly passing years are doing and must do for all of us. For may we not say that every year we live the Spirit seems to be driving us into the wilderness?—driving us out of the things which we have most loved and cared for and enjoyed, forcing us, as it were, to surrender them, and to go, as it was said to St. Peter, 'whither we would not'?—H. R. Gamble, *The Ten Virgins* p. 91.

THE TEMPTATION IN THE WILDERNESS

(*A Lenten Sermon*)

'Led up of the spirit, into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil.'—Matthew iv. 1.

Recurring anniversaries add a pathos and a nobility to life. There are days when all must be sacred. Birth and death, some sacred blessing or some great sorrow, as the day may come, what matter it? The heart sings with joy or it becomes still with sorrow, as the case may be. It is not strange, then, that Christian people should mark the recurring season of

Lent; it is an anniversary which is limited to no nation, no people, no age. It marks an epoch for the great human family for all time.

I. The Challenge.—'Led up of the Spirit to be tempted of the devil.' It is the history of mankind. It was the challenge of the Spirit of God to the spirit of evil; it was the struggle which was bound to take place for the supremacy of the world. It is vain to speculate upon the form or character of the spirit of evil, for whatever theory we may have as to its origin or form, whether it be a permeating essence or a person, nothing alters the universal result of all experience—that it is a fact. Man has been too often driven from Eden by the self-same spirit of evil to have any doubt as to its reality. And it is just as vain for man to speculate upon its nature as to mistake what that nature is. Poverty, obscurity, disappointment, care—these things are often deemed evil by the world, and yet they are not evils in themselves. They are often the stepping-stones to kingdoms where men may reign. Many a man afflicted with poverty becomes servile and mean; and it is just as true that men of wealth may become hard, cynical, and selfish. There is no evil in these things in themselves. Many of them have proved the greatest of blessings with which God has endowed the human family; but it is the material which goes into the crucible that shows in the result. If mean spirits go in, it is mean spirits that come out; if nobility goes in, it is nobility refined and purified that comes forth.

II. The Struggle.—The Lord Jesus Christ, Who looked into the very eyes of the tempter, never made light of evil, and it is well for us to remember that men who succeed in this great battle, only succeed after a struggle, a struggle with a really terrible enemy. We read in the history of days gone by in the land of slaves, how that they were tracked by blood-hounds, but no blood-hound ever tracked its victim as the spirit of evil tracks the footsteps of its slaves. The trouble is that men are so often their own tempters. Bad as he is, the devil is often falsely charged and falsely accused; when men are to be blamed alone they cast on him the sins that are their own. It is not only that man is his own tempter, but man is his own penalty. The evil of disease is one of the scourges with which the spirit of evil rends those who fail in the great conflict. The pitiful thing is that so many of us go through the world, and see its evil, and forget that, sooner or later, evil comes home to them that give it an abiding place within them.

III. The Discipline.—In Lent it is well that we should withdraw ourselves from the world, that we should gather together, and see the evil within us, that we should face the penalties that go with the evil and cry aloud for penitence and for pardon. Those who have known the struggle will welcome this season as a means of grace, and for those who have been amongst the fallen, there will be the pleasing remembrance that Lent is not only the recruiting ground for the good, but it is a fresh starting-place for those who have done wrong. It may mean to them that God will use it as a means of instruction; that He will help them to reckon rightly, to estimate accurately the blessings and the evils that are around them; and when men do that there is little doubt that, however busy they may be with their work, however engrossed with their pleasures, they will at least find some time in which to remember the petition of the Litany, 'That it may please Thee to give us true repentance, to forgive us all our sins, negligences, and ignorances, and to endue us with the grace of Thy Holy Spirit, to amend our lives according to Thy Holy Word'.

IV. The Victory.—The threefold temptations of our Lord show us that body, soul, and spirit of man—each the abiding temple of the Holy Ghost—may be assaulted in its turn. 'Command that these stones be made bread' was the voice of the tempter to the body of the hungering Saviour. 'All these things will I give Thee' is the appeal to the desires of the soul. 'Cast Thyself down'—this was the temptation of pride to the intellect. Body, soul, and spirit were all assaulted, and these, each in its turn, are the universal temptations to-day. And so Jesus Christ has given us as He gave to His disciples that short pattern prayer on which men have moulded their petition to God from that time to this: 'Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil'.

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Unspoken Sermons, p. 126. A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—St. Matthew I.-VIII.* p. 76. F. W. Macdonald, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxxiv. 1908, p. 88. A. B. Davidson, *Waiting Upon God*, p. 109. T. Champness, *New Coins From Old Gold*, p. 55. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xlv. No. 2613; vol. lii. No. 2997. IV. 2.—A. Morris Stewart, *The Temptation of Jesus*, p. 30. IV. 2, 3.—*Ibid.* p. 54. A. G. Mortimer, *One Hundred Miniature Sermons*, vol. i. p. 168. IV. 2-4.—A. Morris Stewart, *The Temptation of Jesus*, p. 74. H. Montagu Butler, *Harrow School Sermons*, p. 13. IV. 3.—H. Scott Holland, *Church Times*, vol. lv. 1906, p. 54. W. H. Brookfield, *Sermons*, p. 252. F. D. Maurice, *Christmas Day and Other Sermons*, p. 142. R. Winterbotham, *Sermons Preached in Holy Trinity Church, Edinburgh*, p. 128. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xlv. No. 2613. IV. 3-4.—A. Morris Stewart, *The Temptation of Jesus*, p. 91.

THE OFFICE OF RELIGION

'But He answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.'—Matthew iv. 4.

Religion rests upon the facts of human nature. What are those facts?

1. Its *sinfulness.*
2. Its *sorrowfulness.*
3. Its *shortness.*

I. They suggest three questions: (1) What is the motive for resisting sin? (2) What is the meaning of sorrow? (3) Does the life of each of us end at his death?

1. What is the revelation of Jesus Christ about human *sin?* Whatever the faults of Christian men and women, and whatever the merits of those who are not Christians, it is ridiculous to tell me that in the conduct of life, in the hours when temptation is strong and sin can be wrought with but little fear of detection or degradation, he who looks only to himself and his fellow-men for his standard of duty possesses the same powerful motive to morality as he who believes that his life, in its meanest actions no less than its highest, is passed under the searching eye of an omnipotent God.

2. What is the revelation of Jesus Christ about life's *sorrow?* He does not ignore it. He does not deny it. He weeps for it as He draws near to the grave of Lazarus. But Christ teaches that sorrow is itself a benediction. The world lends no sanction to the theory that 'whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth'. But the revelation of Christ makes it plain.

3. What is it that Christ reveals about life's *shortness.* Standing beside the open grave, He says, as of old, 'I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth, and believeth in me, shall never die'.

Whoever claims to control our spirits must be prepared to furnish some elucidation or justification of life's sinfulness, its sorrowfulness, and its shortness. Jesus Christ explains these mysteries by referring them to a superhuman law.

II. It remains, then, to ask, What are the substitutes proposed for religion?

1. It is said that humanity may support itself, and, I suppose, enjoy itself, in the contemplation of material progress.

Still, granting the salient fact of material progress, there are two thoughts which may well occur to us: (1) that concurrently with this progress there have arisen certain causes which militate against its beneficent operation; (2) that, however wide its operation may be, it satisfies a part only, and not the whole, of man's nature.

2. But it is sometimes said that although man will not find his satisfaction in an era of commercial prosperity, he will find it in the cultivated pleasure which attends the development of science or art. In other words, as religion decays, scientific discovery and artistic taste will fill the void. The love of knowledge and the love of beauty are not less natural to man than the love of God. But they are not, and cannot be, substitutes for the love of God. They cannot fill the place of religion.

3. It is sometimes argued that the law of duty in itself is potent to command the hearts and minds of men.

Christianity, in referring actions to God, recognizes man's natural love of approbation. The problem of life is to accommodate the self-regarding and the self-forgetting impulses of human nature. They are accommodated, I think, only in a system which teaches that it is the duty of man to sacrifice himself, if the need be, for the salvation of other men—yes, to sacrifice himself even to the death—and yet teaches that his self-sacrifice will issue in a complete reward behind the veil of time.

III. Not in material progress then, nor in art and science, nor in the stoicism of absolute duty, is the law of human nature found to lie. We fall back upon the immemorial truth—'man shall not live,' says the Saviour, 'by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God'. Human nature can find its satisfaction only in Him Who is not human but Divine.—Bishop Welldon, *The Spiritual Life*, p. 140.

References.—IV. 4.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xx. No. 1203. R. E. Hutton, *The Crown of Christ*, vol. ii. p. 487. Brooke Foss Westcott, *Village Sermons*, p. 353. Henry Wace, *Some Central Points of Our Lord's Ministry*, p. 79. F. W. Farrar, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lviii. 1900, p. 406. M. R. Vincent, *God and Bread*, p. 3. Henry Alford, *Quebec Chapel Sermons*, vol. i. p. 152. IV. 5.—C. Jerdan, *Pastures of Tender Grass*, p. 83.

'Then the devil saith unto Him, It is written.'—Matthew iv. 5, 6.

In the eleventh chapter of *Martin Chuzzlewit*, Jonas upbraids his old father for living to such an age. 'Where's his religion, I should like to know, when he goes flying in the face of the Bible like that! Three-score-and-ten's the mark; and no man with a conscience and a proper sense of what's expected of him has any business to live longer.' Is anyone surprised at Mr. Jonas making such a reference to such a book for such a purpose? Does anyone

doubt the old saw, that the devil (being a layman) quotes Scripture for his own ends? If he will take the trouble to look about him, he may find a greater number of confirmations of the fact, in the occurrences of any single day, than the steam-gun can discharge balls in a minute.

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'The devil taketh Him up into an exceeding high mountain, and sheweth Him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them; and saith unto Him, All these things will I give Thee, if Thou wilt fall down and worship me.'—Matthew iv. 8, 9.

Compare Ruskin's application, in the fifth volume of *Modern Painters:* 'High on the desert mountain, full descried, sits throned the tempter, with his old promise—the kingdoms of this world and the glory of them. He still calls you to your labour, as Christ to your rest;—labour and sorrow, base desire, and cruel hope. So far as you desire to possess, rather than to give; so far as you look for power to command, instead of to bless; so far as your own prosperity seems to you to issue out of contest or rivalry, of any kind, with other men, or other nations; so long as the hope before you is supremacy instead of love; and your desire is to be greatest instead of least;—first, instead of last;—so long are you serving the Lord of all that is last and least.'

References.—IV. 8, 9.—C. F. Aked, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xliv. 1893, p. 100. A. Morris Stewart, *The Temptation of Jesus*, p. 142. IV. 8-11.—J. Wordsworth, *University Sermons on Gospel Subjects*, p. 119. IV. 9, 10.—A. Morris Stewart, *The Temptation of Jesus*, p. 178. IV. 10.—Henry Wace, *Some Central Points of Our Lord's Ministry*, p. 115. H. J. Wilmot-Buxton, *The School of Christ*, p. 80. Harry Jones, *Christian World Pulpit*, 1896, p. 151. Henry Alford, *Quebec Chapel Sermons*, vol. i. p. 184. IV. 11.—*Ibid.* vol. i. p. 201. A. Morris Stewart, *The Temptation of Jesus*, p. 194. E. Fowle, *Plain Preaching to Poor People* (7th Series), p. 80. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxxix. No. 2326. IV. 12.—W. Brooke, *Sermons*, p. 2. IV. 12-16.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—St. Matthew I.-VIII.* p. 86. IV. 12-24.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xlv. No. 2646. IV. 13-17.—Fuller Gooch, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxvii. 1895, p. 346. IV. 15, 16.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xvii. No. 1010.

'The people which sat in darkness saw great light.'—Matthew iv. 16.

The first Creature of God, in the Workes of the Dayes, was the Light of the Sense; the Last, was the Light of Reason; and his Sabbath Worke, ever since, is the Illumination of his Spirit. First He breathed Light, upon the Face of the Matter or Chaos; Then He breathed Light into the Face of Man; and still He breatheth and inspireth Light into the Face of his Chosen.—Bacon.

A friend who was with Robertson of Brighton 'at the English Lakes, said to him one day with some sharpness, pointing to the top of Skiddaw, which was unseen the while for mist, "I would not have my head, like the peak of that mountain, involved, as we see it now, in cloud, for all that you could offer me". "I would," rejoined Robertson quickly, "for, by and by, the cloud and mist will roll away, and the sun will come down upon it in all his glory."'

Reference.—IV. 16.—S. D. McConnell, *A Year's Sermons*, p. 82.

'Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.'—Matthew iv. 17.

The appropriate lesson of the hour might be thought to be one of passive watchfulness; to lie in wait for the hoped-for redemption. . . . Instead of this, however, the great Prophet of the hour draws the opposite inference; and utters the exhortation short and sharp, 'Repent!' Personal repentance, the transference of the life from conventionalism to conviction, must precede and usher in the reign of God upon the earth.—Martineau.

References.—IV. 17.—J. Parker, *Studies in Texts*, vol. i. p. 161. G. W. Herbert, *Notes of Sermons*, p. 1. H. Jones, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xliii. 1893, p. 124. J. Martineau, *Endeavours After the Christian Life*, p. 44. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. vi. No. 329. IV. 17-25.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—St. Matthew I.-VIII.* p. 89.

THE CALL OF ST. ANDREW

'Jesus, walking by the sea of Galilee, saw two brethren, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother.'—Matthew iv. 18.

The festival in honour of the memory of St. Andrew is one of the earliest recorded in Church history. Its institution took place about the middle of the fourth century; and it appropriately opens the series of the festivals, inasmuch as St. Andrew was the first disciple of Jesus Christ.

St. Andrew was a native of Bethsaida of Galilee, and was a son of Jonas, and a brother of Simon Peter, but whether older or younger has never been satisfactorily ascertained. He was the first of all the Apostolic band to begin the work of evangelization. 'He first findeth his own brother Simon, and saith unto him, We have found the Messiah, which is, being interpreted, the Christ.' But his call to the work of an Apostle did not take place for a year after his first introduction to Christ. During that time he occupied himself in his ordinary pursuit of fishing, as is evident from the text that it was from the net and the boat that he and his brother Simon were finally called to be 'fishers of men'.

In the narrative of the Gospel, St. Andrew is spoken of in connexion with the call of the first disciples (Matt. iv. 19-22). Then on the occasion when Jesus sat upon the Mount of Olives, over against the temple, and predicted the fall of the Holy City (Mark xiii. 3, 4). He is also said to have been

present at the feeding of the five thousand, for he was the disciple who felt so anxious for the comfort of the famishing multitude (John VI. 8, 9); and in the Holy Week, when certain Greeks 'would see Jesus,' Andrew was the first to tell Jesus of their desire (John XII. 21, 22). These are most, if not all, of the instances in which St. Andrew is noted in the Gospels.

Ecclesiastical history states concerning him that when the division of the world was made among the Apostles, St. Andrew undertook Scythia and the adjacent countries as his sphere of labour. Like St. Paul, he was 'in labours more abundant'.

Ægeas, the proconsul of Achaia, because of St. Andrew's wonderful success in his Master's work, condemned him to be scourged and afterwards crucified. And, in order that his death might be as painful and protracted as possible, he had this noble martyr fastened with cords—not nailed, as was usual—to the cross, which was of the peculiar kind called decussate, in the form of an X, and known afterwards by the name of St. Andrew. When his executioners were conducting him to this cross, and he was within sight of it, it is said that he apostrophized it thus: 'Hail, precious cross! thou hast been consecrated by the Body of my Lord, and adorned with His limbs as with rich jewels. I come to thee exulting and glad; receive me with joy into thine arms. O good cross! since thou hast received beauty from my Lord's Limbs, I have ardently loved thee. Long have I desired and sought thee; now thou art found by me, and art made ready for my longing soul. Take me from among men, and present me to my Master, that He Who redeemed me on thee may receive me by thee.' In this brave and sublime manner St. Andrew died.

From the conduct of Andrew we may learn that it is the nature of true religion to desire that others may possess it. It does not lead us to monopolize it, nor to hide its light under a bushel; but it seeks that others also may be brought to Jesus. It does not wait for them to come to Him, but it goes for them; it seeks them out, and leads them directly to Him.

References.—IV. 18.—C. S. Robinson, *Simon Peter*, p. 30. IV. 18, 19.—J. Halsey, *The Spirit of Truth*, p. 108. A. F. Winnington Ingram, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxi. 1902, p. 84. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xii. No. 702. IV. 18, 19, 20.—Thomas Spurgeon, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xliv. 1883, p. 65. IV. 18-22.—A. G. Mortimer, *The Church's Lessons for the Christian Year*, part i. p. 159. N. Adams, *Christ a Friend*, p. 183. J. H. Rigg, *Scenes and Studies in the Ministry of Our Lord*, p. 43.

THE CALL TO SERVICE

'Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men.'—Matthew IV. 19.

The references to this incident in different Gospels are so various that it seems impossible to determine with certainty that St. Peter and St. Andrew, St. James and St. John were called to follow Christ with a view to being made of further service immediately after the occasion of the miraculous draught of fishes or on a subsequent occasion. It does not matter much whether the incident took place on the same day as the miraculous draught of fishes or on the following day. We know that these men were called, and the exact words of their calling are given. Christ came to these men and said: 'Follow Me'. Some one has said that God never calls an idle man; so we see that Jesus Christ was looking for disciples who were following professions, as in the case of these four men. He saw them at work; He saw that they were industrious. They were doing well in their earthly position; therefore they were the men Christ needed to do well in a higher calling. Christ's religion commands us to serve Him and work for Him. It does not consist of merely singing and praising and praying. Service, and not status, distinguishes one disciple from another, though a good many members of the Christian Church do not recognize this fact, and very often status is thought to be better than service.

I. The Career of a Christian is to be one of Ministry; to undertake the task of helping our fellow-men. To follow the Lord Jesus Christ and accept the Christian faith means renunciation. We are called upon to give up something in this world if we want to become true Christians—something which is incompatible with our new life and new service for Christ—and to believe in Jesus Christ and to follow Him as a true disciple, to practise His teaching, and to love Him. This means, perhaps, the renunciation of many things, not merely what we understand as the renunciation of the devil and all his works, the pomp and vainglory of this wicked world, and all the carnal lusts of the flesh; but even more than that, for it may mean giving up some worldly occupation in which we cannot carry out Christ's principles and His life. Do we recognize this renunciation when we take up the Christian religion? When we are called in Christ, He says: 'Come, follow Me'. It is not a call to slavery; it is a call to blessed companionship with Him, the remaking of us as better men and women, if we can only realize what it means when we go to Him. Do we realize that we are called to follow Christ, that Christ is with us, that Christ takes His place in our hearts when He says 'Follow Me'? Why Christ wanted these men to follow Him was that He might impress His spirit upon them. We shall never be the fishers of other men until the spirit of Christ is in us, until it gives us the greater force of character.

II. This Command to these Poor Fishermen has a very Beautiful and Peculiar Charm.

(*a*) *It was an absolutely direct call* from Person to person. Christ comes to them, and looks them in the face and says: 'Follow Me'. Christ is a personal being; He knows us by name, and speaks to us Himself; and I often wonder if we all realize that He is calling each one of us to be a disciple of His, and serve Him in love for ever and ever.

(*b*) *The swiftness of the answer.* They immediately left their nets and followed Him. Oh! if you

would only respond to the call of God at once, and not put it away from you when He calls you from sin and from the world! Will we respond to this voice? Will the beautiful and peculiar charm of His presence hasten our footsteps to Him?

(*c*) *Notice the thoroughness* with which these fishermen entered into the duty of serving Christ. Of course, we hear of certain human weaknesses in the characters of the disciples; for instance, the want of confidence of St. Peter, the weak Apostle who followed Christ afar off; though, on the other hand, we read of the faithful devotion of St. Andrew, who followed close on his Master. If we follow Him closely, we must follow Him with mind and conscience and spirit in this way.

III. His Presence is With Us.—There was a great general who said to his troops: 'I cannot now explain the worst to you, but I can lie on the hard ground with you'. And that is but a faint idea of the love and work of Jesus Christ. He cannot explain everything to us in the present, but if we have the mind to follow Christ and to rest upon His power, we shall find Christ is side by side with us in the hardships of life, and we shall know there is a Friend Who will help us at all times. Our minds can rest in Him.

FOLLOW ME!

MATTHEW IV. 19.

I. Whom?—Not simply a human teacher; but Jesus, Who qualified Himself by His earthly life, with its temptation, toil, and suffering, to be the only Leader of men.

II. How?—We cannot follow His person, as the disciples did when He was upon earth; but we may—

1. Obey His precepts.
2. Copy His example.

III. Why?—1. We cannot direct our own course.

2. There is no leader equal to Christ.
3. If we follow Him we shall be in good company.
4. Only thus can we escape spiritual danger and eternal death.

IV. Whither?—1. To God. 'I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the Father but by Me.'

2. To heaven. 'In My Father's house are many mansions. . . . I go to prepare a place for you.'

V. When?—1. Now. 'Now is the accepted time; now is the day of salvation.'

2. Always.—F. J. Austin, *Seeds and Saplings*, p. 90.

References.—IV. 19.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxxii. No. 1906. E. S. Talbot, *Some Aspects of Christian Truth*, p. 147. Reuen Thomas, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xl. 1891, p. 141. H. A. Thomas, *ibid.* vol. lv. 1899, p. 182. J. H. Jowett, *ibid.* vol. lxv. 1904, p. 257. H. P. Liddon, *Clerical Life and Work*, p. 93. George Tyrrell, *Oil and Wine*, p. 73. IV. 20.—C. S. Robinson, *Simon Peter*, p. 137. S. Baring-Gould, *Village Preaching for Saints' Days*, p. 9. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xlv. No. 2618. IV. 21.—'Plain Sermons' by contributors to the *Tracts for the Times*, vol. iii. p. 167. Walter C. Smith, *Sermons*, p. 197. IV. 21, 22.—'Plain Sermons' by contributors to the *Tracts for the Times*, vol. vi. p. 142. IV. 23 (R.V.)—A. Rowland, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xlviii. 1895, p. 195. IV. 23-25.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. vi. No. 333.

'And He healed them.'—MATTHEW IV. 24.

Let no man who wants to do anything for the soul of a man lose the chance of doing something for his body. Of many a soul Jesus laid hold by healing the suffering the body brought on it. No one but Himself can tell how much the nucleus of the Church was composed of and by those who had received health from His hands, loving-kindness from His mouth.—Geo. Macdonald, *A Seaboard Parish*, p. 238.

'In the shape of converts,' said James Gilmour of Mongolia, 'I have seen no result. I have not, as far as I am aware, seen any one who even *wanted* to be a Christian; but by healing their diseases I have had opportunity to tell many of Jesus, the Great Physician.'

References.—IV. 24.—W. P. Balfern, *Glimpses of Jesus*, p. 74. J. Oswald Dykes, *The Manifesto of the King*, p. 3. IV. 25.—Henry Wace, *Some Central Points of Our Lord's Ministry*, p. 173.

THE BEATITUDES ILLUSTRATED BY EVENTS IN THE PASSION

MATTHEW V.

1. Christ condemned. Pilate washes his hands and declares Christ innocent. 'Blessed are the pure in heart.'

2. Christ takes up the cross. 'Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake.'

3. Christ falls under the weight of the cross. 'Blessed are they that mourn.'

4. Christ meekly allows another to share His cross. 'Blessed are the meek.'

5. Christ comforts the women. 'Blessed are the merciful.'

6. Christ stripped of His garments. 'Blessed are the poor in Spirit.'

7. Christ nailed to the cross. Prays for His murderers to His Father. 'Blessed are the peacemakers.'

8. Christ dead upon the cross. His hunger and thirst after the perfect fulfilment of His Father's will satisfied. 'Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness.'—F. A. G. Eichbaum, *Subjects for Courses of Sermons*, p. 104.

References.—V.—C. Gore, *Church Times*, vol. xxxiii. 1895, p. 475. R. F. Horton, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. liv. 1898, p. 81. J. Brett, *The Blessed Life*, p. 74. V. 1.—S. Baring-Gould, *Village Preaching for a Year*, vol. ii. (*Sermon-Sketches*), p. 9. A. B. Bruce, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxxviii. 1890, p. 344. J. Stafford Northcote, *ibid.* vol. xl. 1891, p. 317. C. Brown, *ibid.* vol. lxxiv. 1908, p. 137.

A MESSAGE TO THE CHURCH

'And when He was set, His disciples came unto Him, and He . . . taught them.'—MATTHEW V. 1, 2.

I. The Sermon on the Mount was spoken to the Disciples, to the Church.—It has been so truly said, the Sermon on the Mount was spoken in the ear of the

Church but was overheard by the world. The Sermon on the Mount was not, then, primarily spoken to the world at all. Again and again it is true that the teaching of the Sermon on the Mount is beyond those who belong to the kingdom of this world. Our Lord's teaching with regard to forgiveness or resisting evil, or with regard to the simplicity of faith, all these things are confessedly beyond those who belong to the kingdom of the world. But these things are spoken to those who are members of the Body of Christ, in grace, living and walking in the Spirit. When you are dealing with the world at large, then again it may be necessary to make concessions as Moses had to do. It becomes difficult when you speak not only of the State but of the Christian State; the State cannot require the same standard from its members that the Church can and does require from its members. The Sermon on the Mount, let us remember, was spoken to the Church. It was not so impracticable as it seems, because we work not on the scale of time, but on the scale of eternity. No doubt it is true that if the few and evil years of this life were all that you and I had to reckon upon, it would be frankly absurd to set before us such a standard as that in the Sermon on the Mount. Do you not feel and understand how that the Sermon on the Mount does correspond with your own immortality? It is not only here that we progress and grow; there is a Paradise, a heaven beyond, and depend upon it Paradise will be a busy place indeed; there they rest from their labours, but there there will be work, if we may say so, without toil and weariness; surely it is unthinkable that it is only here, where we are so sorely let and hindered, that spiritual growth and progress are possible. It is the very exaltation of the standard of the Sermon on the Mount that speaks to us of our own immortality.

II. Let us also Remember that we are not left to Ourselves.—When you are aiming at holiness you are working in accordance with the will of God; 'this is the will of God, even your sanctification'; and surely it is true that when you are working in accordance with the will of God ultimate failure is unthinkable. Depend upon it, God is not an austere man, an unfair man, gathering where He has not strewed and reaping where He has not sowed. The first thing a preacher has to do is to attack that lie in men's hearts that God deals with us unfairly, to speak to men of the love of God manifest in the way of the world and in life, but above all manifest in Jesus Christ. To preach the love of God, that is how men are brought to repentance. It is the goodness of God that brings men to repentance. The punishment of sin is not an article of Christian faith; we do not say in the Creed, 'I believe in the punishment of sin'; we *do* say that wonderful thing, 'I believe in the forgiveness of sin'. But why do we not say, 'I believe in the punishment of sin'? Because it is a fact of experience; you do not make that an article of faith which is an act of experience. It is the goodness of God that brings men to repentance.

III. And then there is Power.—We have to preach that which St. Paul was expressing when he said, 'I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation'. The Gospel is not only good advice and a message of pardon for the past, but it is the coming into men's lives of a real power, so that they are able to be what in their best moments they desire, what yesterday seemed beyond all hope and imagination. That is what happens; that is what one has seen for years happening in men's lives again and again. And so I say the Sermon on the Mount is not so impracticable as it seems, because we are not left to ourselves. 'This is the will of God, even your sanctification.'

IV. What Kind of Perfection is it to which we are Called?—'Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect,' or as St. Luke gives it in the parallel passage, 'Be ye therefore merciful, even as your Father in heaven is merciful'. And so we are not all to be perfect in wisdom or to be perfect in power; that no doubt is beyond us—limitation in such respects is of the very essence of our nature; but we are called to be merciful even as God is merciful; to be easy to be entreated, to be compassionate; that ought not surely to be beyond us. True it is, indeed, that we have not yet attained; nothing is more strange in this strange and perplexing world than the hard measure which again and again we sinners deal out to one another. But in proportion as you draw near to Jesus Christ, Who was the Friend of sinners, so will you be merciful. It is not to be perfect in wisdom or in power—that is indeed beyond us; but you are called to be compassionate, to be easy to be entreated, to be merciful as God Himself is merciful.

Let us remember that it is not as impossible as it seems because we work not on the scale of time but on the scale of eternity; not so impossible as it seems because when we aim at it we are working in accordance with the will of God, and when you are doing that ultimate failure is unthinkable.

'He went up into a mountain . . . and taught.'—MATTHEW V. 1, 2.

IN a letter to the *Westminster Gazette* (7 June, 1904), an Old Liberal declares that he can reproduce with absolute fidelity the purport and spirit of some words in a great speech of John Bright at the unveiling of Cobden's statue in the Bradford Exchange. 'I remember,' said the orator, 'on the morning of my dear friend's funeral, I was standing beside his coffin, looking at that which contained all that was mortal of the man I had known so long. His daughter, who was in the room with me, said, "My dear father was always very fond of the Sermon on the Mount".' And then Bright's voice swelled and grew in depth and volume as it was wont to do when he was deeply moved, and he went on, 'And I think that my friend's whole life was a sermon upon that highest and holiest of all texts'. He repeated, as only he could have done, the blessings uttered by the Divine lips upon the poor, the mourners, the meek, the hungerers after

righteousness, the merciful, the pure in heart, and the peacemakers; and then, in his own severely simple words, summed up the labours of Cobden and his associates in a single phrase, 'We tried to put Holy Writ to an Act of Parliament'.

References.—V. 1, 2.—G. Jackson, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lv. 1899, p. 245. J. R. Cohu, *The Sermon on the Mount*, p. 1. V. 1-3.—C. J. Ridgeway, *The Mountain of Blessedness*, p. 1. A. G. Mortimer, *One Hundred Miniature Sermons*, vol. ii. p. 280. T. K. Cheyne, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xliv. 1893, p. 376. C. A. Thomson, *ibid.* vol. lv. 1899, p. 202. V. 1-12.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xliii. No. 2508. V. 1-13.—Henry Wace, *Some Central Points of Our Lord's Ministry*, p. 193.

'And He opened His mouth, and taught them, saying, Blessed. . . .'—Matthew v. 2.

There are no real pleasures without real needs.—Voltaire.

No list of circumstances will ever make a paradise.—George Eliot.

In the ninth chapter of the second book of *Sartor Resartus*, Carlyle distinguishes happiness and blessedness as follows: 'I asked myself: What is this that, ever since earliest years, thou hast been fretting and fuming, and lamenting and self-tormenting, on account of? Say it in a word: Is it not because thou art not HAPPY? Because the THOU (sweet gentleman) is not sufficiently honoured, nourished, soft-bedded, and lovingly cared for? Foolish soul! what Act of Legislature was there that *thou* shouldst be Happy? . . . There is in man a HIGHER than Love of Happiness: he can do without Happiness, and instead thereof find Blessedness! Was it not to preach forth this same HIGHER that sages and martyrs, the Poet and the Priest, in all times, have spoken and suffered; bearing testimony, through life and through death, of the Godlike that is in Man, and how in the Godlike only he has Strength and Freedom? Which God-inspired Doctrine art thou also honoured to be taught; O Heavens! and broken with manifold merciful Afflictions, even till thou become contrite and learn it!'

References.—V. 2, 3.—E. M. Goulburn, *Three Counsels of the Divine Master*, vol. i. p. 104. F. H. Dudden, *Church Times*, vol. lvi. 1906, p. 571. V. 2-4.—E. H. Rogers, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xl. 1891, p. 332. V. 2, 3, 5.—George Macdonald, *ibid.* vol. xlii. 1892, p. 36. V. 2-9.—A. J. Parry, *Phases of Christian Truth*, p. 209.

THE FIRST BEATITUDE

'Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.'—Matthew v. 3.

I. The Old Testament is full of descriptions of the spirit of the world, the spirit of selfish wealth with its attendant cruelty: and by contrast to this are descriptions of the oppressed poor who are the friends of God. Our Lord took up all this language upon His own lips when, as St. Luke records, He turned to His disciples and said, 'Blessed are ye poor . . . woe unto you that are rich'. But all the actually poor are not the disciples of Christ. So our Lord has, as recorded by St. Matthew, gone beneath the surface and based His kingdom, the character of His citizens, not upon actual poverty, but upon detachment. The world says, 'Get all you can, and keep it'. Christ says, 'Blessed are those who at least in heart and will have nothing'.

II. Christ was detached. The Incarnation was a self-emptying. Then when He had been born a man He set the example of clinging to nothing external. He abandoned ease, popularity, the favour of the great, even the sympathy of His friends, even, last and greatest of all, on the cross, the consolation of the Divine presence. He became utterly naked, poorer than the poorest; therefore in a supreme sense 'His was the kingdom of heaven'. So we, like Him, are to be ready to surrender, ready to give up; and in proportion to this detachment, in proportion as we do really in will adore the sovereignty of God, and are ready to receive and to give up according to His will, in that proportion are all the hindrances removed by which the royalty of His kingdom is prevented from entering into our hearts and lives.

III. The splendid promise attached to this beatitude brings it into contrast with an old Jewish saying which has many parallels: 'Ever be more and more lowly in spirit, for the prospect of man is to become the food of worms'. The motive to humility which our Lord suggests is very different.—Bishop Gore, *The Sermon on the Mount*, p. 23.

POVERTY OF SPIRIT THE OTHER SIDE OF GREATNESS

Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.'—Matthew v. 3.

I. It seems to me that this foundation beatitude, on which all the other beatitudes are built up, sets forth a universal law of human life, that it describes the attitude of mind characteristic of the wisest, strongest, best of the human family. The greater a man is in any walk of life the wider his vision, and the keener his insight the greater is his poverty of spirit in the presence of the perfection he has seen.

1. The thesis may be worked out in detail. Take the man of science in the presence of the majesty of nature.

Look at the same thing from the point of view of art.

2. The presence of poverty of spirit is still more manifest in the moral sphere. Here, too, the contrast between the ideal and the real, between what ought to be and what is, is still more striking. To have seen the ideal of conduct, to have recognized its binding force, and to feel that one has acted contrary to its plain behests, is the form which poverty of spirit takes in the presence of the ideal of moral goodness somehow revealed to us.

3. But the feeling of poverty of spirit is most conspicuous in the religious sphere. If we follow the experience recorded in the Scriptures, we shall find that the deepest form of poverty of spirit is found whenever men obtained the vision of God.

II. Let us try now to see the connexion between

the feeling of poverty of spirit and the blessedness of the possession of the kingdom of heaven.

If a man is without the kingdom of heaven, he is in no way concerned with the thought of it. If he is concerned with it, he is already within it.

But the vision of God begets poverty of spirit; indeed, the trueness of the vision is measured by the consequent poverty of spirit. This is the note that seals the possession of the kingdom of heaven. In fact, this is the keynote of all our Lord's teaching. It is the note of His own life. At every fresh departure in His work He spent the night in prayer and fellowship with the Father, and whenever He needed wisdom and power for His life-work He sought these from the Father. Thus in virtue of His poverty of spirit He was in possession of the kingdom of heaven. —J. Iverach, *The Other Side of Greatness*, p. 1.

'Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.'—Matthew v. 3.

Poverty in any shape helps to stir in man a sense of need, a disposition to consider himself as dependent. . . . The real puzzle of life consists not in the fact of widespread poverty but in that of widespread affluence; in the fact that so many are sufficiently endowed with 'goods' as to believe they can live by them, and so cease to look for their true life to God their Father.—E. Lyttelton.

References.—V. 3.—J. Brett, *The Blessed Life*, p. 7. J. Iverach, *The Other Side of Greatness*, p. 1. J. R. Cohu, *The Sermon on the Mount*, pp. 23, 54. W. J. Woods, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxxviii. p. 3. J. Stalker, *ibid.* vol. lvi. 1899, p. 379. W. M. Sinclair, *Simplicity in Christ*, p. 113. E. Lyttelton, *Studies in the Sermon on the Mount*, p. 50. W. H. Hutchings, *Sermon-Sketches*, p. 42. C. J. Ridgeway, *The Mountain of Blessedness*, p. 12. A. W. Potts, *School Sermons*, p. 64. Henry Wace, *Christianity and Morality*, p. 17. A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—St. Matthew I.-VIII.* p. 108. W. Sanday, *The Anglican Pulpit of To-Day*, p. 334. F. Temple, *ibid.* p. 83. W. Boyd Carpenter, *The Great Charter of Christ*, p. 83. S. Baring-Gould, *Village Preaching for a Year*, vol. ii. (*Sermon-Sketches*), p. 12. B. F. Westcott, *Social Aspects of Christianity*, p. 101. J. Oswald Dykes, *The Manifesto of the King*, p. 27. Parker, *The Inner Life of Christ*, vol. i. p. 149. Davidson, *Lectures and Sermons*, p. 551. Parry, *Phases of Christian Truth*, p. 209. Jenkins, *Eternal Life*, p. 258. Magee, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. ii. p. 353 (1872). *Expositor* (1st Series), vol. i. pp. 70, 128, and 196. A. M. Fairbairn, *ibid.* vol. viii. p. 188. Bradley, *Christian World Pulpit*, 29 June, 1881. C. Morris, *Preacher's Lantern*, vol. iii. p. 503. A. B. Bruce, *The Galilean Gospel*, p. 39. Goodwin's *Works*, vol. viii. p. 220. Parker, *A Homiletic Analysis of the New Testament*, vol. i. p. 52. See Prof. Tholuck, *Commentary on the Sermon on the Mount*. V. 3, 4.—Archbishop Lang, *Church Times*, vol. lvii. 1907, p. 219. V. 3-5.—C. J. Vaughan, *Characteristics of Christ's Teaching*, p. 1. T. D. Barlow, *Rays from the Sun of Righteousness*, p. 130. V. 3-12.—W. Boyd Carpenter, *The Great Charter of Christ*, p. 101. V. 3-16.—J. Elder Cumming, *The Blessed Life*, p. 11.

THE SECOND BEATITUDE

'Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.'—Matthew v. 4.

The world says 'Get as much pleasure as you can out of life; suck it in wherever you can; and hug yourself as close as you can from all that disquiets you or makes you uncomfortable; in a word, get as much pleasure and avoid as much pain as by intelligence and forethought you can possibly do'. In startling opposition to this maxim of the world, our Lord puts His maxim, 'Blessed are they that mourn'.

I. What does that mean? Briefly: there are two chief kinds of mourning into which it is the duty of every true servant of our Lord to enter—the mourning for sin and the mourning for pain.

1. We must mourn for sin, for we are sinners.

2. The mourning of sympathy with others' pain. There are moments when a Christian may legitimately, like His Lord, in the garden of Gethsemane, be engrossed in the bearing of 'his own burden'. But in the main a Christian ought, like his Lord, or like St. Paul, to have his own burden so well in hand, that he is able to leave the large spaces of his heart for other people to lay their sorrows upon.

II. And in proportion to the fullness with which you enter into penitence for sin and into sympathy for the sufferings of men, you shall get, not the miserable laughter of forgetfulness, which lasts but for a moment, but the comfort (or encouragement) of God.

III. There is a false as well as a true mourning. It is possible to be discontented with the world but to lack the courage of faith which makes our discontent fruitful of reform. We are discontented; but our discontent is pride, not the humility of true sorrow. It will not be comforted, it will not thankfully take the Divine offer of absolution. The 'woman that was a sinner' made no delay in believing herself forgiven, but set to work at once to show the love which springs of gratitude in the heart of those who accept their release.—Bishop Gore, *The Sermon on the Mount*, p. 27.

'Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.'—Matthew v. 4.

We reach happiness only through tears. True bliss does not consist in the absence of tears but in the presence of consolation, and real misery is not so much to weep as to weep without being consoled. If Christianity accords moments to sorrow, it devotes our whole life to joy.—Vinet.

References.—V. 4.—J. Brett, *The Blessed Life*, p. 35. W. J. Woods, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxxviii. 1890, p. 95. W. Wynn, *ibid.* vol. xxxix. 1891, p. 179. George Macdonald, *ibid.* vol. xlii. 1892, p. 47. F. W. Farrar, *ibid.* vol. xlvii. 1895, p. 33. W. M. Sinclair, *Simplicity in Christ*, p. 139. J. Wright, *The Guarded Gate*, p. 29. J. Oswald Dykes, *The Manifesto of the King*, p. 45. E. Lyttelton, *Studies in the Sermon on the Mount*, p. 24. C. J. Ridgeway, *The Mountain of Blessedness*, p. 57. J. R. Cohu, *The Sermon on the Mount*, p. 65. A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—St. Matthew I.-VIII.* p. 117. E. M. Goulburn, *Three Counsels of the Divine Master*, vol. i. p. 118.

THE THIRD BEATITUDE

'Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.'—Matthew v. 5.

I. The world says 'Stand up for your rights; make the most of yourself; don't let any man put upon

you'. And so we are always standing on our dignity, always thinking ourselves insulted or imposed upon. 'Blessed are the meek,' our Lord says. The meek—that is manifestly those who are ready to be put upon as far as they themselves are concerned. This is the character of our Lord, Who, 'when He was reviled, reviled not again; when He suffered, threatened not; but committed Himself to Him that judgeth righteously'.

II. Of course, from another point of view, we may be quite bound from time to time to assert ourselves. We may have to assert ourselves for the sake of the moral order of the Church and of the world. But no one gets true peace, or has really got to the foundation of things, until, as far as his own dignity is concerned, he is in a position to say, You can wrong God and you can wrong society; and it may be my duty to stand up for God and for society; but me, as far as I am concerned, you cannot provoke. This is the ideal to which we have to attain.

III. And the result of this entire absence of self-assertion is that we can make no claim on the world which God will not at the last substantiate. 'Blessed are the meek'—our Lord is here quoting the Psalm—'for they shall *inherit* the earth'. What is an heir? An heir is a person who enters into rightful possession. Now, if we go about the world making claims on society which God does not authorize, refusing to bear what God will have us bear, the day will come when the true Master appears, and we shall be exposed to shame. But the meek, who have committed themselves to Him that judgeth righteously, have nothing to fear. 'Friend, come up higher,' is all that is before them. They will simply, in steady and royal advance, enter into the full heritage of that which men kept back from them, but God has in store for them.—Bishop Gore, *The Sermon on the Mount*, p. 32.

'Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.'—Matthew v. 5.

The history of the world confirms the prophecy that *the meek shall inherit the earth*. A nation that sells its birthright of peace, and backslides from the front rank of industrialism into the file of filibusterism, makes a poor bargain indeed.—From Prof. Nitobe's, *Bushido*, pp. 186, 187.

When have we ever before held such a clew to the meaning of Christ's Sermon on the Mount? 'Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.' In the cruel strife of centuries has it not often seemed as if the earth were to be rather the prize of the hardest heart and the strongest fist? To many men these words of Christ have been as foolishness and as a stumbling-block, and the ethics of the Sermon on the Mount have been openly derided as too good for this world. . . . It is none the less true that when once the degree of civilization is such as to allow this highest type of character, distinguished by its meekness and kindness, to take root and thrive, its methods are incomparable in their potency.—Fiske, *Man's Destiny*, chap. xv.

Could the world unite in the practice of that despised train of virtues, which the Divine ethics of our Saviour hath so inculcated upon us, the furious face of things must disappear; Eden would be yet to be found, and the angels might look down, not with pity, but joy upon us.—Sir Thomas Browne, *Christian Morals*.

The declaration of our Saviour that the meek shall inherit the earth may be understood, I think, as verified in the very nature and attributes of meekness. The *dross* of the earth the meek do *not* inherit; but all the true enjoyments, the wisdom, love, peace, and independence, which earth can bestow, are assured to the meek as inherent in their meekness.—Sir Henry Taylor.

'Blessed are the meek.'—Matthew v. 5.

Say what you will of Pietism, no one can deny the sterling worth of the characters which it formed. It gave to them the highest thing that man can possess—that peace, that cheerful spirit, that inner harmony with self which can be disturbed by no passion. No pressure of circumstances or persecution of men could make them discontented, no rivalry could provoke them to anger and bitterness. Even the casual observer was touched with an involuntary feeling of respect before such men. I yet remember what happened on one occasion when difficulties arose between the strap-makers and the saddlers in regard to their respective rights. My father's interests were seriously affected; yet even in conversation the difference was discussed by my parents with such tolerance and indulgence towards the opposite party, and with such a fixed trust in Providence, that, boy as I then was, the memory of it will never leave me.—Kant.

Describing the character of Mr. Robert Cunningham, minister of Holywood in Ireland during the early part of the seventeenth century, Livingstone declares that 'he was the one man to my discerning, of all that ever I saw, who resembled most the meekness of Jesus Christ in his whole carriage, and was so far reverenced by all, even the most wicked, that he was oft troubled with that Scripture, "Woe to you when all men speak well of you!"'

References.—V. 5.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—St. Matthew I.-VIII.* p. 126. J. Brett, *The Blessed Life*, p. 22. W. J. Woods, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxxviii. 1890, p. 134. W. M. Sinclair, *Simplicity in Christ*, p. 163. E. M. Goulburn, *Three Counsels of the Divine Master*, vol. i. p. 133. S. A. Tipple, *Sunday Mornings at Norwood*, p. 55. J. Oswald Dykes, *The Manifesto of the King*, p. 61. E. Lyttelton, *Studies in the Sermon on the Mount*, p. 66. C. J. Ridgeway, *The Mountain of Blessedness*, p. 34. J. R. Cohu, *The Sermon on the Mount*, p. 74.

THE FOURTH BEATITUDE

'Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.'—Matthew v. 6.

I. The citizens of the new kingdom 'hunger and thirst after righteousness'. Everyone knows what appetite is, what hunger and thirst mean. It is a

strong craving, a craving which must be satisfied, or we perish. You cannot forget that you are hungry or thirsty. And in human pursuits we again and again see what is like hunger and thirst. Righteousness, or rather *the* righteousness, that character which God has marked out for us, the character of Christ—blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after it.

II. We so often feel hopeless about getting over our faults. Let us hunger and thirst after righteousness, and we shall be filled. As our Lord saw of the travail of His soul and was satisfied, so, depend upon it, shall we. If you only seriously want to be good, your progress may be slow, but at the last you will be good. Christ is pledged to satisfy, if only you will go on wanting. There is not in the pursuit of goodness any failure except in ceasing to hunger and thirst—that is, in ceasing to want, to pray, to try.

III. Do you want righteousness seriously, deliberately? Then you can have it, and not for yourself only, but for the world. 'Till righteousness turn again unto judgment, all such as are true in heart shall follow it.' It is pledged to us. The day will come when the kingdom of heaven, the kingdom of righteousness and meekness and truth, shall be an established and a visible fact. Blessed are they that here and now hunger and thirst after righteousness in themselves and in the world: for they shall be filled. Bishop Gore, *The Sermon on the Mount*, p. 34.

'Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.'—Matthew v. 6.

Grace is a nourishment, and the richness of its sustaining quality is determined by one thing alone—the genuineness of our desire.—E. Lyttelton.

References.—V. 6.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxxv. No. 2103. G. Salmon, *Gnosticism and Agnosticism*, p. 124. C. J. Vaughan, *Characteristics of Christ's Teaching*, p. 18. C. G. Finney, *Sermons on Gospel Themes*, p. 398. W. J. Woods, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxxviii. 1890, p. 228. Canon Duckworth, *ibid.* vol. xlii. 1892, p. 303. W. M. Sinclair, *Simplicity in Christ*, p. 189. J. S. Swan, *Short Sermons*, p. 48. J. Oswald Dykes, *The Manifesto of the King*, p. 81. E. Lyttelton, *Studies in the Sermon on the Mount*, p. 75. C. J. Ridgeway, *The Mountain of Blessedness*, p. 47. J. R. Cohu, *The Sermon on the Mount*, p. 81. J. K. Popham, *Sermons*, p. 1. E. M. Goulburn, *Three Counsels of the Divine Master*, p. 144. J. Brett, *The Blessed Life*, p. 47. A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—St. Matthew I.-VIII.* p. 135. V. 6-8.—T. Disney Barlow, *Rays from the Sun of Righteousness*, p. 148.

THE FIFTH BEATITUDE

'Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.'—Matthew v. 7.

Of course wherever human misery is, there is also human pity. But, apart from Christ, it was not thought of as a motive force, to be used in redeeming others' lives and in enriching our own.

I. For the disciple of Christ pity is a motive to vigorous action. God in Christ declares His 'power most chiefly in showing mercy and pity'. Powerful pity is pity which passes from emotion into practical and redemptive action. Of such pity only does Christ say 'Blessed are the merciful or pitiful'. Compassion which does nothing is in the New Testament regarded as a form of pernicious hypocrisy.

II. And the merciful shall obtain mercy. Here we get a great law of the Divine dealing. God deals with us as we deal with our fellow-men. Do we want to know how our Lord will regard us at the last day? We can find the answer by considering how our face looks, not in mere passing emotion, but in its serious and deliberate aspect, towards our fellow-men.

III. The same law is observable in the treatment we receive at men's hands. On the whole we can determine men's attitude to us by our attitude to them. Almost all men have their best selves drawn out towards a really compassionate life. 'Perchance for a *good* man—one who is not only just, but good—some would even dare to die.' 'Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.'—Bishop Gore, *The Sermon on the Mount*, p. 36.

'Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.'—Matthew v. 7.

You will find, alike through the record of the Law and the promises of the Gospel, that there is, indeed, forgiveness with God and Christ for the passing sin of the hot heart, but none for the eternal and inherent sin of the cold. 'Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy;'—find it you written anywhere that the *un*merciful shall?'—Ruskin, *Fors Clavigera*, xlii.

References.—V. 7.—J. Brett, *The Blessed Life*, p. 60. A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—St. Matthew I.-VIII.* p. 143. C. J. Ridgeway, *The Mountain of Blessedness*, p. 60. W. J. Woods, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxxviii. 1890, p. 310. W. M. Sinclair, *Simplicity in Christ*, p. 213. E. M. Goulburn, *Three Counsels of the Divine Master*, vol. i. p. 158. Stopford A. Brooke, *Short Sermons*, pp. 208, 214. E. Lyttelton, *Studies in the Sermon on the Mount*, p. 81. J. Oswald Dykes, *The Manifesto of the King*, p. 101. J. R. Cohu, *The Sermon on the Mount*, p. 89. C. J. Vaughan, *Characteristics of Christ's Teaching*, p. 34. V. 7, 10, 11, 12.—George Macdonald, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xlii. 1892, p. 79.

HEART PURITY

'Blessed are the pure in heart.'—Matthew v. 8.

I. There is such a thing, according to the Holy Scriptures, as heart purity; that is to say, there is such a thing as a state of the human heart, in which the man, the genuine man, the person of the present day and of modern circumstances, entirely loves the will of God, and entirely seeks to do it. There is such a thing as will, mind, and affection, united, not divided, against the tempter and for the will of God.

II. But how shall this thing be? Can I answer better than in the words of our Lord, spoken on an occasion close to the purpose of our present thoughts? 'Who then can be saved?' cried the amazed Apostles. Who then can be saved, deep and at the centre, from the love and from the power of sin? '*The things which are impossible with men are possible with God.*'

It is a question of a miracle; the requisite is the action of none less than a Divine Person. We can,

in the grace and mercy of God, put ourselves in the way of the action, even as helpless sufferers of old, the blind, the halt, the palsied, the bleeding, put themselves in the way of the Man of Nazareth. The secret is the Wonder-Worker Himself, trusted, welcomed in, summoned by the soul, to be the conquering and liberating Presence in its great need, and in its depths.

III. We shall never do it for ourselves. At the centre of things, man is powerless to be his own transfigurer; he can as soon run, he can as soon soar, from his own shadow. But his Maker and his Redeemer, as man yields himself to God, can lift him from that shadow into light, and set him free indeed. —Bishop H. C. G. Moule, *The Secret of the Presence*, p. 218.

THE SIXTH BEATITUDE

'Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.'—Matthew v. 8.

I. If we are to take part in the kingdom, there must be singleness of purpose. Purity of heart is, of course, continually taken in its narrower meaning of absence of sensual defilement and pollution. That is an important part of purity; and may I say a word about the pursuit of purity in this narrower sense? A great many people are distressed by impure temptations, and they very frequently fail to make progress with them for one reason, namely, that while they are anxious to get rid of sin in this one respect, they are not trying after goodness as a whole. For the way to get over uncleanness is, in innumerable cases, not to fight against that only, but to contend for positive holiness all round, for Christlikeness, for purity of heart in the sense in which Christ used the expression, in the sense in which in the 51st Psalm a clean heart is coupled with a 'right spirit'—that is, a will set straight towards God, or simplicity of purpose. Our Lord means 'Blessed are the single-minded,' for they, though as yet they may be far from seeing God, though as yet they may not believe a single article of the Christian Creed, yet at last shall attain the perfect vision; yes, as surely as God is true, they shall be satisfied in their every capacity for truth and beauty and goodness; they shall behold God.

II. Any measure of true spiritual illumination, like that of Job when the Lord had answered his questionings, may be described as 'seeing God'; and in this sense to see God is a necessary preliminary to repentance, and is requisite for spiritual endurance. But in its full sense it is incompatible with any remaining dissatisfaction; it is the final goal of human efforts, the reward of those who here are content to 'walk by faith, not by sight,' and it includes in perfection—what in a measure all discovery after search includes—satisfaction for the intellect, and full attainment for the will, and the ecstasy of the heart, in God as He is.—Bishop Gore, *The Sermon on the Mount*, p. 40.

'Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.'—Matthew v. 8.

'Hold off from sensuality,' says Cicero, 'for if you have given yourself up to it, you will find yourself unable to think of anything else.' That is morality. 'Blessed are the pure in heart,' says Jesus Christ; 'for they shall see God.' That is religion.—Matthew Arnold.

As I myself look at it, there is no fault nor folly of my life—and both have been many and great—that does not rise up against me, and take away my joy, and shorten my power of possession, of sight, of understanding. And every past effort of my life, every gleam of rightness or good in it, is with me now, to help me in my grasp of this heart, and its vision.—Ruskin.

'Intuition,' said Amiel, 'is the recompense of inward purity.'

The remark has often been made that the pre-eminent, the winning, the irresistible Christian virtues, were charity and chastity. Perhaps the chastity was an even more winning virtue than the charity; it offered to the Pagan world, at any rate, relief from a more oppressive, a more consuming, a more intolerable bondage. Chief among the beatitudes, shone, no doubt, this pair: *Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven*, and *Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God*; and of these two, the second blessing may have brought even the greater boon. . . . Perhaps there is no doctrine of Christianity which is exposed to more trial amongst us now, certainly there is none which will be exposed, so far as from present appearances one can judge, to more trial in the immediate future, than this.—Matthew Arnold, *A Comment on Christmas*.

'Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.' Blessed are those who have preserved internal sanctity of soul; who are conscious of no secret deceit; who are the same in act as they are in desire; who conceal no thought, no tendencies of thought, from their own conscience; who are faithful and sincere witnesses, before the tribunal of their own judgment, of all that passes within their mind. Such as these shall see God. What! after death, shall their awakened eyes behold the King of heaven? Shall they stand in awe before the golden throne on which He sits, and gaze upon the venerable countenance of the paternal Monarch? Is this the reward of the virtuous and the pure? These are the idle dreams of the visionary, or the pernicious representation of impostors, who have fabricated from the very materials of wisdom a cloak for their own dwarfish or imbecile conception.

Jesus Christ has said no more than the most excellent philosophers have felt and expressed—that virtue is its own reward. It is true that such an expression as He has used was prompted by the energy of genius, and was the overflowing enthusiasm of a poet; but it is not the less literally true [because] clearly repugnant to the mistaken conception of the

multitude. . . . That those who are pure in heart shall see God, and that virtue is its own reward, may be considered an equivalent assertion. The former of these propositions is a metaphorical repetition of the latter. The advocates of literal interpretation have been the most efficacious enemies of those doctrines whose nature they profess to venerate.—Shelley, *Essay on Christianity*.

References.—V. 8.—J. Oswald Dykes, *The Manifesto of the King*, p. 119. E. M. Goulburn, *Three Counsels of the Divine Master*, vol. i. p. 169. G. Salmon, *Gnosticism and Agnosticism*, p. 53. H. J. Wilmot-Buxton, *The School of Christ*, p. 114. C. J. Vaughan, *Characteristics of Christ's Teaching*, p. 53. J. B. Lightfoot, *Cambridge Sermons*, p. 34; see also *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xliv. 1893, p. 309. C. J. Ridgeway, *The Mountain of Blessedness*, p. 72. E. L. Hull, *Sermons*, p. 145. W. C. Magee, *Christ the Light of all Scripture*, p. 105. Stopford A. Brooke, *Short Sermons*, pp. 256, 263. E. Lyttelton, *Studies in the Sermon on the Mount*, p. 86. J. R. Cohu, *The Sermon on the Mount*, p. 98. J. S. Swan, *Short Sermons*, p. 95. B. F. Westcott, *The Revelation of the Risen Lord*, p. 96. T. F. Lockyer, *The Inspirations of the Christian Life*, p. 144. J. Guinness Rogers, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxxviii. 1890, p. 337. W. J. Woods, *ibid.* vol. xxxviii. 1890, p. 418. C. A. Vince, *ibid.* vol. xxxix. 1891, p. 12. E. H. Eland, *ibid.* vol. lix. 1901, p. 342. W. T. Davison, *ibid.* vol. lxvi. 1904, p. 337. Bishop E. King, *Church Times*, vol. lvi. 1906, p. 531. Walter C. Smith, *Sermons*, p. 50. A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—St. Matthew I.-VIII.* p. 153. V. 8, 6, 9.—George Macdonald, *ibid.* vol. xlii. 1892, p. 61.

THE SEVENTH BEATITUDE

'Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called sons of God.'—Matthew v. 9.

I. Christ is the Prince of Peace. He brings about peace among men, breaking down all middle walls of partition between classes and races and individuals, by making them first of all at peace with God—atonement among men by way of atonement with God. This is the only secure basis of peace. There are many kinds of false and superficial peace, which the Prince of Peace only comes to break up. 'I came not to send peace on earth, but a sword.' Peace can never be purchased in God's way by the sacrifice of truth. But peace in the truth we, like our Master, must be for ever pursuing.

II. Do we habitually remember how it offends our Lord to see divisions in the Christian Church, nations nominally Christian armed to the teeth against one another, class against class and individual against individual in fierce and relentless competition, jealousies among clergy and church workers, communicants who forget that the sacrament of union with Christ is the sacrament of union also with their fellow-men?

III. Christians are to be makers of Christ's peace. Something we can all do to reconcile individuals, families, classes, churches, nations. The question is, are we, as churchmen and citizens, by work and by prayer, in our private conduct and our public action, doing our utmost with deliberate, calculated, unsparing effort? If so our benediction is the highest: it is to be, and to be acknowledged as being, sons of God.—Bishop Gore, *The Sermon on the Mount*, p. 42.

'Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.'—Matthew v. 9.

'The Lord,' said Dr. A. A. Bonar, 'does not use me, like His servant, Dr. Chalmers, for great things, but my way of serving the Lord is walking three or four miles to quiet a family dispute.'

Just before his death, Cobden and a friend were walking through St. Paul's Cathedral, when the latter observed that perhaps the name of Cobden one day might be ranked among those heroes. 'I hope not,' Cobden said, 'I hope not. My spirit could not rest in peace among these men of war.'

He was an happy reconciler of many differences in the families of his friends and kindred—which he never undertook faintly; for such undertakings have usually faint effects—and they had such faith in his judgment and impartiality, that he never advised them to anything in vain.—Izaak Walton, *Life of Dr. Donne*.

Compare Sir Philip Warwick's account of Hampden's conduct in a Parliamentary debate. 'We had catched at each other's locks, and sheathed our swords in each other's bowels, had not the sagacity and great calmness of Mr. Hampden, by a short speech, prevented it, and led us to defer our angry debate until the next morning.'

'This great gift also,' says Augustine, 'hadst Thou bestowed on Thy good servant, in whose womb Thou did'st create me, O my God, my Mercy: wherever she could, she showed herself such a peacemaker between factious and quarrelsome people, that, although she listened to many a bitter word from both sides, such as swelling anger pours forth against an absent enemy in the presence of a friend who has to listen to sharp angry talk, she never would repeat to one what another said, unless it were something which might tend to reconcile them.'

References.—V. 9.—J. R. Cohu, *The Sermon on the Mount*, p. 109. J. Oswald Dykes, *The Manifesto of the King*, p. 139. E. Lyttelton, *Studies in the Sermon on the Mount*, p. 92. W. G. Rutherford, *The Key of Knowledge*, p. 171. C. J. Vaughan, *Characteristics of Christ's Teaching*, p. 71. E. M. Goulburn, *Three Counsels of the Divine Master*, vol. i. p. 184. C. J. Ridgeway, *The Mountain of Blessedness*, p. 84. W. J. Woods, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxxix. 1891, p. 108. H. Price Hughes, *ibid.* vol. xliv. 1893, p. 381. G. Body, *ibid.* vol. liii. 1898, p. 220. H. A. Thomas, *ibid.* vol. lv. 1899, p. 348. H. Hensley Henson, *ibid.* vol. lxi. 1902, p. 372. H. D. Rawnsley, *ibid.* vol. lxiii. 1903, p. 125. F. B. F. Campbell, *ibid.* vol. lxvi. 1904, p. 199. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. vii. No. 422. J. Brett, *The Blessed Life*, p. 87. F. Lewis Donaldson, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxxiv. 1908, p. 185. A. Maclaren, *Expositions, of Holy Scripture—St. Matthew I.-VIII.* p. 161. V. 9, 10.—T. D. Barlow, *Rays from the Sun of Righteousness*, p. 172.

'Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you.'—MATTHEW v. 10, 11.

WHEN St. Francis de Sales was asked which of the beatitudes he preferred, he chose this one, giving it as his reason: 'Because their life is hid with Christ in God, and they are conformed to His image and likeness—inasmuch as all through His earthly life He was persecuted for that very righteousness' sake which He came to fulfil'.

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'And shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for My sake.'—MATTHEW v. 11.

WHEN immortal Bunyan makes his picture of the persecuting passions bringing in their verdict of guilty, who pities Faithful? That is a rare and blessed lot, which some greatest men have not attained, to know ourselves guiltless before a condemning crowd—to be sure that what we are denounced for is solely the good in us. The pitiable lot is that of the man who could not call himself a martyr even though he were to persuade himself that the men who stoned him were but ugly passions incarnate—who knows that he is stoned, not for professing the Right, but for not being the man he professed to be. —GEORGE ELIOT in *Middlemarch*.

REFERENCES.—V. 11.—J. R. Cohu, *The Sermon on the Mount*, p. 45. S. Martin, *Rain Upon the Mown Grass*, p. 295. F. D. Maurice, *The Prayer Book and the Lord's Prayer*, p. 331. V. 11, 12.—J. Guinness Rogers, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xliv. 1893, p. 339. E. Lyttelton, *Studies in the Sermon on the Mount*, p. 106. V. 12.—C. E. Jefferson, *The Character of Jesus*, p. 243.

SALT WITHOUT SAVOUR

'Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost its savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men.'—MATTHEW v. 13.

I. EACH of the three leading words of this short sentence, 'Ye are the salt of the earth,' appears to have a significance of its own.

1. *Ye*, 'you living men and women'. This was one meaning of the Incarnation, that the unseen God should be revealed by and through the 'man Christ Jesus'. Christ Himself must be chiefly known—not through His words or even His personal example—but through the men and women who are the living embodiments of His spirit.

2. Ye are the *salt*. When our Lord calls His disciples—'those who profess and call themselves Christians'—the salt of the earth, He is implicitly warning us against a vulgar error—the error of estimating, or trying to estimate, the real influence of any movement by the simple process of counting heads. The fact is that, from some points of view, it is not so much the quantity of Christians that matters, as the quality, and the failure in the latter respect is often far more grievous than in the former. There was once a city which might have been saved by 'ten righteous' if only they could have been found.

3. 'Ye are the *salt* of the *earth*;' of the earth—not of heaven. True it is, to earth that we belong—to earth—and even though our spirits soar beyond the stars, on earth our feet are set. Let us never be tempted by any superfine religion to try and forget or ignore this fact. The 'good Church-people' are not merely the communicants, but those who carry with them into business and politics, into society in general, whether in the west or the east, the salt of a higher honour, justice, purity, usefulness.

II. 'Ye are the salt of the earth.' Salt has, we might say, two special functions of its own. In the first place it is a preserving and purifying power. It saves from corruption. It is an influence which is more felt than seen.

Or, once more, salt suggests the notion of something strong and pungent—that which adds taste and flavour to all that it touches. I am afraid that this is not the idea which we always connect with good people. Good people are frequently conceived of, not as the most strenuous souls, but rather as negative and colourless, or, at the best, sweet and consoling, as though our Lord had said, not 'ye are the salt,' but 'ye are the sugar of the earth'. Do not let us give in to the notion that there is any natural connexion between goodness and dullness, or goodness and weakness. When our Lord said to His disciples, 'Ye are the salt of the earth,' He did not mean that they were to be the wits of the world; but surely He meant that they were to bring to it the savour—shall we say—of consecrated intelligence as well as of moral purity.

III. Salt is good; but if the salt have lost its savour, wherewith shall it be salted? The earth needs the Christian religion as much as ever it did; but an insipid and savourless Christianity will not long be tolerated. It is a fearful thing to realize that in *us* Christ Himself reigns or falls: that by *us* He is judged, that through *us* His name is blessed or blasphemed. 'If the salt have lost its savour, wherewith shall it be salted?' For there is something more tragical than Jesus crucified by Caiaphas and Pilate—it is the Christ who is wounded 'in the house of His friends'.—H. R. GAMBLE, *Christianity and Common Life*, p. 63.

'Ye are the salt of the earth. . . . Ye are the light of the world.'—MATTHEW v. 13-15.

To the personal influence of Christians our Lord commits His cause; in personal influence His Church was founded, and by this it was to stand.—R. W. CHURCH.

REFERENCES.—V. 13.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—St. Matthew I.-VIII.* p. 178. E. Lyttelton, *Studies*

in the Sermon on the Mount, p. 113. H. Scott Holland, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lviii. 1900, p. 185. D. Fraser, *Metaphors in the Gospels*, p. 1. A. Jessopp, *Norwich School Sermons*, p. 54. Stopford A. Brooke, *Short Sermons*, p. 22. V. 13, 14.—F. E. Paget, *Helps and Hindrances to the Christian Life*, vol. ii. p. 76. R. H. McKim, *The Gospel in the Christian Year*, p. 289. C. J. Vaughan, *Characteristics of Christ's Teaching*, p. 104. V. 13-16.—R. W. Church, *The Gifts of Civilization*, p. 81. J. Oswald Dykes, *The Manifesto of the King*, p. 181. W. M. Sinclair, *Simplicity in Christ*, p. 263. W. Boyd Carpenter, *The Great Charter of Christ*, p. 133. A. Melville, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xl. 1891, p. 360. A. Clayton, *ibid.* vol. lxx. 1906, p. 49. V. 13-37.—C. Gore, *Church Times*, vol. xxxiii. 1895, p. 337.

CHRIST'S CONCEPTION OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

'Ye are the light of the world.'—Matthew v. 14.

'I am the Light of the world.' That is the assumption which Jesus Christ makes for Himself. 'Ye are the light of the world.' That is the high assumption which He makes similarly on the part of His disciples. And taken together they declare that there is not only power in His own character adequate to dispel the darkness, but the power of that character reproduced in His disciples is also capable of the same result.

I. In the parable of the lamp and the lampstand there is a great deal of simple, practical instruction as to light shining—whence it proceeds, how it is maintained, and what is to be its nature and outcome.

1. Of course it assumes that in any life the lamp has been kindled by Jesus Christ. It assumes, too, that the light is received not for the benefit of the lamp, but for the benefit of those among whom the lamp is placed; that the light is given in order to be diffused. Christ is in us in order that He may be seen through us, in all the activities of our lives and influence of our character.

2. And to such as are already kindled the injunction is, 'let your light shine'; that is, do not hinder it from shining. Therefore, Christ's exhortation really calls us to remove all hindrances to the shining of the light in our own lives.

3. Elsewhere in the same sermon, Jesus Christ said: 'If thine eye be single,' etc. If one is seeking first and only His glory, then there is but little doubt as to the clear shining of the light, and but little doubt also as to its influence.

II. Then the Saviour goes on to speak about a lampstand. What does that mean?

1. I cannot but feel that it illustrates our necessary connexion with the world. You have been set in a family—that is, you are set upon a lampstand there. You have been put into an office, and that place with all its duties is God's own lampstand for you.

2. It is well to remember that the appearance of the lampstand has very little to do with the shining. You may have a beautiful lampstand, but it does not make the light shine any brighter. Let your light shine just where you are.

3. It is the darkness which is immediately surrounding us that is to be illumined. 'All that are in the house' does not mean all that are in the next street, the next town, or village, or country.

III. If the light is to shine, it is, of course, necessary to see that the flame is continually fed. There is need of continual secret assimilation of oil. If we fail to receive a continual ministry of grace to our own hearts, we shall fail when we seek to minister to others.

The cost at which a man becomes a shining light. Of course, it is the oil which feeds the flame, but the wick burns also. You must be consumed also if others through you are going to have light shed upon the pathway, upon the great mysteries and facts of life. Do not forget that it will cost you no less than it cost Jesus Christ, the entire sacrifice of yourself.—J. Stuart Holden, 'Christ's Conception of the Christian Life,' *Mundesley Bible Conference*, 1908, p. 63.

Illustration.—I read a very interesting thing the other day in the life of Leonardo da Vinci, who painted the famous picture of the Lord's Supper. When he had painted this wonderful picture he called in one of his friends to see it. He stood back from the canvas with his friend, waiting in silence for his comment on what he himself regarded as his greatest work. His friend's first words were, 'How wonderfully you have painted that silver cup.' The painter immediately took his brush and put a great daub of black paint over it. The friend, in consternation, said: 'Why did you do that?' 'I did that,' he replied, 'because it was the cup which first attracted your attention, and I do not want anything in my work to detract from the central figure of Jesus Christ. I have painted that picture to give men a conception of Him, and if you come and fix upon that which is a mere detail in the picture, and so overlook Him, it must go.' I could not but feel that the devotion of that painter of early days to Jesus Christ is as an inspiration and an example to me. If my life is to shine for Christ, if Christ is to be the central figure, if Christ is to be seen in me in all His beauty, other things must be painted out, other things must be sacrified; they must go.

You must for wisdom, for sanity, have some access to the mind and heart of the common humanity. The exclusive excludes itself.—Samuel Taylor Coleridge.

LET YOUR LIGHT SHINE

I would not give much for your religion unless it can be seen. Lamps do not talk; but they do shine. A lighthouse sounds no drum, it beats no gong; and yet far over the water its friendly spark is seen by the mariner. So let your actions shine out your religion. Let the main sermon of your life be illustrated by all your conduct, and it shall not fail to be illustrious.—C. H. Spurgeon.

'Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house.'—Matthew v. 14, 15.

The whole majesty of humanity raised to its fullness, and every gift and power necessary for a given pur-

pose, at a given moment, centred in one man, and all this perfected blessing permitted to be refused, perverted, crushed, cast aside by those who need it most,—the city which is Not set on a hill, the candle that giveth light to None that are in the house;—these are the heaviest mysteries of this strange world, and, it seems to me, those which mark its curse the most.—RUSKIN, *Stones of Venice*, vol. II.

LIKE a horse after running, a dog after tracking the game, and a bee after storing honey, so a man, after some good deed, does not call others to come and see, but goes on to do another deed, as the vine proceeds to produce grapes season after season.—MARCUS AURELIUS.

REFERENCES.—V. 14.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xix. No. 1109. H. P. Liddon, *Christmastide in St. Paul's*, p. 405; see also *Penny Pulpit*, No. 485. W. M. Sinclair, *Religion in Common Life*, p. 58. F. Mudie, *Bible Truths and Bible Characters*, p. 283. H. Scott Holland, *Church Times*, vol. lvi. 1906, p. 380; see also *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxx. 1906, p. 216. J. W. Diggle, *Sermons for Daily Life*, p. 37. J. H. Newman, *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, vol. i. p. 152. Henry Alford, *Quebec Chapel Sermons*, vol. iii. p. 406. W. G. Rutherford, *The Key of Knowledge*, pp. 182-209. R. Rainy, *Sojourning With God*, p. 64. W. H. Dallinger, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lv. 1899, p. 52. W. L. Watkinson, *ibid.* vol. lx. 1901, p. 388. V. 14-16.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—St. Matthew I.-VIII.* p. 188. D. Fraser, *Metaphors in the Gospels*, p. 16. E. Lyttelton, *Studies in the Sermon on the Mount*, p. 120. V. 15, 16.—J. B. Mozley, *Sermons Preached Before the University of Oxford*, p. 262. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxvii. No. 1594.

'Let your light so shine before men; that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.'—MATTHEW v. 16.

CHRIST doth not say that others hearing your good works, your good story, or your pathetical expressions; but that *others seeing your good works may glorify your Father*.—JONATHAN EDWARDS.

'LET your light shine before men,' wrote Margaret Gordon to Carlyle, 'and think them not unworthy the trouble.'

GOD appoints to every one of His creatures a separate mission, and if they discharge it honourably, if they quit themselves like men, and faithfully follow the light which is in them, withdrawing from it all cold and quenching influence, there will assuredly come of it such burning as, in its appointed mode and measure, shall shine before men, and be of service constant and holy.—RUSKIN, *Frondes Agrestes*, p. 71.

TOLSTOY, in his *Confession*, speaks of the faith and practice of orthodox believers in his own circle, men whose religious position was respectable, and whose manner of life in no way differed from the ambitious, vicious conduct of unbelievers like himself. 'No arguments were able to convince me of the sincerity of such so-called believers' faith. Only actions, proving their conception of life to have destroyed that fear of poverty, illness, and death, so strong in myself, could have convinced me; and such actions I could not see among them. Such actions, indeed, I saw among the open infidels of my own class in life, but never among its so-called believers.'

'A MAN,' said Mozley, 'can only be a witness to the Christian faith, if his life can only be accounted for by Christian faith.'

'Before men.'—MATTHEW v. 16.

THE main point nowadays is to be pious in the open air.—ROTHE.

'I CANNOT,' said John Wesley's father to him, 'allow austerity or fasting, considered by themselves, to be proper acts of holiness, nor am I for a solitary life. God made us for a social life. We are to let our light shine before men, and that not barely through the chinks of a bushel, for fear the wind should blow it out; the design of lighting it was, that it might give light to all who went into the house of God.'

'IT has struck me often lately,' writes Mr. Coventry Patmore in a letter, 'that à Kempis, whom you are daily reading now, cannot be read with safety without remembering that he wrote his book expressly for the use of monks. There is much that is quite unfit for and untrue of people who live in the ordinary relations of life. I don't think I like the book quite as much as I did. There is a hot-house, egotistical air about much of its piety. Other persons are so ordinarily the appointed means of learning the love of God, and to stifle human affections must be very often to render the love of God impossible.'

REFERENCES.—V. 16.—G. F. Holden, *Church Times*, vol. lviii. 1907, p. 810. B. Reynolds, *ibid.* vol. li. 1904, p. 112; see also *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxv. 1904, p. 54. H. Ward Beecher, *Sermons* (2nd Series), p. 244. Henry Wace, *Some Central Points of Our Lord's Ministry*, p. 213. E. Fowle, *Plain Preaching to Poor People*, *Sermon* (1st Series). J. W. Diggle, *Sermons for Daily Life*, p. 79. E. Talbot, *Sermons Preached in Leeds Parish Church*, 1889-1895, p. 86. W. Lefroy, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxvi. 1904, p. 27. J. B. Mozley, *Sermons Parochial and Occasional*, p. 212. W. M. Punshon, *Christian Consistency*, *Sermons*, p. 737.

THE PRESUPPOSITIONS OF CHRISTIANITY—THE OLD TESTAMENT

'Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil.'—MATTHEW v. 17.

OUR Christianity is unique, a thing by itself; but it has not come into existence without any ties with the past. It is original; it is not eclectic; but it has one great root from which it has sprung and of which it claims to be the perfect flower. That is the revelation of God to Israel, recorded in the sacred books of that people, the collection of which we call the Old Testament. To a full and proper understanding of Christianity, a man must know the Old Testament; he must in a measure be familiar with the religion of the Jews. His own faith has blossomed out of that, and owes much to it. It is the presuppositions of Christianity in the Old Testament that we shall look at here. To the rest, Christianity, at any rate in its primitive and purest form, owes nothing directly. Its debts are directly, and

in the first instance only, to the Old Testament faith.

I. I would even emphasize the statement in that form as my first point. It is not to Judaism as it existed in Christ's time that any debt is due. It is to the religion which is enshrined in the Old Testament. And the distinction is vital. There is a serious difference between Judaism as Christ found it, and the religion which He recognized as the truth in the much misunderstood sacred books of His people. There was there the revelation which God had given of Himself, and there was alongside of it the man-made version which passed current in the temple and in the synagogue, which was expounded in the schools, and which was practised by the Pharisee. The latter has its modern survival, but it is not Christianity. It is the Judaism of the present day, with the modifications and embellishments which have made it what it is in order to serve a people without a country or a central shrine, at which alone they might perform the rites which ought to be observed, but perforce must lie in abeyance. It is not to that we turn to find the presuppositions of Christianity. That has little to tell us. Our Lord, in fact, repudiated the whole body of tradition, because, as He said, the Scribes and Pharisees made void the law of God by their tradition.

II. Christianity accepts without further discussion or exposition the ripened views of the religion of Israel on many primary religious truths. It takes, for instance, the Old Testament view of God, of man, of the Messiah. These, of course, are views that had only gradually attained to clearness in Israel's consciousness through God's continuous teaching. And it is the mature view which Christianity assumes, and to which it adds. But what the Old Testament thus offers, it accepts without demur.

(*a*) The Old Testament never attempts to prove the existence of God. It sets the man down as a fool, i.e. not wrong in his head, but wrong in his will, uttering not what he thinks, but what he wishes, who says there is no God. Its very first book, with its very first words, begins with the assumption of God: 'In the beginning God'. That is the attitude of the New Testament.

(*b*) So with regard to man: Christianity thinks of man as the Old Testament has taught him to think of him. Man as the New Testament deals with him is man made in the image of God. He is man—no isolated unit, but linked by a thousand ties to all his race who have preceded him and to all his fellow-men amongst whom he lives. He is man, with a physical frame that needs to be nourished, clothed, and cared for; but that is the least of him. He is man, with an intelligence that lifts him high above the beasts that perish. He is man, with an immortal soul fitted for fellowship with God Himself. He is man, with the fateful right of a free will and the dread responsibility which its use involves. He is man, fallen by his own fatal choice. He is man, lost, unable to save himself, but not beyond salvation. That is man as the Christian knows him, but the New Testament offers no proofs. It takes man as it finds him in actual human experience, as does the Old Testament.

(*c*) In the same way the New Testament takes over the whole Messianic hope of the Old. It offers to its students the justification and fulfilment of that hope in Jesus, whom it presents as the Messiah, the Christ. That hope itself was a growth. The seed was the promise to Adam almost immediately after the fall: 'The seed of the woman shall bruise the head of the serpent'.

III. Turn to a further general consideration. The possession of this great treasure-house of moral and religious truth accounts for many things that seem omissions in Christianity as it appears in what are its own distinctive records and in the teachings of its Founder. 'Take away the Old Testament,' says John Ker, 'and even though the Christianity of the New were left, there would be an immense want in meeting the different moods of feeling and stages of thought in human nature.' There is little in the New Testament to stir the patriotic sentiments. There is little to correspond to the book of Psalms. What is there to tell us that phases of thought like those which meet us in the book of Job or of Ecclesiastes are compatible with devoutness? Nothing. But why? Is it because they are alien to Christianity? No; but because they are adequately dealt with in the first stages of revelation which Christianity adopts as its own.—Robert J. Drummond, *Faith's Certainties.*

FULFILMENT

'Not to destroy, but to fulfil.'—Matthew v. 17.

I. Jesus Christ here gives us the secret of every great ministry. We shall never be great preachers if we only discourse upon the topics of the day. He has a poor text who has only the latest anecdote of an evening newspaper. That is not preaching to the times, that is making a livelihood out of lies. He preaches to the times who preaches from eternity. Jesus Christ did not displace the law and the Prophets, He will talk with both of them upon a mountain by and by; they three—Law, Prophet, Redeemer—will meet and reveal the unity of things. The secret of a great ministry is that it founds itself upon the original, the primordial, the initial; its great speech is *ab initio*, coming up with dews of heaven's first and only morning upon it. That is preaching.

II. If we follow Jesus therefore we shall hear wonderful speaking.

1. Take, for example, His doctrine respecting worship. That doctrine was taught to one hearer Jesus Christ never kept anything for great assemblies. We keep our little essays for the principal meeting. Ah me! what wonder we are buried so cheaply and so instantaneously forgotten! Jesus revealed the great doctrine of true spiritual worship to one hearer, and she was a woman. The women said all the most

beautiful things that are to be found in Scripture, and the things were the more beautiful that the women knew nothing about their beauty. They were words wrung out of agony. Agony is always eloquent. Jesus Christ did not rebuke people for worshipping in special localities. When did He contract history or reduce it by subtraction to some meaner expressiveness? When did He fail to open the bud and show the full flower? If He had destroyed the local notion of prayer He would have created an immense prejudice; He accepted it, enlarged it, glorified it by fulfilment and completion.

2. We might illustrate this text from the more concrete point of what is known as beneficence or good-doing. The Jew thought he had advanced to the very final step in the march of civilization when he gave something to the inoffensive stranger, to the harmless widow and orphan; but Jesus says, If thine enemy hunger, feed him; love thine enemy: go to the positive aspect of thy poor beneficence. Whilst we were yet sinners Christ died for us; not whilst we were becoming sinners, but when we had reached the very depth of our apostasy, and when we had depleted ourselves of all nervous power and all moral restorativeness, when we had lost all self-helpfulness; while we were yet sinners, the blood dripped on us, the red blood of the infinite Redemption. I am not come to destroy your little beneficences and maxims of caretaking respecting the stranger and the fatherless and the widow, but I am come to raise you to that Godlikeness which is kind to the unthankful and to the evil, to that Divinity of love which sheds its showers upon the atheist and the blasphemer.

3. We might illustrate the text by Jesus Christ's estimate of righteousness. He found a good deal of respectability in His day; there were many persons who were reading pious sentences and observing more or less reputable traditions; He looked abroad upon the whole mass, and having estimated all that was being done by Scribe and Pharisee and Sadducee, He said, Except your righteousness exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and of the Pharisees, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.

4. Jesus Christ said, You must enlarge your conceptions of the world; of course it was right that you begin with this little place which you call your own land. If there was anything in the world which Jesus Christ was not it was a patriot. A patriot was a very small but frequently a somewhat necessary person. Jesus Christ was not a patriot. Jesus Christ was a philanthropist, a man-lover, a world-redeemer. And beautiful it is to mark the evolution of this thought in the apostolic missionary service.

5. If you will read the law—hard, stiff reading, and equally an education and a successful examination—if you will read the law as given in the Pentateuch, you will see what Jesus Christ has done in the enlargement of men's ideas and the fulfilment of elementary discipline and propositions. Love, if true, is growing, it will be mighty some day; and then we shall see that though the tithe has not been done away it has been carried up into its proper consummation; it is displaced by love, all-giving love, that wondrous love which says nothing has been given whilst anything has been withheld.—Joseph Parker, *City Temple Pulpit*, vol. vii.

FULFILMENT, NOT DESTRUCTION, THE METHOD OF JESUS

'I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil.'—Matthew v. 17.

I. It is evident that our Lord's critics had been denouncing Him as an intellectual and social anarchist, and one can imagine their evidence.

It is also evident that Jesus keenly resented this charge, and one can understand His reasons. When He was called a revolutionary there was enough truth in the criticism to make it dangerous. He did appear on first sight not to improve but to reverse the past, not to attack abuses but to uproot institutions, and if this had been so it would have been a serious reflection, both upon the wisdom and the work of Jesus. Destruction is not the principle of growth in any province of God's universe.

Had the opponents of Jesus been able to take a fairer view of His work, they would have found that He was the opposite of what their fears painted. Under His spirit the God of Abraham and Jacob became our Heavenly Father, to be worshipped the world over wherever there was an honest heart.

II. Fulfilment is the guiding principle of all successful progress and ought to control every department of action. When, for instance, we attempt the regeneration of society, repression may be needful as a temporary measure; but repression is a policy of despair. It coerces, but it does not control, it terrifies, but it does not satisfy. We ought to go to the root of the matter and find out the causes which create the vices of the people.

1. The same principle holds in the elimination of sin from an individual life. To sin is to miss the mark; the arrow went astray, and struck the wrong place. Every vice is the inversion of a virtue, it is degenerate goodness. Moralists of the second order would advise a man to put his sins under lock and key: Jesus teaches men to expel them. He would transform temptations to sin and make them incentives to holiness; He would have us concern ourselves not with the destruction of the evil but with the cultivation of the good.

2. With this principle of fulfilment we ought also to approach the erroneous ideas which affect the popular mind and are rivals of the truth. It is wiser to give a man what he is seeking after than to denounce its imperfect substitute. It is, indeed, of no use to take away unless you can bestow, and therefore the wise missionary of to-day finds out what the non-Christian religion means, and shows that it is a prophecy of Christ. It is the unknown God whom men are seeking through many systems and after many fashions; it is the known God whom Jesus reveals and presents to us all.

Just as religion appears to us a fulfilment or a destruction of life, shall we come to love or hate it. If religion be nothing but a refusing and denying, a repressing and mortifying, then it may be a necessity; it is also a burden. But this is not the religion of Jesus as He taught and illustrated it in the life of Galilee. With Him religion was not a bondage, but the breaking of fetters, that the sons of God might enter into the liberty of their Father's house.—J. Watson (Ian Maclaren), *The Inspiration of Our Faith*, p. 147.

'Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil.'—Matthew v. 17.

Compare the closing sentences of Max Nordau's *Degeneration*: 'The criterion by which true moderns may be recognized and distinguished from impostors calling themselves moderns may be this: Whoever preaches absence of discipline is an enemy of progress; and whoever worships his "I" is an enemy to society. Society has for its first premise, neighbourly love and capacity for self-sacrifice; and progress is the effect of an even more rigorous subjugation of the beast in man, of an ever intenser self-restraint, an ever keener sense of duty and responsibility. The emancipation for which we are striving is of the judgment, not of the appetites. In the profoundly penetrating words of Scripture: *Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil.*'

Compare Matthew Arnold's verses entitled 'Progress'.

'Think not.'—Matthew v. 17.

To be misunderstood even by those whom one loves is the cross and bitterness of life. It is the secret of that sad and melancholy smile on the lips of great men which so few understand; it is the cruellest trial reserved for self-devotion; it is what must have oftenest wrung the heart of the Son of Man; and if God could suffer, it would be the wound we should be for ever inflicting on Him. He also—He above all—is the great misunderstood, the least comprehended.—Amiel.

There is still something of self-seeking in the refined disinterestedness which will not justify itself, that it may feel itself superior to opinion.—Amiel.

References.—V. 17.—J. R. Cohu, *The Sermon on the Mount*, p. 36. W. Boyd Carpenter, *The Great Charter of Christ*, p. 151. J. M. Wilson, *The Anglican Pulpit of To-Day*, p. 356. A. Jessopp, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xlvii. 1895, p. 218. Reuen Thomas, *ibid.* vol. lx. 1901, p. 404. H. E. J. Bevan, *ibid.* vol. lxiii. 1903, p. 325. V. 17-20.—J. Oswald Dykes, *The Manifesto of the King*, p. 203. W. M. Sinclair, *Simplicity in Christ*, p. 287. E. Lyttelton, *Studies in the Sermon on the Mount*, p. 125. V. 17-26.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—St. Matthew I.-VIII.* p. 199. V. 17-48.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. liii. No. 3031. V. 18.—*Ibid.* vol. xxviii. No. 1660. V. 19.—H. P. Liddon, *Clerical Life and Work*, p. 355. 'Plain Sermons' by contributors to the *Tracts for the Times*, vol. ix. p. 64.

TRUE RELIGION

'I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness (or rightness) of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.'—Matthew v. 20.

These words of our Lord are a challenge, an impeachment and an indictment of high treason against those in authority in the Church. No man who uttered such words, under such conditions, could escape retaliation. Had our Lord contented Himself with His wonderful works, He might have walked across Calvary unscathed. But one who could say such things as this, under such circumstances, must come to the Cross. Those who were so challenged were certain to encompass His death. For I want you just to notice who the challenge was made against. It was made against the great religious teachers of the day, the scribes and Pharisees. They were the oracles of the kingdom, and in no case could they enter into the kingdom whose oracles they held. You know how the case stood, how religion had become formal, mechanical. You cannot turn out righteousness from any machine. Directly religion becomes a system, it loses its power. Systematized religion degenerates always, sooner or later, into formalism. It was so then, and has ever been so since.

I. *The Scribes* were the men who knew all about Holy Scripture. They read it, they learned it, they knew every word of it. And yet, though they knew all about it, they did not know it.

II. And the *Sadducees*, who were they? They were the Higher Critics of the day. How did the Lord admonish them? He said, You are only haggling over the letter, you are literalists. You do not know the Scriptures, and you do not know the power of God.

III. Then you know about the *Pharisees* and their punctiliousness, how they were the religionists. They did exactly what they were told in the letter and not the spirit. According to the Pharisees, you might touch the dead body of an ass, but not of a high priest, because that would defile you. And you must not go and eat with unwashed hands. What did our Lord do? He and His disciples deliberately went and sat down to dinner with unwashed hands—deliberately, as an object lesson.

IV. I want you to note that our Lord stands amongst us to-day, and says to us, 'Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven'. Is our religion formal? When we worship Christ with ceremony, let it be with understanding too—with the head and with the heart. He loved me, and washed me, and gave Himself for me, and the object of life is to be like Him. If this righteousness is in us, we are right. Take care that your faith does not make you formalists at heart. It must make you like your dear Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.—A. H. Stanton, *Unpublished Sermon.*

THINGS NO MAN COULD SAY

'I say unto you.'—MATTHEW v. 20.

THINGS which no man would say or would be allowed to say and retain any reputation for sanity or truthfulness. There are things which we cannot say, as certainly as there are things which we ought not to say.

Yet we are now face to face with a Man who used all the vocabulary of God, a Man who never hesitated to use the language which God alone, according to our interpretation, has permitted Himself to use.

I. Begin where you like, the evidence is forthcoming and is unique.

1. Let us hear Him in one of His simplest speeches; simplest, that is, when looked upon superficially: 'I am meek and lowly in heart'. No man has a right to say that; to say 'I am meek' is to prove that the speaker is not meek; to claim lowliness may be to abandon it. Never forget the ironies of history. Consider what it is for a man to stand up in any company of his fellows and to say, 'I am meek and lowly in heart'! Not a soul would believe him; there is a human instinct, an unwritten transcendental human intuition that says to a speaker, No, for if you were so you would not speak thus; you would leave us to discover your meekness and your lowliness of heart.

2. Take another instance, running on the same line: 'I will give you rest'. This is a word that no sane man can utter if he be only a man. Who knows the meaning of rest as Jesus Christ used that pregnant word? No man can give another man rest; he can lull him, soothe him, administer opiates to him, and bring to bear upon him the influence of chemical anodynes; he cannot give peace, rest, fulness of peace.

3. Take this instance. 'I and My Father are one'. If that occurs only once perhaps it was introduced surreptitiously, but it does not occur only once; for the same lips said: 'He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father'. A man may have said that, but he called down upon himself the ridicule of all who heard it; he did not seek the faith of the world, he tempted its distrust and its derision.

4. Hear Him once again, as we might hear Him in every day of His life: 'I will raise him up at the last day'. A man cannot say that, and be only a man; he is a lunatic, he is the devil, or he is God. You cannot make a commonplace of him; you find no place in history that he can occupy. Can any man in the world stand this test? Not one. If any man has uttered these words he was less than a man or more than a man; and you cannot find a middle place for him.

II. These are some of the passages. Now these passages put Christ in this position; they utterly discredit Him; He is the victim of His own pretensions; He has discrowned Himself in the presence of sober-minded, honourable criticism. If He had claimed less He might have received more. He would sit down nowhere but on the throne. A man may easily cut up his own claims and pretensions, and may be burned by lighting his own certificates and credentials, and go up with them in their own smoky evaporation. But if the words are true they make Jesus Christ more than a man and better than a man; and you cannot remove those words from the record without removing Christ with them. —JOSEPH PARKER, *City Temple Pulpit*, vol. III. p. 13.

'Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.'—MATTHEW v. 20.

PEOPLE have often tried to find a type of life that might serve as a basement type. . . . The type must be one discontented with society as it is.—WALTER PATER.

REFERENCES.—V. 20.—F. E. Paget, *Faculties and Difficulties for Belief and Unbelief*, p. 100. H. S. Lunn, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxxviii. 1890, p. 382. H. Hensley Henson, *ibid.* vol. lxv. 1904, p. 136. R. W. Hiley, *A Year's Sermons*, vol. ii. p. 28. H. Varley, *Spiritual Light and Life*, p. 129. J. B. Mozley, *Sermons Preached Before the University of Oxford*, p. 25. Henry Alford, *Quebec Chapel Sermons*, vol. iii. p. 50. A. G. Mortimer, *One Hundred Miniature Sermons*, vol. ii. p. 36. V. 21.—F. W. Farrar, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. liv 1898, p. 232. Hugh Black, *ibid.* vol. lxiv. 1903, p. 7.

'It was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not. . . . But I say . . .'—MATTHEW v. 21, 22.

ONE of the commonest and most deep-seated, and perhaps not the least pernicious fallacy in our estimate of relative 'goodness,' lies in our disposition to rank negative above positive virtue—abstinence from wrong above active duty and distinguished service. There is surely a higher and completer decalogue than the purely prohibitory one of Sinai, taught us by One who surpassed and superseded Moses. 'Thou shalt' appeals to nobler natures and befits a more advanced civilization than 'Thou shalt not'. The early Israelites, just emerging from the double degradation of semi-barbarism and of slavery, and soiled with the brutal passions and the slimy sins belonging to both conditions, had first to be taught the difficult lessons of self-denial and forbearance. On Christians is laid the loftier obligation of active and laborious achievement. It is much for the fierce appetites and feeble wills of savages to abstain from the grosser indulgences of the temper and the flesh—not to steal, not to kill, not to lust, not to lie. But the civilization of a cultured and awakened age can rest content in no such formal or meagre conception of moral duties. It cannot acquiesce in mere self-regarding excellence. It feels that there is something at once loftier, more generous, and more imperative than the asceticism which aims simply at the elaboration and development of the spiritual possibilities of a man's own nature—and that to serve others, even in miry byways, in menial capacities, in damaging and revolting conditions, is a worthier and more Christian vocation than coddling one's individual soul. *Faire son devoir* is, after all, a nobler purpose than *faire*

son salut.—W. Rathbone Greg, *Literary and Social Judgments*, pp. 488, 489.

References.—V. 21, 22.—J. R. Cohu, *The Sermon on the Mount*, p. 131. H. Scott Holland, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxix. 1906, p. 321. J. R. Walker, *ibid.* vol. lxxiv. 1908, p. 378. V. 21-24.—E. Lyttelton, *Studies in the Sermon on the Mount*, p. 135. V. 21-26.—J. Oswald Dykes, *The Manifesto of the King*, p. 223.

'I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment.'—Matthew v. 22.

You are to distinguish, of course, controversy from rebuke. The assertion of truth is to be always gentle: the chastisement of wilful falsehood may be—very much the contrary indeed. Christ's Sermon on the Mount is full of polemic theology, but very gentle: 'Ye have heard that it hath been said—but *I* say unto you'; 'and if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others?' and the like.—Ruskin; see also *Mornings in Florence*, § 112.

High cultivation may help to self-command, but it multiplies the chances of irritative contact. In mansion, in hovel, the strain of life is perpetually felt—between the married, between parent and children, between relatives of every degree, between employers and employed. They debate, they dispute, they wrangle, they explode—their nerves are relieved, and they are ready to begin over again. Quit the home and quarrelling is less obvious, but it goes on all about one. What proportion of the letters delivered any morning would be found to be written in displeasure, in petulance, in wrath? The post-bag shrieks insults or bursts with suppressed malice.—George Gissing.

References.—V. 22.—E. Lyttelton, *Studies in the Sermon on the Mount*, p. 141. W. Leighton Grane, *Hard Sayings of Jesus Christ*, p. 151.

MEMORY AT THE ALTAR

'If thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest.'—Matthew v. 23.

There are a hundred things we may and ought to do at the altar. We should bow at the altar with reverence of spirit. We should confess at the altar with penitence of soul. We should sing at the altar with glad thanksgiving. We should make our vows at the altar with earnest purpose. But whatever else we do we must *there remember*. We must yoke memory to worship else worship will be vain.

I. We must remember our relations with our fellows. That is a secret of blessing at the altar. It is an enrichment of our worship that we remember our *happy* relations with our fellows.

It is essential to our worship that we remember our *unhappy* social conditions at the altar. Our brother may have a legitimate grievance against us. We have wronged him. And we are called to remember that unwelcome fact at the holy altar. Leave your gift before the altar, go and be reconciled to your brother, then, with clean hands and a pure heart come and offer your gift. Do not forget the gift and the altar when you have righted yourself with your brother. No social service, however obligatory and beautiful, must lead us to neglect the gift and the altar. Our Lord, Who was the servant of all, was supremely the servant of Jehovah.

There must always be a right relationship between our service of humanity and our sacrifice to God.

When I give God His rights I shall hasten to give man his rights. Philanthropy and worship must blend if both are to be effective. It is indeed a short-sighted policy which would abolish the altar and its worship for the service of humanity. Look at the very meaning of the word worship: it means worthship.

II. Passing from the immediate reference of the text, and still holding to its principle, we must remember the general circumstances of our life. Life's painful circumstances are seen in their true proportions if remembered at the altar.

III. We must remember our sins. This is not a popular doctrine, nor is it a popular practice. Yet it is a deep necessity of the soul that when we bring our gift to the altar we remember our transgressions. Public worship offers us an immense opportunity for the exercise of memory upon our sins. As Benjamin Jowett of Balliol has said, 'The advantage of public worship is that it is also private'. The privacy of public worship is its opportunity and its charm. If memory be thus exercised, it shall lead us to a great evangelical victory. We shall pass from the vision of our sin to the vision of the blood of Jesus, God's Son, which cleanseth us from all sin.—Dinsdale T. Young, *Messages for Home and Life*, p. 155.

References.—V. 23.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons Preached in Sackville College Chapel*, vol. ii. p. 70; see also *Readings for the Aged* (4th Series), p. 148. V. 23-25.—E. Griffith Jones, *The Cross and the Dice Box*, p. 39. V. 24.—C. E. Jefferson, *The Character of Jesus*, p. 147. V. 25.—H. Rawlings, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lii. 1897, p. 299. V. 25, 26.—T. Disney Barlow, *Rays from the Sun of Righteousness*, p. 1. W. H. Brookfield, *Sermons*, p. 58. E. Lyttelton, *Studies in the Sermon on the Mount*, p. 150. V. 26.—F. C. Spurr, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xlv. 1894, p. 117. V. 27, 28.—E. Lyttelton, *Studies in the Sermon on the Mount*, p. 157. 'Plain Sermons' by contributors to the *Tracts for the Times*, vol. ix. p. 295.

'Whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.'—Matthew v. 28.

But this is not the rule by which we are to judge our past actions, but to guard our future ones. He who has thoughts of lust or passion is not innocent in the sight of God, and is liable to be carried on to perform the act on which he suffers himself to dwell. And in looking forward, he will do well to remember this caution of Christ's, but in looking backward, in thinking of others, in endeavouring to estimate the actual amount of guilt or trespass; if he begins by placing thought upon the level of action, he will end by placing action on the level of thought. It would be a monstrous state of mind in which we regarded mere imagination of evil as the same thing with action;

hatred as the same with murder; thoughts of impurity as the same with adultery. It is not so that we have learned Christ. . . . However important it may be to remember that the all-seeing eye of God tries the reins, it is no less important to remember also that morality consists in definite acts capable of being seen and judged of by our fellow-creatures.—Jowett.

She was unaware that the distance between us and dreadful crimes is much greater often than it appears to be. The man who looks on a woman with adulterous desire has already committed adultery in his heart if he be restrained only by force or fear of detection; but if the restraint, although he may not be conscious of it, is self-imposed, he is not guilty. Nay, even the dread of consequences is a motive of sufficient respectability to make a large difference between the sinfulness of mere lust and that of its fulfilment.—From *Miriam's Schooling*, by Mark Rutherford.

References.—V. 28.—C. S. Macfarland, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxx. 1906, p. 21.

'Pluck it out, and cast it from thee.'—Matthew v. 29.

No man ever took his besetting sin, it may be lust, or pride, or love of rank and position, and, as it were, cut it out by voluntarily placing himself where to gratify it was impossible, without sensibly receiving a new strength of character.—Jowett.

References.—V. 29, 30.—E. Lyttelton, *Studies in the Sermon on the Mount*, p. 165. J. B. Mozley, *Sermons Parochial and Occasional*, p. 1.

'If thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee.'—Matthew v. 30.

Offence in Scripture does not mean sin itself so much as something suggestive of it; something which puts sin in our way, and places us in imminent danger of giving way to it. In all such cases our Lord enjoins a decided line upon man. . . . After all it is not the temptations which meet men, but the temptations which they go to meet, which they purposely find out, and use all kinds of art and management and subtlety to put themselves in the way of, which do the great mischief in moral and spiritual things.—Mozley.

'I say unto you, That ye resist not evil.'—Matthew v. 39.

Is not the public air which European nations breathe at this moment, as it has been for several years back, charged with thunder? Despots are plotting, ships are building, man's ingenuity is bent, as it never was bent before, on the invention and improvement of instruments of death; Europe is bristling with five millions of bayonets; and this is the condition of the world for which the Son of God died eighteen hundred and sixty-two years ago! There is no mystery of Providence so inscrutable as this; yet, is not the very sense of its mournfulness a proof that the spirit of Christianity is living in the minds of men? For, of a verity, military glory is becoming in our best thoughts a bloody rag, and conquest the first in the catalogue of mighty crimes. . . . There cannot be a doubt that when the political crimes of kings and governments, the sores that fester in the heart of society, and all 'the burden of the unintelligible world,' weigh heaviest on the mind, we have to thank Christianity for it. That pure light makes visible the darkness. The Sermon on the Mount makes the morality of nations ghastly. The Divine love makes human hate stand out in dark relief. This sadness, in the essence of it nobler than any joy, is the heritage of the Christian. . . . If the Christian is less happy than the Pagan, and at times I think he is so, it arises from the reproach of the Christian's unreached ideal, and from the strings of his finer and more scrupulous conscience.—Alexander Smith in *Dreamthorp*.

In the *Spectator's* review of James Gilmour's book, *Among the Mongols*, it is stated: 'As for danger, he had made up his mind not to carry arms, not to be angry with a heathen, happen what might, and—though he does not mention this—not to be afraid of anything whatever, neither dogs, nor thieves, nor hunger, nor the climate; and he kept those three resolutions. If ever on earth there lived a man who kept the law of Christ, and could give proofs of it, and be absolutely unconscious that he was giving them, it is this man whom the Mongols he lived among called "our Gilmour".'

References.—V. 30.—W. Allen Whitworth, *Church Times*, vol. xxxiii. 1895, p. 538. V. 31, 32.—E. Lyttelton, *Studies in the Sermon on the Mount*, p. 174. V. 33, 34.—J. H. Jellett, *The Elder Son*, p. 129. V. 33-37.—C. Gore, *Church Times*, vol. xlii. 1899, p. 174. E. Lyttelton, *Studies in the Sermon on the Mount*, p. 185. A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—St. Matthew I.-VIII.* p. 208. J. Oswald Dykes, *The Manifesto of the King*, p. 265. V. 36.—W. M. Sinclair, *The New Law*, p. 89.

THE LAW OF REVENGE

'Ye have heard that it was said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: but I say unto you, Resist not him that is evil.'—Matthew v. 38, 39.

Our Lord is here dealing with one interesting prescription of the old law. It had definitely allowed revenge up to a certain point, but no further. It might go to the point of exact reciprocity.

I. Here we must remark that the law of the old covenant was in itself a limitation of human instinct. The savage instinct of revenge is to rush blindly in, and do as much harm to an enemy as can be done. The savage satisfies himself to the full; he kills the man that has done him wrong and his wife and family. Now nothing is more striking in the old covenant than that it checks barbarous habits and puts them under restraint. The point which needs emphasizing is that the old law worked by way of gradual limitation, not of sudden abolition. God dealt with men gradually. Their savage passions are restrained under the Old Testament as a preparation for the time when they were to be brought under the perfect discipline of the Son of man. So now, when the fullness of the time is come, our Lord lays on this passion of revenge a harder and deeper prescrip-

tion, and says in fact to each of His disciples: A wrong aimed at thee as an individual is, so far as thy feeling goes, simply to be an occasion for showing complete liberty of spirit and superiority to all outrage. The Lord requires not moderation in revenge, but complete self-effacement.

II. We may notice that this requirement of self-effacement is of the nature of an ascetic prescription, as when our Lord said, 'If thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out; if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off'. The instinct of revenge has in it something that is right: something of the passion of justice. It is a true instinct which makes us feel that for wrong done man should suffer wrong. It is derived from the Divine principle of justice. But in our own cases, where our own interests are concerned, this passion of justice has come to be so mixed up with selfishness, and with those excessive demands which spring of selfishness—in a word, it has become so defiled with sin—that our Lord imposes on it an absolute ban; He says: 'Vengeance is Mine, I will repay, saith the Lord'.

III. The requirement which our Lord lays on His disciples is not only made in words. It was enforced, where the enforcement is most striking, in our Lord's example. You watch our Lord in His Passion; and when you look delicately and accurately at the details of the treatment He received, you observe how almost intolerably hard to bear were many of His trials. Yet 'when He was reviled, He reviled not again; when He suffered, He threatened not; but committed Himself to Him that judgeth righteously'.—Bishop Gore, *Sermon on the Mount*, p. 79.

References.—V. 38-42.—S. Chadwick, *Humanity and God*, p. 313. A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—St. Matthew I.-VIII.* p. 210. E. Lyttelton, *Studies in the Sermon on the Mount*, p. 193. W. Leighton Grane, *Hard Sayings of Jesus Christ*, p. 77. J. Oswald Dykes, *The Manifesto of the King*, p. 207. V. 38-48.—C. Gore, *Church Times*, vol. xxxiii. 1895, p. 360.

'Resist not evil.'—Matthew v. 39.

Macaulay admits this placable and forgiving spirit was a redeeming feature of Lord Bacon's character. 'He bore with meekness his high civil honours, and the far higher honours gained by his intellect. He was very seldom, if ever, provoked into treating any person with malignity and insolence. No man more readily held up the left cheek to those who had smitten the right. No man was more expert at the soft answer which turneth away wrath.'

There came one time, when I was in Pall Mall, an ambassador with a company of Irishmen and rude fellows; the meeting was over before they came, and I was gone up into chamber, where I heard one of them say, 'He would kill all the Quakers'. I went down to him, and was moved in the power of the Lord to speak to him. I told him, 'The law said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth; but thou threatenest to kill all the Quakers, though they have done thee no hurt. But,' said I, 'here is gospel for thee: here is my hair, here is my cheek, and here is my shoulder,' turning it to him. This came so over him that he and his companions stood as men amazed, and said, if that was our principle, and if we were as we said, they never saw the like in their lives. I told them what I was in words I was the same in life. Then the ambassador, who had stood without, came in; for he said that Irish colonel was such a desperate man that he durst not come in with him, for fear he should do us some mischief; but truth came over him, and he carried himself lovingly towards us; as also did the ambassador; for the Lord's power was over them all.—Fox's *Journal*.

References.—V. 39.—W. Garrett Horder, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xlix. 1896, p. 117. J. H. F. Peile, *Ecclesia Discens*, p. 222. James Moffatt, *The Second Things of Life*, p. 21. V. 39-41.—Lyman Abbott, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xlix. 1896, p. 131.

THE SECOND MILE

'Whosoever shall compel thee to go one mile, go with him twain.'—Matthew v. 41.

I. That for which the second mile stands—the overplus of goodness, unselfishness, and service—is seen throughout the whole Gospel. It characterizes, for instance, Christ's ample interpretation of the old commandment. 'Thou shalt not kill' becomes in His lips 'Be not angry'. The law forbade adultery—He proscribed evil thought. The law condemned false witness—Christ said, 'Let your yea be yea, and your nay, nay'. In other words, in His interpretation of the old code Christ taught men to go the second mile—not merely to desist from open sin, but to manifest that specific grace of which the particular sin is the moral antithesis. The same principle is seen also in the record of the measure in which God deals out His blessing to His people. He not only bestows pardon but abundant pardon. He gives not only grace but abounding grace. He promises not only victory in life's conflicts but makes men 'more than conquerors'.

II. Applied to life's compulsions, of which every one of us is conscious—those things of which we can never rid ourselves and from which we can never altogether escape—the doctrine of the second mile enjoins the doing of ordinary toil and the fulfilment of ordinary obligation in the spirit of Christian service. It demands that we shall not only be honest in our business dealings but generous also, measuring duty not by financial consideration but in the spirit of Christian service. It means that we look beyond second causes and gladly acknowledge God's will in all life's restrictions and burdens.

III. But the glory of the second mile is only to be seen in all its fullness as exemplified in Christ Himself. His life, His teaching, His miracles of healing, His gentleness, the purity of the example, which He left us, may be looked upon as the first mile to which the need of men compelled Him. But love constrained Him still further, and the second mile led Him to Calvary! And still day by day does He manifest that same love in His response to our constraints. For if we invite Him for one mile, and compel Him by faith

and prayer with that compulsion to which He always so readily yields, to come into fellowship with us, He always goes further and gives 'exceeding abundantly above all that we ask'. And if we invite Him for the first mile of life, we need have no fear but that He will come with us twain, even through death and beyond. It is Christ who has made the second mile beautiful, and beckons us on to share its glory.—J. Stuart Holden, *The Pre-Eminent Lord*, p. 119.

References.—V. 41.—Rocliffe Mackintosh, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxxiv. 1908, p. 189. V. 43.—W. M. Sinclair, *The New Law*, p. 20. V. 43, 44.—H. Hensley Henson, *Christ and the Nation*, p. 265. Lyman Abbott, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xlix. 1896, p. 169. V. 43-48.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—St. Matthew I.-VIII.* p. 214. J. Oswald Dykes, *The Manifesto of the King*, p. 311. E. Lyttelton, *Studies in the Sermon on the Mount*, p. 200. G. Macdonald, *Unspoken Sermons*, p. 217. V. 44.—J. R. Cohu, *The Sermon on the Mount*, p. 142. W. G. Rutherford, *The Key of Knowledge*, p. 51. V. 45.—Henry Van Dyke, *Sermons to Young Men*, p. 193. R. F. Horton, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. l. 1896, p. 209. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxiv. No. 1414. V. 46, 47.—R. W. Dale, *The Evangelical Revival*, p. 60.

LOVE YOUR ENEMIES

'I say unto you, Love your enemies.'—Matthew v. 44.

It is one of the signs of the Divine originality of Christ that, in the midst of a condition of society which throughout the world was based on national selfishness and racial hatred, He ordered the citizens of His kingdom to act on the very opposite principle of treating every human being as a friend.

'In the time of our Lord, and in the last decrepitude of the morality of nations, the selfishness of human intercourse was much greater than the present age can easily understand. Selfishness, therefore, was not a mere abuse or corruption arising out of the infirmity of human nature, but a theory and almost a part of moral philosophy. It was in the midst of all this recognized and authorized sentiment to the contrary that Christ stood up and said, "Love your enemies".'

We may perhaps have been thrown much together with people whose tastes and opinions were quite different from our own. Each fault that we may have committed has probably been watched by keen observers, who, if they are of the world and not of Christ, will score one against us accordingly. It would probably amaze us beyond measure did we know what is said of us, in our absence, by those of our acquaintances who have occasion to mention our names. We cannot live entirely here amongst people possessed by the Spirit of Christ. We are far more likely to meet with enemies, in the general sense of the word, than with friends.

'I say unto you, Love your enemies; bless them that curse you; do good to them that hate you; and pray for them that despitefully use you, and persecute you.' A hard task to us in our natural state. Unaided we cannot think kindly of the offender. Our lips would more easily form themselves into a curse than a blessing.

I. The Holy Spirit of God alone can help us to this calm, tranquil, undisturbed feeling of Christian benevolence which our Lord commands. That is why our Lord commands it with such confidence. He knows that in God's strength we can get this temper. But He here is urging it for our own sakes.

It is because such boilings of our blood prevent us from being what we should. They are of the devil, not of God. Christ gives us the reason: 'That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven'.

II. It is no use having right opinions about religion, unless we get the Holy Spirit to enable us to put them into practice. Think how far more deeply men are every moment offending than even our most cruel enemy has injured us. How easily might God take away the unthankful and the evil from sharing His blessings at all! Yet He allows them to rejoice—filling their hearts with food and gladness, and giving them every opportunity of returning to Him before it is too late. If God can do that, to Whom all sin is so utterly abhorrent, why cannot we overlook these miserable little offences which can only affect the things of this life? Oh, pray more earnestly than ever before for this conquering glorious grace of the Holy Spirit in this thing; that we may reach this happy, unruffled, hopeful temper; not that we may grow indifferent to error and wrongdoing, but that, while doing what we can to bring the counsels of the evil to nought, we may remember all the time that the slanderer, the injurious, or the insolent, are all the time our brethren, misguided children of the same great Father, bought by the same precious Blood, needing the same pardon as ourselves.

'Love your enemies, and pray for them which despitefully use you.'—Matthew v. 44.

There is a class of men who see a great many things to be said against their own side, and a great deal for its adversaries. They fulfil the precept, 'Love your enemies,' but we could almost wish we were among them, that we might have some chance of impartiality and a small portion of their favour.—Dr. John Kea.

In George Fox's Journal for 1652 he describes a riot, in the course of which a rude mason gave him a severe blow on the back of the hand, bruising the flesh and benumbing the arm, 'that I could not draw it unto me again. But I looked at it in the love of God (for I was in the love of God to them all, that had persecuted me).'

'Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you.'—Matthew v. 44.

There are cases, I grant you—cases of impenitent wickedness—where the higher law is suspended, finds no chance to act—where relief from the bond is itself mercy and justice. But the higher law is always there. You know the formula—'It was said by them of old time—But *I* say unto you'. And then follows the new law of a new society. And so in marriage. If love has the smallest room to work—if forgiveness can find the narrowest foothold—love and forgiveness

are imposed on—demanded of—the Christian! here as everywhere else. Love and forgiveness — *not* penalty and hate!—Mrs. H. Ward in *The Marriage of William Ashe.*

I preached in Charles Square to the largest congregation I have ever seen there. Many of the baser people would fain have interrupted, but they found, after a time, it was lost labour. One, who was more serious, was (as she afterwards confessed) exceedingly angry at them. But she was quickly rebuked by a stone which hit on her forehead and struck her down to the ground. In that moment her anger was at an end, and love filled her heart.—Wesley's *Journal* (9 May, 1742).

THE JUST AND THE UNJUST

'He maketh His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.'—Matthew v. 45.

Why does God cause His sun to rise on the evil as well as the good? why does He send the rain on the unjust as well as on the just? God, because He is God, never acts without reason. There is a meaning and purpose in this matter, as indeed there is a meaning and purpose in all God's dealings, and in all God's works; and what you and I want to pray for, is the clear eye and the attentive mind and the enlightened heart to understand these things.

Now there seem to be three reasons at any rate why God causes the sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sends the rain on the just and unjust.

I. He Wants us to Believe in His Fatherhood, in its widest meaning. God wants us to realize that He is the Father of all men, whether they be good or whether they be bad, and because God is the Father of all men He must, nay, He loves to show His abundant works of love to all men, so instead of the indifference of Nature, we have before us the great beneficence of God. We see God in the light of a loving Father, making ample, making equal provision for all His children, bad and good. Now God the Father is doing nothing unjust in all this. When He does this He is doing, when you come to think of it, He is doing exactly what a good earthly father would do. Picture to yourself a father who has many children. Some of them may be dearer and closer to him than the others. There may be one son who may love him better than his brothers and sisters, and that one son of his may have won his father's heart more than all the rest of the family put together. But that father does not confine his attention to the best beloved of the family. No, he exercises his fatherly care over all his children, all of them; he clothes all of them, he feeds all and educates all of them, he tries to set all out in life, he toils for all of them. Why? Because he is the father of them all, and so with God the Father. We are all His children, the worst as well as the best of men. He never forgets us, He never disowns us, He tries to win us wanderers back, by giving us fresh signs of His love and goodwill.

II. The World is not a Place of Judgment, but it is a Place of Probation.—The good and the evil—we know it—the good and the evil are working and living in this world to-day, side by side, and Jesus Christ Himself recognized this fact, in that most instructive parable of the tares and the wheat. In that parable He bade us not to judge anybody, but to let the good and the bad remain together unseparated until the harvest—that means as long as this world lasts. The good and the bad are to remain undistinguished.

III. God Wants to Teach us the Length and Breadth of His Forgiving Love.—The gifts and blessings of Nature give us some faint idea of His love. Only a faint idea. God bestows all the loveliness of the world upon such sinners as we are. Then, though we wander from God, though we forget God, still the sun shines, still refreshing rain comes. And all this He does, He continues to do, for this reason, to bid us to look up and see that Father, with Whom is no variableness neither shadow of turning. We love change, but God never changes. He always is our Father. He always loves us. In spite of ourselves, in spite of our selfishness, in spite of our sins, God Who hates sin with a hatred of which He alone is capable, God still continues to bless us and give us all we need. He still loves to give good unto men. What a forgiving love that must be!

'He maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good.'—Matthew v. 45.

The sun does not wait for prayers and incantations in order to be induced to rise, but shines out forthwith and is hailed by all; so do not you wait for applause and praise to be induced to do good, but do it of your own accord, and you will be as much loved as the sun.—Epictetus.

'He sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.'—Matthew v. 45.

'But,' adds Bacon, after quoting this verse in his essay upon Goodness, 'he doth not raise wealth, nor shine Honour and Vertues, upon Men equally. Common benefits are to be communicate with all; but peculiar Benefits, with choice.'

'If ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same?'—Matthew v. 46.

It would be a great step in advance for most of us to love anybody, and the publicans of the time of Jesus must have been a much more Christian set than most Christians of the present day; but that we should love those who do not love us is a height never scaled now except by a few of the elect in whom Christ still survives.—*Mark Rutherford's Deliverance.*

If any of the Indians in Georgia were sick (which indeed exceedingly rarely happened, till they learned gluttony and drunkenness from the Christians), those that were near him gave him whatever he wanted. O, who will convert the English into honest Heathens!—Wesley's *Journal* (8 Feb., 1753).

THE DISTINCTIVENESS OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

'If ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not even the publicans the same?'—MATTHEW v. 47.

THE drift of this passage is the distinctiveness of the Christian life. Christ has an ideal of His own to offer to the world; His type of goodness is original, is unique, and the lives of those who follow Him are to furnish the proof of it.

The illustration in the text may seem a trivial one; but it is not so. Manners make the man always.

Half the battle of human advancement is gained when men have learned to give to one another not less than they receive from one another. The social equilibrium is maintained on these terms, and the individual life is preserved in well-being and peace.

I. Law and Personal Duty.—The regrettable thing is when with this, the legal standard for society, there is confounded the moral standard for the individual. Israel had never learned to distinguish between personal duty and civic obligation. The standard of mere equity is a noble enough standard in its way, and even when most unpleasing may extort an admiration of a kind. It is not the Christian standard.

II. Retaliation and Non-Resistance.—The non-resistance of injury. 'I say unto you, Resist not evil,' etc. And here, let us remember, that it is the individual life that is referred to. Christ speaks to the private life, leaving societies and nations free, as they are inherently bound, to maintain right in the world by the final argument if need be. The temper that will not take offence invariably ends by disarming violence. The supreme example, of course, is the Son of man. In His life meekness is a notable trait throughout.

III. The Christian and His Enemy.—Your persecutor is to be loved. No one anywhere is to be hated, and nothing is to be hated but hate.

That is a high pitch of virtue to rise to. But, you observe, we are offered here a ladder of self-discipline by which to rise to it. First comes the injunction, 'Bless them that curse you'. Then, next, he is to do his enemy good. For, as we all know, nothing is so treacherous as feeling. He is to pray for his enemy. The most real and irrefragable thing in the whole universe is surely the Divine Heart which is the radiant, life-giving core of it. And what does that Heart do but just this: bless its enemies, and load them daily with benefits and yearn over them evermore.—A. MARTIN, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. LXXII. 1907, p. 88.

THE MINISTRY AND THE MASSES

'What do ye more than others?'—MATTHEW v. 47.

THE relation of working men to the churches is determined by many things, and one of them is worth special consideration. When I think of the impressions received in my artisan days, and compare them with later experience, I have to recognize in crowds of the workers a deep-rooted prejudice, not so much against the office of the ministry as against the men who hold it. That this prejudice is as a stone wall between them, no one who knows the former will seriously question.

The prejudice, not to use a stronger term, exists; and, until they can fight it down, ministers must reckon with it as best they can. Of one thing I am persuaded: it will yield to no assumption of orders; it is impervious to argument; and it is proof against appeals to respect the ministerial office for its own sake. Nothing can make an impression on this prejudice but an example which works out in self-sacrifice, character, and courage. If ministers are to be highly esteemed, it must be for their work's sake.

I. It is the first of these that goes to the quick of the problem. It is self-sacrifice. Religion must always find its dynamic through the heart. He who holds the heart in the service of religion is a giant as compared with a vastly abler man who but influences the mind. 'All men are commanded by the soul.' The Koran makes a distinct class of those who are by nature good, and whose goodness has an influence on others, and pronounces this class to be the aim of religion. The light of the saintly spirit which, as it has often been remarked, is a form of the heroic spirit, shines through the wrappings of education and dogma, and reveals to us the synthetic power and beauty of sacrifice. It is not reason or ability, it is not money or mechanism, nor these combined, that can effectually lift the race. Nothing, on our side of the question, can do this but good men. Man is God's means for acting upon men. Whether God could save the world apart from human agency we know not. This is certain, He has not so far willed to do so. God in Christ is the Supreme Sacrifice for the salvation of the world; and man's power with man is obedience to the same profound law.

It is one great weakness of our Protestant Churches that we produce so few saints who strike the imagination of the people. We somehow fail, all but entirely, to achieve the type of man and woman which is to the sacerdotal Churches what pageantry or sentiment is in politics. Who, for example, during the last quarter of a century has given nobler hostage to the imagination of the workers than the late Father Dolling? A man who offered his life on the altar of the unreached majority; who lived and moved amid human wreckage and moral hopelessness, probably unmatched on the face of the earth. Broken in health and consumed in little more than half his days; living daily, as we are told, with vagabonds at his table and outcasts sleeping at night under his roof, this man's life was an incarnation of the divinest of all motives—the redemption of the lowest in the Saviour's name.

And when he 'underwent the ceremony of death' men who rarely speak of the Christian religion without a sneer, and newspapers that exist nearest the ground, bore willing testimony to a sacrifice that finds its way through the imagination to the heart as nothing else can. Father Damien, diseased and

rotting among his lepers, and Father Dolling, toiling for the outcasts of London, are of the same spiritual kin. 'No man,' says a wise teacher, 'ever casts the wealth of his life and the crown of his devotion at the feet of Jesus without quickening the earth with diviner life, and uplifting it with a new courage.'

II. Next to self-sacrifice character can do much to break down popular prejudice against ministers as a class. One of the first and hardest things they have to do is to convince the masses that they preach what they believe, and, as far as possible, live what they preach. Ministers must make men feel that the message which they claim to have received of the Lord Jesus is for themselves, and, as they believe, for others, nothing less than a matter of eternal life or death. I do not exaggerate when I say that eighteen out of every twenty working men whom I knew intimately in my factory days regarded ministers as men who, like the augurs of ancient Rome, laughed in themselves and to one another over a huge business of make-believe, which it was to their interest to keep in existence as long as possible. I shall say nothing about the unworthy side of the justification for this impression. It has not been to seek in the past, and it can be found to-day. Enough for my purpose to remark that the popular idea is a severe idea, of what is fitting between ministerial profession and conduct. The idea may be unfair, it may be absurd, but it is there, and the minister will disregard it only at the cost of his own influence.

III. Then, again, a potent force in the ministry is courage, and it was never more needed.

The courage that is needed pre-eminently is the courage of the Christian message. 'I am not ashamed of the Gospel, for it is the power of God unto salvation,' said the great Apostle. There is no lack of power in the world, but it is not power unto salvation. Civilization means the domination of human intelligence over natural conditions; salvation means civilization quickened into life which can be affirmed of God. Until we grasp the difference between that which is native to man, and that which is the gift of God in Jesus Christ, we may talk never so wisely about progress, but we talk in a circle.

Let our tongue cleave to the roof of our mouth rather than by a word we should encourage any impression that the world has its substitute for the dayspring from on high. Let us pray to be, and pray for, men with the courage of our message.—Ambrose Shepherd, *The Gospel and Social Questions*, p. 171.

References.—V. 47.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xviii. No. 1029. J. Denney, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xlvii. 1895, p. 183; see also vol. lviii. 1900, p. 24. C. Silvester Horne, *ibid.* vol. lviii. 1900, p. 17.

'Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.'—Matthew v. 48.

'These words,' says Julius Hare, 'declare that the perfect renewal of God's image in man is not a presumptuous vision, not like a madman's attempt to clutch a handful of stars, but an object of righteous enterprise, which we may and ought to long for and strive after. . . . *Be ye perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect.* This is the angel-trumpet which summons man to the warfare of duty. This, and nothing less than this, is the glorious price set before him. Do our hearts swell with pride at the thought that this is what we ought to be, what we might be? A single glance at the state of the world, at what we ourselves are, must quench that pride, and turn it into shame.'

His whole life was but one noble, earnest effort to follow His Master's call; that call which sets no lower ideal before the Christian than one of absolute, moral beauty, the very Beauty of God Himself. 'Be ye perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.' There is but one way to attain this height, either practically or intellectually; and that is, to aim ceaselessly at all that is highest, noblest, most beautiful; and of all men I have ever known, this dear brother pursued such an aim most earnestly. —Père Gratry on *Henri Perreyve.*

References.—V. 48.—A. Earle, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. liv. 1898, p. 132. J. E. Carpenter, *ibid.* vol. lx. 1901, p. 202. F. W. Robertson, *Sermons Preached at Brighton* (3rd Series), p. 143. C. J. Vaughan, *Characteristics of Christ's Teaching*, p. 121. J. Martineau, *Hours of Thought on Sacred Things*, p. 72. Prebendary Shelford, *Religion in Common Life*, p. 1. J. T. Bramston, *Sermons to Boys*, p. 94. Bishop Creighton, *University and Other Sermons*, p. 110. W. J. Knox-Little, *The Perfect Life*, p. 1. S. Chadwick, *Humanity and God*, p. 1. VI.—C. Gore, *Church Times*, vol. xxxiii. 1895, p. 429. VI. 1.—F. E. Paget, *Sermons on Duties of Daily Life*, p. 251. E. Lyttelton, *Studies in the Sermon on the Mount*, p. 209. J. Oswald Dykes, *The Manifesto of the King*, p. 333. H. C. Beeching, *Faith*, p. 21. VI. 1-5.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—St. Matthew I.-VIII.* p. 220. VI. 1-9, 10.—H. Scott Holland, *Church Times*, vol. liii. 1905, p. 155. VI. 1-18.—W. Boyd Carpenter, *The Great Charter of Christ*, p. 187.

'Do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do, that they may have glory of men.'—Matthew vi. 2.

'Practically at present,' Ruskin writes, in *Sesame and Lilies*, 'advancement in life means, becoming conspicuous in life; obtaining a position which shall be acknowledged by others to be respectable or honourable. We do not understand by this advancement, in general, the mere making of money, but the being known to have made it; not the accomplishment of any great aim, but the being seen to have accomplished it.'

He who sincerely takes life in earnest finds it quite natural and a matter of course to do so, and therefore he does not make any great noise about it.—Rothe.

References.—VI. 2.—H. P. Liddon, *Sermons on Some Words of Christ*, p. 19. Phillips Brooks, *The Law of Growth*, p. 273. VI. 2-4.—E. Lyttelton, *Studies in the Sermon on the Mount*, p. 218. J. Oswald Dykes, *The Manifesto of the King*, p. 351.

'Let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth.'—Matthew vi. 3.

Carlyle, after quoting this verse in his essay on 'Characteristics,' adds: 'Whisper not to thy own

heart, How worthy is this action. For then it is already becoming worthless. The good man is he who *works* continually in well-doing; to whom well-doing is as his natural existence, awakening no astonishment, requiring no commentary; but there, like a thing of course, and as if it could not be so.' He returns to the same idea at the close of his essay on Varnhagen von Ense's *Memoirs:* 'Is a thing nothing because the morning papers have not mentioned it? Or can a nothing be made something, by never so much babbling of it there? Far better, probably, that no morning or evening paper mentioned it; that the right hand knew not what the left was doing!'

Brave deeds are most estimable when hidden. . . . What was finest in them was the desire to hide them. —Pascal.

In his *Life of Chalmers*, Dr. Hanna quotes the grateful remark of an old, unfortunate teacher: 'Many a pound-note has the Doctor given me, and he always did the thing as if he were afraid that any person should see him. May God reward him!'

Bees will not work except in darkness; Thought will not work except in Silence; neither will Virtue work except in Secrecy. Let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth! Neither shalt thou prate even to thy own heart of 'those secrets known to all'. Is not shame the soil of all Virtue, of all good manners and good morals? Like other plants, Virtue will not grow unless its root be hidden, buried from the eye of the Sun. Let the Sun shine on it, nay, do but look at it privily thyself, the root withers, and no flowers will glad thee.—Carlyle, *Sartor Resartus*, bk. iii. chap. iii.

References.—VI. 3.—A Scotch Preacher, *The Strait Gate*, p. 138. VI. 4.—W. M. Sinclair, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. l. 1896, p. 58. J. M. Neale, *Sermons Preached in Sackville College Chapel*, vol. iv. p. 245. VI. 5.—E. Lyttelton, *Studies in the Sermon on the Mount*, p. 228. C. E. Jefferson, *The Character of Jesus*, p. 55. F. E. Paget, *Sermons on Duties of Daily Life*, p. 269. VI. 5, 6.—J. Oswald Dykes, *The Manifesto of the King*, p. 373.

PRIVATE PRAYER

'But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret.'—Matthew vi. 6.

I. It would be impossible to say what our Lord exactly meant by closet prayer. We generally understand it to mean our bedroom. It means, literally, the place from which things are given out or dispensed. We may take it to be the spot in the background of life, that spot wherever it be which is the holiest and calmest, and where the chief supplies of thought and being lie. Our Lord Himself made the mountain His closet and the garden. It is not so much the place as the spirit of the place. The great idea is privacy, modesty, and intimacy.

Observe the personal words and the possessive *thou*. When *thou* prayest enter into *thy* closet, and when thou hast shut thy door pray to thy Father. They are so endearing, they are so practical, and are so solemn, they bring it all so close together.

II. By its being said, Enter into thy closet, it implies of course that you are not there, but that you go there for the purpose of prayer. When you go to your closet to pray the first thing is, shut the door. It of course means, first that you are to separate yourself from all outer things, be and feel shut in with God. It has been thought, too, and this is in entire agreement with the context, that you are to shut your door in order that you may not be overheard, which implies that even in your closet you pray out loud, in a soft but in an audible voice.

III. The next thing taught us by our Saviour's words is, take as you go to prayers, take with you fatherly views of God. Let it be the prayer, not of a subject to a king, but of a child to its parent. Pray to the Father. Pray to the Father who is in secret. Take care that your private communications with your Father are not vague, not such as any one else could say as well as you, but personal, confidential, and minute.

Remember that every complete prayer has in it an order, an invocation, a confession of sin, thanksgiving for mercies, a supplication for gifts and graces, intercession, arguments, and pleadings, with a doxology. There is another part of devotion which does not occupy its proper place and degree in many of our holy functions, which is very important. Adoration, adoring God for what He is in Himself, not for what He gives. Simple, devout, admiring contemplation of God.—James Vaughan, *Penny Pulpit*, vol. xiv. p. 25.

RECOLLECTION

'When thou hast shut thy door.'—Matthew vi. 6.

Recollection, said Richard Cecil, is the life of true religion. It is to the soul, said another, what sleep is to the body; without it must come fever, collapse, and death. The soul that does not gather itself together and abide steadfast at the centre will soon be spent. A return to the well-head is the condition of renewed constant vigour and fertility. We live amidst unprecedented activity and growing discontent. The outward agencies of the Church were never so demonstrative; they almost keep pace with the world; but no one is satisfied with their results. 'Life hurries on, spreads itself far and wide, but the source of life dries up.' Dispersed amid the multitude of things external, Christian people are forgetting that mental and spiritual progress consist in intensifying the inward life—that abiding and fruitful Christian work can only be accomplished by serious and refreshed souls.

I. Recollection is the fixed thought of the Redeeming God carried into all things. It is the calm, collected mood of those who set the Lord always before them, to whom every common vessel has been made a sacramental chalice, because all life has become a true communion with God in Christ. It is not necessarily the repression of activity; it is its intensification. If it be true that the world is in a

hard strait, and that the duty of Christian men to-day is to turn aside from everything and to employ their whole force to set forward the perilous course of the mighty vessel freighted with the human race, recollection will not hinder this zeal. But the 'sad heart tires in a mile'. The world will not be overcome by what St. Bernard calls *evisceratio mentis* — the disembowelling of the soul. The trouble of all the Churches to-day is the slackening of the central impetus, and the one cure is recollection—the possession of the soul—the return to the abandoned sanctuary.

II. Some general helps to recollection may be stated, however incompletely. Perfect simplicity of life and feeling can rarely be reached without sacrificing some part of our possessions and our work. There is no rule; every believer has to find how he may best live for himself the life of the true Christian. It is certain that the demands of society are a chief foe to recollection. The last Babylon is a place of merchandise, where the souls of men are sold. John Woolman says, 'Universal love reconciles the mind to a life so plain that a little doth suffice to support it, a life of simplicity and sufficiency where the real comforts of life are not lessened'. It is assuredly true that many do nothing because they try to do much. It is not the will of God that any should undertake all kinds of labour. It is not the will of God that men should elect forms of service for which they have no capacity. He does not take the pencil from the artist, the pen from the ready writer, and turn these men into preachers. He asks each to glorify Him where he stands, to take possession for God of the channels in which his strength is flowing.

III. For true recollection we must be occupied with the immediate duty. That is really all we have to do with. Yet Christian workers in our day are being crushed with the burden of the past and the future. With these we have no concern. The past may inspire us, but looking unto Jesus we have a present help. It does not trouble us; in the kingdom of priests we are loosed from our sins. It does not dishearten us; God is with His people still. The future is His, not ours. We have no concern with one day of it. When we sit with Christ in heavenly places we pass already into the nobler order; we see all things put under Him. But the times, the seasons, the circumstances—these things should not load us with the lightest burden.

It is hardly necessary to add that the life of recollection is supremely a life of prayer—a life of prayer with others, but chiefly a life of prayer in the closet. As Pascal says, it abides in its own room. Its first precept is 'Shut to the door'. There it seeks light, peace, strength in the most hidden recollection. So the soul discovers that it has power with God. It reveals to Him its own natural longings. But its will is subordinate to His—it is at last, as a great master of the spiritual life has not shrunk from saying,' steeped sevenfold in the blood of the Lamb'.—W. Robertson Nicoll, *Ten Minute Sermons*, p. 69.

TIMES OF PRIVATE PRAYER

'Thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.'—Matthew vi. 6.

Whoever is persuaded to disuse his morning and evening prayers, is giving up the armour which is to secure him against the wiles of the Devil. If you have left off the observance of them, you may fall any day; and you will fall without notice. For a time you will go on, seeming to yourselves to be the same as before; but the Israelites might as well hope to lay in a stock of manna as you of grace. You pray God for your daily bread, your bread day by day; and if you have not prayed for it this morning, it will profit you little that you prayed for it yesterday. You did then pray and you obtained, but not a supply for two days. When you have given over the practice of stated prayer, you gradually become weaker without knowing it. Samson did not know he had lost his strength till the Philistines came upon him; you will think yourselves the men you used to be, till suddenly your adversary will come furiously upon you, and you will as suddenly fall. You will be able to make little or no resistance. This is the path which leads to death.—J. H. Newman.

'Pray to thy Father which is in secret.'—Matthew vi. 6.

What indeed is prayer but love—love *with a want!*—Eugénie de Guérin.

References.—VI. 6.—'Plain Sermons' by contributors to the *Tracts for the Times*, vol. i. pp. 71, 79. W. Howell Evans, *Sermons for the Church's Year*, p. 136. A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—St. Matthew I.-VIII.* p. 226. J. H. Newman, *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, vol. i. p. 244. W. Binnie, *Sermons*, p. 140. W. M. Sinclair, *The New Law*, p. 38. C. J. Vaughan, *Characteristics of Christ's Teaching*, p. 137. E. Lyttelton, *Studies in the Sermon on the Mount*, p. 232. G. G. Bradley, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xlv. 1894, p. 168. E. Rees, *ibid.* vol. lxvii. 1905, p. 219. G. Dawson, *Sermons*, p. 8. VI. 6-15.—C. Holland, *Gleanings from a Ministry of Fifty Years*, p. 185. VI. 7.—J. E. Rattenbury, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxxii. 1907, p. 371. VI. 7, 8.—J. G. James, *Problems of Prayer*, p. 113. F. D. Maurice, *The Prayer Book and the Lord's Prayer*, p. 149. VI. 7-15.—J. Oswald Dykes, *The Manifesto of the King*, p. 393. VI. 8, 9.—F. D. Maurice, *Christmas Day and Other Sermons*, p. 170.

GOD OUR FATHER

(Trinity Sunday)

'After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father.'—Matthew vi. 9.

In 1865 the late Charles Kingsley wrote to Maurice, 'As to the Trinity, I do understand you. You first taught me that the doctrine was a live thing, and not a mere formula to be swallowed by the undigesting reason; and from the time that I learnt from you that a Father meant a real Father, a Son a real Son, a Holy Spirit a real Spirit, Who was really good and holy, I have been able to draw all sorts of practical lessons from it in the pulpit, and ground all my morality upon it, and shall do so more.'

We dwell only upon the first of these propositions,

that 'a Father means a real Father,' and seek, like Kingsley, to draw some practical lessons from the fact. The whole Trinity is in a sense summed up in 'Fatherhood'—the Son reveals the Father, the Holy Ghost proceeds from Him, with the Son, and witnesses to our sonship. The great Duke of Wellington is reported to have said, 'The Lord's Prayer alone is an evidence of Christianity, so admirably is that prayer accommodated to all our wants'. We have now to do with only the opening invocation. Why 'our' if used in private prayer? Two reasons, including our relations to (1) God and (2) to one another.

I. Our Relations to God.—It teaches us the doctrines of (*a*) Mediation; (*b*) Sonship.

(*a*) *Mediation.* We clearly see that God is not revealed as Father of the *individual* in the Old Testament, but as the Father of the *nation* (Mal. I. 6; Mal. II. 10; Is. LXIII. 16). True (Ps. LXXXIX. 26) 'He (David) shall cry unto Me "Thou art My Father, My God".' Yet David in his most intimate approaches to the throne does not call God 'Father'. The doctrine but dimly hinted at in the Old Testament is a New Testament truth. Christ says, 'No man knoweth the Father, but the Son and He,' etc. 'I ascend unto My Father and your Father.' 'No man cometh unto the Father but by Me.' 'Our Father' means then Christ's Father and my Father, teaching (1) Atonement, (2) Intercession. Some would like to finish up the Lord's Prayer with the customary Christian form 'for Christ's sake,' but that is not necessary if we understand the meaning of 'Our,' which places Him in the forefront of the prayer. It also teaches:—

(*b*) *Sonship.* Not only is He our Advocate, but he whom He leads to God is a son also. 'At that day ye shall ask in My name . . . for the Father Himself loveth you.' This is the consummation. God is 'Father' of all, even in a sense of unbelievers. This is the teaching of the parable of the Prodigal Son. But even a heathen acknowledges a distinction. Alexander the Great said, 'God is a common Father of all men, but more particularly of the good and virtuous'. Hence the necessity of the New Birth.,

II. Our Relation to One Another.—Another reason for the use of the plural may be found in our relations to one another.

(*a*) *The Brotherhood of Believers.* 'Our Father' means the Father of all my fellow-Christians and my Father. 'God is your Father, and all ye are brethren;' 'Members one of another'. We include in the prayer all God's children everywhere, as they include us. This obtains *universal* blessing. The Church is a *Catholic* Church. God's grace, like the sunbeams' actions upon the ocean drawing its particles up into the air in invisible vapour, draws from many hearts, widely apart as the far-stretching ocean, the common prayer of 'Our Father,' and as these particles condense into a cloud and fall in copious streams upon the earth, making it bring forth and bud, so are our common prayers answered, and widespread blessing secured for the world.

(*b*) *Common Brotherhood.* 'Our Father' means the Father of all mankind and my Father. We include in our petitions those who are not in the family reconciled to God. Our Lord says in the same chapter, 'Love your enemies, and do good to them that hate you . . . that ye may be the children of your Father in heaven'.

III. One or Two Reflections.—1. Let us learn a lesson of confidence. We never come alone into God's presence. Every time we say 'Our Father' Christ joins with us in the petition. We go hand-in-hand with Him to the throne (the hand pierced for us), 'and Him the Father always hears'. His Holy Spirit prompting our prayers and filling them with true and vital meaning, thus the whole Trinity stand engaged to make us blest.

2. Let us be sure we can use the plural form in the highest sense of Sonship. 'As Christ is God's Son, so humbly am I.'

3. Let us not be selfish in our prayers. God's family is large, and has many needs. Mark the order of petitions in the Lord's Prayer. Those for others come first.

4. Let us not think we are lost in a crowd. The prayer is individual as well as general. Scientists tell us a real solid exists nowhere in nature. Different experiments have proved invisible spaces between atoms composing a so-called solid body. Individuality is God's order—'One sparrow'. Our very hairs are numbered.

THE COSMOPOLITANISM OF THE LORD'S PRAYER

MATTHEW VI. 9-13.

I. HAS it ever struck you how representative this prayer is in respect to human want. To my mind its very originality lies in its power to include the old desires of the heart. These six petitions are each the voice of an ancient philosophy or faith; Christ has simply gathered them in. He has counted the scattered cries and made them one choir.

II. The Jew cried, 'Hallowed be Thy name,' he wanted a God whom men could reverence for His holiness—who charged His very angels with folly, who could not look upon sin but with abhorrence. Two empires have cried, 'Thy kingdom come'—the Chinese and the Roman; they have seen heaven incarnated on a visible throne. The Brahman has cried, 'Thy will be done'; he counts his own will delusion; he wants to lose himself in the Absolute Life. The polytheist of every clime cries, 'Give us this day our daily bread'; his whole use of religion is for the needs of the hour. The Buddhist cries, 'Forgive us our debts'; he trembles lest the consequences of sin may be to bring us back after death to lower forms of being. And the Stoic cries, 'Lead us not into temptation'; his whole desire is to be free from the vain seductions of life—to ignore its jealousies, to scorn its passions, to laugh at its ambitions, to regard its gains and its losses with equal contempt.

III. These are the cries of the old world; and Christ has said, 'Come unto Me and I will give you rest!' He has not sent *one* of them empty away. He has gathered them together as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings; and there will not be one want neglected in His shower of blessings.—G. Matheson, *Messages of Hope*, p. 212.

References.—VI. 9.—E. Lyttelton, *Studies in the Sermon on the Mount*, p. 238. J. E. Roberts, *Studies in the Lord's Prayer*, p. 15. Henry Wace, *Some Central Points of Our Lord's Ministry*, p. 231. J. B. Brinkworth, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xlviii. 1895, p. 312. C. S. Macfarland, *ibid.* vol. lxv. 1904, p. 333. R. Flint, *Sermons and Addresses*, p. 94. B. Wilberforce, *Sanctification by the Truth*, pp. 189, 202, 213. C. Gore, *Prayer and the Lord's Prayer*, p. 30. C. E. Jefferson, *The Character of Jesus*, p. 311. A. Saphir, *The Lord's Prayer*, p. 37. B. W. Randolph, *Church Times*, vol. lii. 1904, p. 197. G. E. Deacon, *The Lord's Prayer*, p. 1. A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—St. Matthew, I.-VIII.* pp. 228, 233, 241. R. F. Horton, *Lyndhurst Road Pulpit*, p. 165. C. J. Vaughan, *Characteristics of Christ's Teaching*, p. 155. F. D. Maurice, *The Prayer Book and the Lord's Prayer*, pp. 283, 294. Henry Alford, *Quebec Chapel Sermons*, vol. ii. p. 149. F. W. Farrar, *The Lord's Prayer*, pp. 11, 31, 43; see also *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xlii. 1892, pp. 6, 16, 29. J. Harries, *Does God Break His Pledges?* pp. 38, 43, 49, 52. H. J. Wilmot-Buxton, *Sunday Sermonettes for a Year*, p. 34; see also *Common Life Religion*, p. 126. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. iv. No. 213. VI. 9, 10.—J. E. Roberts, *Studies in the Lord's Prayer*, pp. 25, 82. C. W. Stubbs, *The Social Teaching of the Lord's Prayer*, pp. i. 28. VI. 9-13.—Ibid. *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lii. 1897, p. 233. W. Boyd Carpenter, *The Great Charter of Christ*, p. 207. J. Jarvie, *Discourses*, p. 154.

ON DOING GOD'S WILL

'Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven.'—Matthew vi. 10.

Many people make a great mistake about God's will; they think that to do God's will is hard, painful, and so they say 'God's will be done' with a sigh or a groan. They think that if God's will be done it means taking away our dear ones—that sickness and trouble will come into our homes. God's will, in their minds, is always connected with ruin, dying friends, and newly made graves. Some people never think of writing those words except on tombstones.

I. God's Will is Love.—He loves us; He is our best friend, so to do His will must be for our happiness. We obey the will of a good earthly father because we know He is doing the best for us and our future. The angels are perfectly happy because they are doing God's will. People often say: 'Oh, I have a will of my own, and I want to go in my own way'. That is pretty certain to end in misery. The prodigal leaves his father's home and comes to misery; when the sheep leaves the fold he is lost.

II. How are we to do God's Will as it is Done in Heaven?—Do you say it is too high for you? That you are here on earth and that heaven is very far away? Many mistakes are made about heaven. Heaven means the state of life where God's people do His will, and that life begins here on earth. We must begin the heavenly life here, heaven must be in us now if we are to be in it hereafter. Heaven means doing God's will. If there is no heaven in this life, we shall be the same individuals after death as now. If a man has no love for God, no love for his neighbours, no love for holy and beautiful things, if he be without prayer or praise, what would he do in heaven? We are *made* to do God's will, and as long as we do it we shall be happy. It is not unpleasant, it is a pleasure. The child who loves you runs quickly to do your wishes; so if we love God our greatest joy is to serve Him. God must come to us before we go to Him. God must work on us before we can do His good pleasure. 'I want to do God's will, I want to serve Him.' In answer to this cry God always comes to us—comes into our hearts in answer to our prayer.

III. The Example of Jesus Christ.—What is God's will? What would He have us do? To get the right answer we must look at Jesus Christ. He did His Father's will as it is done in heaven. He made the world better. We are like emigrants sent from home into a far country. The good emigrant constructs roads and highways. He makes the rough wilderness to blossom like the rose. He puts the wild land into cultivation and produces useful crops and sweet flowers. He builds a good house and makes the place useful and beautiful. We are sent into the world for a like purpose that we may go down into the forest of ignorance and clear the way for truth. We are sent to get the highway of life open—to pick up the stones and clear away the rocks so that poor pilgrims may not stumble. We must help our neighbours along the path of life. That is doing God's will.

THE LIFE OF THE ANGELS

'Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.'—Matthew vi. 10.

What we have to fix our gaze upon, as we use this prayer, is, the revelation that underlies it of the existence of certain spiritual beings who in heaven are doing ever the Father's will; in other words, underlying this prayer, there lies the revelation of angelic existence.

I. The point to which I wish to call your attention is the student life of the angels of God. Always and everywhere that is their condition. There is in them an intense craving to know. St. Peter speaks, in the first chapter of his first general Epistle, of things 'which the angels desire to look into'. But then, side by side with this intense craving to know, they have limited knowledge. Our Lord Himself tells us that 'of that day and that hour knoweth no man, not *even the angels of God*'. Therefore they are in the position of having limitations to their knowledge, a limitation which provokes them immediately into the activity of study.

II. If you look at the student life of the angels you will find that they are always revealed to us as students of theology. They seek God everywhere, they find God everywhere, they rejoice in God everywhere, and everywhere they worship God.

If you look in the Bible you will find three great spheres of angel-study comprehended in the great theology of the angels, a threefold study in which they are ever engaged.

1. The angels are revealed as studying the material world around us. 'When God laid the foundations of the earth, the sons of God shouted for joy.' And that joy has been an abiding joy; the angels are ever students of science, they are ever penetrating with enlightened gaze into all the mysteries of all physical phenomena around us.

2. But there is a second sphere of angel-study to which our attention is turned by St. Paul. He says as he goes forth upon his mission as a Christian preacher, and as the power of the Gospel is made manifest among men through his preaching, that he is acting upon the angels. And that one effect of God's wonderful working in His Church is the education of the angels themselves. 'To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the Church the manifold wisdom of God.' So that the angels are shown to us as the students of Church history. And surely not of Church history only; are we not taught that all history is under the hand of God in some strange way?

3. The angels are revealed to us as being students of what we call theology, in the more restricted sense especially, as being students of the Incarnate. St. Paul, enumerating some of the mysteries of the Incarnation, says that 'He was seen of the angels'.

III. Our prayer is that God's will may be done on earth, as it is in heaven, which surely means that we, by God's grace, may be enabled so to live on earth as angels live above. If this be the case then one aspect of our life must be the aspect of a student. Like the angels we must seek from God the blessed gift of hunger and thirst after knowledge—after knowledge of all kinds.

1. We learn from the angels that our student life must not be narrow.

2. We should imitate the angels in the spirit in which they study. The student should be possessed above all things by the spirit of reverence.

3. The study of God, and the study of God's will whenever we seek it, is meant to influence our character and to shape our lives. We must study God's will in order that we may do it, that we may become like Him.

Theological study which is thus wide in its extent, courageous and reverent in its spirit, practical in its end—this is the ideal of student life which is revealed to us by the lives of the angels.—G. Body, *The Contemporary Pulpit*, vol. VIII. 1887, p. 321.

CHRISTIANITY AND WEALTH

'Thy will be done on earth.'—Matthew VI. 10.

Our Lord Jesus Christ left no code of social legislation. He laid down no *laws* for Palestine in the first century, but He laid down *principles* for all countries, and for every century.

What does Christ say of accumulation, and what of expenditure?

I. First, how are we to understand 'Lay not up for yourselves treasures on the earth'? Does He mean that we are not to save money at all? Observe that two reasons are given for this advice. First, the hoard is liable to be lost, spoilt, or stolen, before it is enjoyed; and secondly, 'Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also'. It is assumed that wealth, whether in gold or commodities, is simply hoarded for future personal enjoyment, buried, probably under the floor; and our Lord says, as many other moralists have said: How foolish to keep the means of enjoyment till they are stolen, or spoilt, instead of using them. Well, we do not hoard money now, we invest it, which is a very different thing. But the second reason does touch us. Where is our real treasure? and where is our heart? It cannot be in both places. Those who try to 'make the best of both worlds' generally make nothing of either. We ought to know—we do know, if we are honest with ourselves—in which of these two worlds lies that which we love best and are most afraid to lose.

Is it then impossible, according to our Lord's preaching, to be a successful man of business and to have one's heart and treasure in heaven? No, assuredly not impossible. We are unlucky if we have not known several instances to the contrary. But it is difficult; so our Lord warns us; and those who have tried it will not, I think, differ from Him.

But there is another aspect of accumulation besides the self-regarding one. What is the *justice* of the matter? All acquisition should surely be the exchange value for some service rendered.

And the law of Christ has much to say about investments. There are some businesses which degrade all who touch them: there are others which simply waste the energies of the workmen employed upon them; there are others which are gigantic instruments of national demoralization. Are we Christians enough to resist a tempting opportunity to invest at a high rate of interest in concerns of this kind? Once more, how are the workmen treated? All these cautions seem to be covered by our Lord's principles, but it would be a great mistake to suppose that He condemns the investment of surplus income in sound enterprises, which is generally, I believe, the best way of making work for the unemployed, and one of the best uses that we can make of superfluous money—far better, certainly, than promiscuous doles.

II. Next, as to expenditure—it is strange how often one hears the old fallacy that to consume the fruits of labour is 'good for trade'. The millionaire who uses up the value of five hundred working men's time impoverishes the nation by that amount, and is by no means a benefactor. He is bound to show that he is putting in some equivalent for all that he takes out. Wealth does not release the rich man from his obligation to work, but only enables him to do unpaid work for society. A man has a *legal* right

to the use of money which the law allows him to call his own; but *morally*, we have only the right to do what we ought, not what we like, or are allowed to do.—W. R. Inge, *All Saints' Sermons*, 1905-1907, p. 69.

'Thy will be done.'—Matthew vi. 10.

Compare the closing words of Sir Thomas Browne's *Religio Medici*: 'Bless me in this life with but the peace of my conscience, command of my affections, the love of Thyself and of my dearest friends, and I shall be happy enough to pity Cæsar! These are, O Lord, the humble desires of my most reasonable ambition, and all I dare call happiness on earth; wherein I set no rule or limit to Thy hand or providence; dispose of me according to the wisdom of Thy pleasure. Thy will be done, though in my own undoing.'

In *Past and Present* (chap. xv.) Carlyle describes the true reverent man as one who 'has a religion. Hourly and daily, for himself and the whole world, a faithful, unspoken, but not ineffectual prayer rises, "Thy will be done". His whole work on earth is an emblematic spoken or acted prayer. Be the will of God done on earth—not the Devil's will, or any of the Devil's servants' wills! He has a religion, this man; an everlasting Loadstar that beams the brighter in the Heavens, the darker here on earth grows the night around him.'

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DAILY BREAD

'Give us this day our daily bread.'—Matthew vi. 11.

It is remarkable that, out of the seven petitions which compose the Lord's Prayer, only one should concern the needs of the body, while the other six concern needs of eternity. One for the body, six for heaven. And have you noticed that, for present duties, God has fixed an inverse ratio? God has said, 'Six days for work and one for worship,' but He has restored the balance, as it were, in prayer, and He has said, 'Six prayers for heaven, and one prayer for the earth'. After all, when you come to look at it from a real and honest standpoint, you cannot fail to see that the things that concern us for our short day here on earth are of secondary importance to the things that concern the eternity beyond.

I wish you to look a little more closely at the believers' way of seeking temporal things from God, and first to see the piety of the prayer, and then the faith, and then the moderation.

I. The Piety.—Look at the child kneeling at his father's knee, with the love of a son looking up to his father's face, reaching up a hand for the needs of a day—our daily bread. How reasonable it all is. Who made the body, and who made the bread? Did not God make the body and the bread; and is it not God, and only God, Who can suit the bread to the body? Is it not God Who gives you the food you eat, and gives you health to eat it? Therefore, is it not reasonable that day by day, and hour by hour, you should lift your eyes to Him Who giveth all, and say, 'Give us this day our daily bread'? And besides being reasonable, is it not a joy, is it not a delight, that we should turn up loving eyes to the Father of all, and then ask Him for all our needs? 'My Father, give me enough bread for my bodily needs, give me enough sustenance to keep me alive, while Thou wilt.' Would it not be a joy and a pleasure if we could look up, with the eyes of sons and daughters, look up trustingly, lovingly to our Father, and say, 'Give us this day our daily bread'? It is a beautiful thing, in the sight of God and His holy angels, to see a godly man get up in the morning, and, surrounded by his wife and children, put special emphasis upon the words of my text, 'Give us this day our daily bread'. He looks round and sees his family. He knows that the bread they eat depends more or less on his toil, and he puts an emphasis on the 'us'. He thanks God that He has made the 'us' so large that it includes all that he holds dear, his wife, his children; yes, possibly many more, and he prays, 'Give us this day our daily bread'. What does it matter if the next meal does depend upon his labour? Things may change, health may fail, trials may draw near, but it is the Lord Who changeth not; and that poor man goes forth from his knees to his work, full of joy. 'Give us this day our daily bread.'

II. The Faith.—Look at the faith of the prayer. It is a strange thing, but there is absolutely no doubt about it, we have far more difficulty in trusting God with regard to temporal matters than with regard to spiritual matters. 'Spiritual things,' we say, 'these are in God's province; for temporal things I have to depend upon myself.' Is it so? God withdraws His hand. You lie, perhaps, upon the bed of sickness, you live by charity. Do you depend upon your

own powers, upon your own ability? No, it is given you, given; and what a useful lesson it is! Every morning, yes, often during the day, you should pray, 'Give us'. Why? 'Because I depend upon Thee, Great Lord, because the power of brain and body which Thou hast given me Thou canst take away, Therefore, give it me, keep it for me. Give me all that is included in the word "bread".'

III. The Moderation.—Let us see the moderation of the prayer. We see that in time, manner, and degree. Enough for the day is the evil thereof, and enough for the day is this one prayer, 'Give us this day'. One thinks of the miser hoarding his money, hoarding penny after penny. He gloats over it. It is his worship, it is his god. He does not pray, 'Give us this day'. Do not for a moment imagine that I do not want you to make provision for to-morrow; I do. But I do not want you to make anxious provision. That is all the difference in the world. That is the difference between what is good and what is evil. God will provide. 'Give us this day our daily bread.' You know that in the East this word 'bread' is made to stand for all the necessaries of life. God knows what is necessary. We leave it a blank in God's hand. We say, give us this day all that we need for our bodily sustenance. Is not that enough of a prayer? I wonder how many of us pray that prayer as it ought to be prayed?

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FORGIVE US OUR DEBTS

'Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.'—Matthew VI. 12.

In that last hour of that last day, when the silent morning light has glimmered through the window for the very last time before our failing eyes, and we feel the burden of our many sins pressing heavily upon us, there will be nothing that can give the trembling mind of the strongest man of us any comfort, unless he can say with truth, 'And now, Lord, what is my hope? Truly my hope is even in Thee.' Nothing, unless he can receive back through the familiar voice of the Spirit of God, speaking by a pure conscience, the message which our Lord gave to the sick of the palsy: 'Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee'. And surely it will be well, while we are in the full vigour of both mind and body, 'and the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh when we shall say, We have no pleasure in them,' that we consider what grounds we have for this assurance, so that when the summons comes we may have no cause why our hearts should fail us.

I. Our Lord has mercifully put into our daily prayer a reminder of how the case really stands between us and God.

There is no happiness apart from God. God is that Essence of Goodness and Perfection which fills all space, time, and eternity; Who brought everything into being; apart from Whom there is no life; Who keeps everything in health and safety; Whose perfect will is the law of the universe; and Who, by allowing you and me free will, is training us to be with Him, and share His glory of perfection for ever and ever. To Him we owe everything. It is to His bountiful Providence that we are indebted for our daily food, clothes, money, gifts, and talents. To the Goodness of His Being belong the ideals of our homes, family life, friendships, and affections. To His pervading loving-kindness we attribute our enjoyments in the present, our hopes for the future, our knowledge of Him, our understanding of His revelation, our salvation in Jesus Christ His Son and Messenger, our instruction in the ways of peace and happiness, our consolation in the troubles of this world, our comfort in the unknown terrors of that which is to come. From His loving-kindness in the gradual stages of revelation come the explanation of the bewildering mysteries of life, our conscience, our sense of duty and responsibility, our capacity to love Him, after Whose spiritual image we were formed. We owe all this to God.

II. Is there no duty we owe to Him in return? More than that, can we have these things without owing Him any duty at all? Some of them come to us by nature, and we can spoil them by neglecting our duty to God. Some of them we cannot have at all without recognizing this duty, and acting upon it. We owe God love, gratitude, reverence, trust, obedience. We find His laws for us in our consciences, in His Holy Word, in the revelation of His Son. We see that to be on the same side with all that is good, powerful, healthy, living, happy, eternal, we must give ourselves up wholly to Him. We must resign our wills into His hands; our lives, thoughts, hearts, principles, affections, all to be ruled by Him. When a heart is so willingly given up to Him, He sends His Spirit, His Grace, His Power, and does so guide and rule it. He makes the sacrifice easy. He alone can govern the unruly wills and affections of sinful men. That is what He is always waiting to do for us. That, then, is what we owe to God; in order to be what we are intended to be we have to yield up to Him all that we have and are.

III. How imperfect is the sacrifice we have made! What self-will there yet remains in some; what worldliness, what wayward affections, what folly, what weakness, what sinfulness in others! What a want of truth, candour, firmness, purity, self-control, generosity, unselfishness, love to man and love to God! Convinced of all this, we should indeed be miserably helpless, if the same message which tells us about God and our

sins did not also assure us that, 'if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness'.

IV. Therefore it is that, with the precious promises of God's Word before us, and with all the bitter remembrance of our shortcomings behind us, our Lord bids us bend daily before our gracious Father in heaven, and say in penitence and humility, in love, trust, and hope, 'Forgive us our debts'.

We are forgiven, not cheaply, because that would encourage other beings and worlds to rebel and ruin themselves. We are forgiven by the infinite and never-failing love of our All-pitying God. We are forgiven for the sake of Him Who died for us, and rose again, and ever liveth to make intercession for us. We are forgiven, in order that God may be feared, and not defied, that He may be loved and not challenged. We are forgiven that we may ever be renewed from the past, that we may have hope for the future, and courage again and again to seek the life-giving Throne of grace to obtain help in time of need.

And among other conditions of our forgiveness there is one of which we, poor vindictive angry souls, so ready to take offence, so unwilling to pardon, have at the same time daily to remind ourselves. In the very act of prayer, we are taught to remember it. The temper that does not forgive cannot be forgiven, because it is itself a proof that we have no idea of the debt we owe. We cannot forget the ten thousand talents, as we exact the hundred pence, and in the act of exacting we bring back the burden of that greater debt upon ourselves.

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THE SOURCES OF TEMPTATION

'Lead us not into temptation.'—Matthew vi. 13.

What are the sources of temptation? We should do wrong to narrow down our idea of temptation to incitement to evil, coming from an evil quarter. There are more sources than one, and the first we are apt to overlook; it is:—

I. God Almighty Himself.—In more than one place God reveals Himself as tempting man. God tempted Abraham by the order to slay his only son; God tempted David to number Israel by permitting the devil to suggest it. It is a common phenomenon of daily life, in which God may be seen tempting men, in His goodness, to goodness, for their good. Joseph and Daniel are tried respectively with the same temptations which tried David and St. Peter, but they emerge through degradation and the fear of death to a greater eminence than they enjoyed before. But temptations which come from God are no easy things which any one can bear; all that is ordinarily said about temptation applies to them (see 2 Cor. xii. 7-9). See men and women around us snapping under the sharp discipline of God. Yet, could they have but seen it, with the trial, coming out of it, there was the way of escape, there was the special grace enabling them to bear it, the special virtue to be developed out of it. It has been so all through the history of human experience. The sorrows of the world's sin have brought out the Church; the sufferings of the human frame have developed the healing art. Trouble has brought the unexpected store of sympathy; the depth of despair has brought close the vision of God. But the most characteristic source of temptation is:—

II. The Devil.—Now it belongs to the jugglery of the accusing angel to try and confuse in our minds attack and defeat, temptation and sin. Before any sin can be set up, three processes must be gone through. First, there is the suggestion of evil (here, *per se*, there is no sin); then there comes the delight, the acquiescence in the suggestion (here the sinfulness is commencing); until at last the will consents, and sin is formed, according to the strong statement of St. James, pregnant with death.

Next observe some of the regions in which Satan's temptations come upon us. We shall find these in the example of the temptation of our Blessed Lord, the model on which Satan founds many more of his attacks.

1. The appetite. This is the point where Satan is riding rough-shod over the lives of thousands of human beings. Think of the terrible condition of our streets, the coarse animalism of our villages. An appetite which overmasters the will enslaves the man. On any showing grace is stronger than nature, reason than instinct, and man is higher than a brute.

2. Satan also approaches through the soul—i.e. the inner principle of life. He tampers with the policy, the aim, the motive of life by means of a view from a 'high mountain'. A view! A young man—e.g.—entering life is altogether upset by the view of riches, and enters on his work with a false aim. We have to deal with a subtle danger known as 'the world'—an influence, a mist, which mounts up from the careless lives of men, which smoothes out the distances in religion and obliterates the objects of faith. The world of religion, the world of morality, the world of ideals, we know what they mean—so that no one can let himself 'go,' so to speak, in the world. While we get good out of the world for all sorts of purposes, we have to be on our guard against this tarnishing 'mist'. It is a dangerous atmosphere to which Satan tempts us to commit ourselves. He is asking us to part with our eternal inheritance at the price of the gratification of a few years; to sell our birthright for a mess of pottage.

3. Satan's third attack is through the region of the 'spirit'—e.g. 'If Thou be the Son of God, cast Thyself down'. It is a very subtle temptation to dictate

to God how He ought to treat us. Stairs, and walking down, are much too simple things for God to care for. The Son of God has a right to expect upholding angels; nothing between Him and God. It sounds well, but it is the highest presumption. It is the claim for exceptional treatment, the essence of self-complacency. Thus men would be Christians without the sacraments, without the Church, without a revelation.

III. There still remains another source—there is a temptation which comes from within. We know of two conditions for the spread of disease—an infected air and an enfeebled constitution. And so in the infected air around us our weak human nature is a distinct trial to us. True, at baptism, original sin was washed away, but there still remains 'poor human nature' as we call it. When this fails beneath the assault, where is the means of escape?

Never too much temptation—God always faithful. A way of escape through the temptation. Do we not know how a doctor will say sometimes of a sick man, 'His splendid constitution saved him'? Is there not, or should there not be, a reserve of strength within the souls of us all? There exists in all who have not quenched or driven it out, a reserve of baptismal grace. Confirmation was no mere taking upon ourselves of our baptismal vows, as is sometimes said, with strange ignorance of real meaning. Confirmation was an access of strength coming to us through the Holy Spirit. Welcomed into the soul, it stays, a store of strength, a spiritual reserve in time of need. It is not in vain that we have so often approached the altar, so often prayed, received absolution, heard the Word of God. In our spiritual gifts we shall always find a reserve of strength, so that even the memory of past grace is a way of escape.

'Deliver us from evil.'—MATTHEW VI. 13.

THE Christian says to God: Deliver us from evil. The Buddhist adds: And to that end deliver us from finite existence, give us back to nothingness! The first believes that when he is enfranchised from the body, he will enter upon eternal happiness; the second believes that individuality is the obstacle to repose, and he longs for the dissolution of the soul itself. The dread of the first is the Paradise of the second. —AMIEL.

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'When thou fastest.'—MATTHEW VI. 17.

FASTING? Why, for a man who is trying to do his work in the best way, life is a perpetual fast.—EDWARD THRING.

REFERENCES.—VI. 17.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons Preached in Sackville College Chapel*, vol. i. p. 141. J. S. Maver, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. liv. 1893, p. 174. VI. 17, 18.—F. E. Paget, *Sermons on Duties of Daily Life*, p. 289. VI. 19.—S. Rigby, *Sketches of Sermons*, p. 1. E. Lyttelton, *Studies in the Sermon on the Mount*, p. 275. W. B. Selbie, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxvi. 1904, p. 212. VI. 19, 20.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—St. Matthew I.-VIII.* p. 299. VI. 19-21.—Stopford A. Brooke, *The Fight of Faith*, p. 307. D. Fraser, *Metaphors in the Gospels*, p. 28. R. J. Campbell, *A Faith for To-Day*, p. 331. George MacDonald, *Unspoken Sermons*, p. 118. J. Denney, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. liv. 1898, p. 344. R. J. Campbell, *ibid.* vol. lxii. 1900, p. 68. VI. 19-22.—H. Ward Beecher, *Sermons*, vol. ii. p. 1. VI. 19-24.—J. Oswald Dykes, *The Manifesto of the King*, p. 449. VI. 19-34.—W. Boyd Carpenter, *The Great Charter of Christ*, p. 233. VI. 20.—T. L. Cuyler, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xli. 1892, p. 367. S. Rigby, *Sketches of Sermons*, p. 13. VI. 20, 21.—A. G. Mortimer, *One Hundred Miniature Sermons*, vol. i. p. 155.

'Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.'—MATTHEW VI. 21.

WHERE the pursuit of truth has been the habitual study of any man's life, the love of truth will be his ruling passion. 'Where the treasure is, there the heart is also.' Every one is most tenacious of that to which he owes his distinction from others.—HAZLITT.

THE character of a man depends on that which is his confidence. . . . If you can persuade a covetous man that money is not *son bouclier ni sa grande récompense*, but that God is, you change him from a covetous man into a pious man. . . . The thing in which I put my confidence for happiness has necessarily a directing influence over my whole being; it communicates its own nature to me in some measure. ERSKINE OF LINLATHEN.

REFERENCES.—VI. 21.—H. Montagu Butler, *Harrow School Sermons* (2nd Series), p. 211. A. F. Winnington Ingram, *Church Times*, vol. lviii. 1907, p. 690. H. Harris, *Short Sermons*, p. 230. A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—St. Matthew I.-VIII.* p. 302.

THE EYE OF THE SOUL

'The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light. But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!'—MATTHEW VI. 22, 23.

I. IF we would see aright, we must cultivate the imagination.

II. Have faith in conscience as a trustworthy witness.

III. Educate them both in the things of God. If one of us was asked to judge a piece of music to see if it were Handel's, we should be sure to judge wrongly, if we did not know Handel's style; we must study our composer; we must read into his thoughts and note his expressions, and then we shall know if the piece has a true ring or not. So it is with the things of God: something comes before you purporting to be from God: are you in a position to judge? Not if you have never studied God's ways, not if you know nothing of His love, not if you never pray, not if you are drifting on, careless of your faith, not if you only care for your intellect and leave conscience and imagination to dwindle and to die: then you will decide against the revelation of God; for the light that is in you will be darkness, and if the light that is in you be darkness, how great is that darkness! But if, on the other hand, with humble patience and modest fearlessness you turn yourself towards the opening heaven; if with fresh untarnished powers you compare that external revelation with the light already gathered by those powers within; if, to sum it all up, in the words of the text, your eye is single, then the opening revelation shall flood your soul with light; nay! your whole body shall be full of light; you shall breathe light, speak light, act light; and you shall inherit the blessing pronounced on those who have 'not seen and yet have believed'.—Bishop Winnington Ingram, *Oxford University Sermons*, p. 1.

References.—VI. 22.—W. G. Rutherford, *The Key of Knowledge*, p. 182. J. J. Tayler, *Christian Aspects of Faith and Duty*, p. 267. R. C. Moberly, *Church Times*, vol. xlviii. 1902, p. 76. VI. 22, 23.—J. G. James, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxxix. 1891, p. 118. S. Milburn, *ibid.* vol. xlviii. 1895, p. 152. J. Martineau, *Endeavours After the Christian Life* (2nd Series), p. 100. C. J. Vaughan, *Characteristics of Christ's Teaching*, p. 175. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. vi. No. 335. VI. 22-24.—E. Lyttelton, *Studies in the Sermon on the Mount*, p. 282.

'If the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness.'—Matthew vi. 23.

He put things in such a way that his hearer was led to take each rule or fact of conduct by its inward side, its effect on the heart and character; then the reason of the thing, the meaning of what had been mere matter of blind rule, flashed upon him. The hearer could distinguish between what was only ceremony and what was *conduct;* and the hardest rules of conduct came to appear to him infinitely reasonable and natural, and therefore infinitely prepossessing.—M. Arnold.

Human life at the best is enveloped in darkness; we know not what we are or whither we are bound. Religion is the light by which we are to see our way along the moral pathways without straying into the brake or the morass. We are not to look at religion itself, but at surrounding things with the help of religion. If we fasten our attention upon the light itself, analysing it into its component rays, speculating on the union and composition of the substances of which it is composed, not only will it no longer serve us for a guide, but our dazzled senses lose their natural powers; we should grope our way more safely in conscious blindness. 'When the light that is in you is darkness, how great is that darkness!' In the place of the old material idolatry we erect a new idolatry of words and phrases.—Froude on *Calvinism*.

Reference.—VI. 23.—Hugh Price Hughes, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lvi. 1899, p. 161.

'Ye cannot serve God and mammon.'—Matthew vi. 24.

It would almost appear as if one half of mankind started on their career in life for the purpose of proving that this saying of our Lord's was not true.—Mozley.

Mammon, cries the generous heart out of all ages and countries, is the basis of known gods, even of known devils. In him what glory is there that ye should worship him? No glory discernible; not even terror: at best, detestability, ill-matched with despicability!—Carlyle, *French Revolution* (towards close).

Our deity being no longer Mammon—O Heavens, each man will then say to himself: 'Why such deadly haste to make money? I shall not go to Hell, even if I do not make money! There is another Hell, I am told!'—Carlyle, *Past and Present*, iv.

Nature gives herself to those who are determined to possess her, but she will be exclusively loved.—Millet, 'Notes on Art'.

Go and argue with the flies of summer that there is a power Divine yet greater than the sun in the heavens, but never dare hope to convince the people of the South that there is any other God than Gold.—Kinglake in *Eothen*, chap. vii.

This is the meaning of St. Francis's renouncing his inheritance; and it is the beginning of Giotto's gospel of works. Unless this hardest of deeds be done first—this inheritance of mammon and the world cast away—all other deeds are useless. You cannot serve, cannot obey, God and mammon. No charities, no obediences, no self-denials, are of any use, while you are still at heart in conformity with the world. You go to Church, because the world goes. You keep Sunday, because your neighbours keep it. But you dress ridiculously, because your neighbours ask it; and you dare not do a rough piece of work, because your neighbours despise it. You must renounce your neighbour, in his riches and pride, and remember him in his distress.—Ruskin.

It is impossible to read those impassioned words in which Jesus Christ upbraids the pusillanimity and sensuality of mankind, without being strangely reminded of the more connected and systematic enthusiasm of Rousseau. 'No man,' says Jesus Christ, 'can serve two masters. Take, therefore, no thought for

the morrow, for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.' If we would profit by the wisdom of a sublime and poetical mind, we must beware of the error of interpreting literally every expression it employs. Nothing can well be more remote from the truth than the literal and strict construction of such expressions as Jesus Christ delivers. He simply exposes, with the passionate rhetoric of enthusiastic love towards all human beings, the miseries and mischiefs of that system which makes all things subservient to the subsistence of the material frame of man. He warns them that no man can serve two masters—God and mammon; that it is impossible at once to be high-minded and just and wise, and to comply with the accustomed forms of human society, seek power, wealth, or empire, either from the idolatry of habit, or as the direct instruments of sensual gratification.—SHELLEY, *Essay on Christianity*.

'BUT, you may tell me, the young people are taught to be Christians. It may be want of penetration. But I have not yet been able to perceive it. As an honest man, whatever we teach, and be it good or evil, it is not the doctrine of Christ. . . . Take a few of Christ's sayings and compare them with our current doctrines:—

'*Ye cannot*, he says, *serve God and mammon*. Cannot? and our whole system is to teach us how we can! . . .

'*Take no thought for the morrow*. Ask the successful merchant; interrogate your own heart; and you will have to admit that this is not only a silly but an immoral position. All we believe, all we hope, all we honour in ourselves or in our contemporaries, stands condemned in this one sentence, or, if you take the other view, condemns the sentence as unwise and inhumane. We are not then of the "same mind that was in Christ". We disagree with Christ. Either Christ meant nothing, or else He or we must be in the wrong. . . .

'To be a true disciple is to think of the same things as our Prophet, and to think of different things in the same order. To be of the same mind with another, is to see all things in the same perspective; it is not to agree in a few indifferent matters near at hand and not much debated; it is to follow him in his farthest flights, to see the force of his hyperboles. . . . You do not belong to the school of any philosopher because you agree with him that theft is, on the whole, objectionable, or that the sun is overhead at noon. It is by the hard sayings that discipleship is tested.' Whereupon the writer ends, as he began, by vehemently denying the claim of modern Christians (so-called) to the name and mind of Christ. When the hard sayings of Christ conflict with modern practice, the whole fellowship of Christians, he contends, 'falls back in disappearing wonder'.—R. L. STEVENSON.

REFERENCES.—VI. 24.—S. Baring-Gould, *Village Preaching for a Year* (*Sermon-Sketches*), vol. ii. p. 5; see also 2nd Series, vol. ii. p. 126. J. K. Popham, *Sermons*, p. 156. H. Ward Beecher, *Sermons*, vol. ii. p. 303. H. J. Wilmot-Buxton, *Sunday Sermonettes for a Year*, p. 182. E. Fowle, *Plain Preaching for Poor People* (10th Series), p. 85. H. Scott Holland, *Church Times*, vol. lvi. 1906, p. 347; see also *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxx. 1906, p. 195. F. W. Farrar, *ibid.* vol. xxxvii. 1890, p. 49. A. M. Fairbairn, *ibid.* vol. liv. 1898, p. 229. VI. 24, 25.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—St. Matthew I.-VIII.* p. 311; see also *Creed and Conduct*, p. 184, and *Sermons Preached in Manchester*, p. 261.

THE LORD WILL PROVIDE

(*Fifteenth Sunday after Trinity*)

'Take no thought for your life.'—MATTHEW VI. 25.

THE verses in to-day's Gospel are about 'taking no thought'. What does that mean? Our Lord mentions it *five* times (vv. 25, 27, 28, 31, 34), so it must be important. Is it that we are not to think at all about life, raiment, food, etc.? No; God has given us reason, judgment, prudence, etc., to use for His glory; but it is that we are not to think *too much*, so as to be full of care, and anxiety, as though God were not caring for His children's wants (Phil. IV. 6).

Now, our Lord says we may take a lesson in this—

I. From the Birds (v. 26). We see them flying about in the air—hopping here and pecking there. 'They sow not,' that they may have a good crop; 'they reap not,' that they may have a good provision in store. But do they ever want? You never see them in need of anything. Why? Because God provides them with all, and watches over them (Job XXXVIII. 41). He knows them (Ps. L. 11). He is acquainted with their ways (Jer. XVII. 11). He provides their dwelling (Ps. CIV. 16, 17). He hears their cry (Ps. CXLVII. 9). He gives man a law concerning them (Deut. XXII. 6, 7). The sparrow lying dead upon the housetop does not escape the eye of God (Matt. X. 29).

II. From the Flowers (v. 28).—'Consider the lilies, how they grow.' A bulb is put into the ground. It appears lost in winter, but rises in spring (Cant. II. 11, 12; John XII. 24; 1 Cor. XV. 36-38). They are 'of the field,' ready therefore to perish (Ps. CIII. 15, 16). 'They toil not,' etc. There is no labour on their part. Yet how beautiful the lilies are! The glory of Solomon was great (1 Kings X.). But to what does 'the greater than Solomon' compare Himself (Cant. II. 1, 2)?

III. And all this is for our Learning.

(*a*) *Our heavenly Father knows exactly what we need* (v. 32). If He provides for the *birds* and *lilies* which 'take no thought,' surely He will provide for *me*, *His own child* (Ps. XXIII. 1; Luke XI. 13).

(*b*) *We are not, however, to be idle*, and fancy God will do all. That is *tempting*, not *trusting*. Be diligent with what God gives, and leave the rest to Him (Prov. XIII. 4; Matt. XXV. 24).

(*c*) *One thing we are to 'take thought' about*—that is, our soul's welfare (v. 33). That first and last should engage our attention (Phil. II. 12; 2 Pet. I. 10; III. 14).

REFERENCES.—VI. 25.—F. W. Farrar, *Sin and Its Conquerors*, p. 94. Lyman Abbott, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol.

xlix. 1896, p. 245. A. B. Bruce, *ibid.* 1896, p. 179. A. G. Mortimer, *One Hundred Miniature Sermons*, vol. ii. p. 95. VI. 25-34.—J. Oswald Dykes, *The Manifesto of the King*, p. 483. E. Lyttelton, *Studies in the Sermon on the Mount*, p. 288. Spurgeon, *Morning by Morning*, p. 26. A. J. Griffith, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xv. p. 140. J. M. Neale, *Sermons to Children*, p. 204. H. J. Wilmot-Buxton, *Waterside Mission Sermons*, vol. i. No. 16. C. Kingsley, *Discipline and Other Sermons*, p. 168. VI. 26.—R. W. Hiley, *A Year's Sermons*, vol. ii. p. 140. E. White, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxxix. 1891, p. 385. A. H. Bradford, *ibid.* vol. lviii. 1900, p. 151. VI. 26-30.—G. Elmslie Troup, *ibid.* vol. xl. 1891, p. 197. VI. 27.—H. Ward Beecher, *Sermons* (2nd Seriess), p. 220.

HUMAN LILIES

'Consider the lilies, how they grow.'—Matthew vi. 28.

I. Probably the lily of Galilee was our Lord's favourite flower. I am not aware that He mentioned any other. And if we were capable of considering the lily, not by chemical analysis, but by the laws of philosophic thought, and knowing how it grew, we should discover that the whole history of created (or, rather, derived) life was bound up in the nature of that flower. If we could trace it back to its very first beginning we should have solved the riddle of life, and discovered—as Tennyson said of the flower in the crannied wall—the secret of God and man.

II. A lily, our Lord implies, is the analogy of a man; but it is an analogy with a difference. So far as we can judge, the lily is irresponsible. It appears to us to be evolved solely by the direct action of the Creative Spirit operating in natural law; its growth and beauty are the automatic result of the continuous adjustment of internal relations to external relations. Our life, like the life of the lily, is from above—that is, from within. It is Divine; but it may be helped by our care or hindered by our neglect; that which in the lily is probably mechanical and unconscious must be with us a willing exercise of spiritual energy. We are not responsible for where we are planted. 'My Father is the Husbandman.' The environment into which I am born is His affair, not mine; and all lilies have not the same environment to overcome, or the same difficulties to meet. There are some planted in pleasant gardens, protected from trial; there are others, like the beautiful water-lily, whose whole growth is a continuous struggle, who must rise from the very depths, and lift their heads above the pressure around them, and there, resting on the surface of the very difficulty they have overcome, open out their golden petals and feed upon the sunshine. The power of rising in the water-lily is calculated exactly according to the depth of the water in which the natural law has planted it. There hath no temptation taken it but such as it shall be able to overcome. There is within the stem of the water-lily an elaborate apparatus, consisting of an elastic spiral coil, which expands and contracts, giving it power to rise or sink as the water deepens or diminishes, so that it may be always above the pressure in which it lives, and face to face with the life-giving sun.

III. Is the spiral coil, the Divine nature, thus lifting each one of us? The grace we do not exercise, the power we do not exert, like the limb we do not use, or the faculty we do not expand, atrophies, withers, weakens. The first step is to believe in the power, and the next to suffer the life to come out. The saying about not 'toiling and spinning' has reference only to the production of Christian character, and it means that Christian character is not a mosaic of moralities, painfully built up in imitation of a model, but a life; not hand-made, like Solomon's robes, but God-evolved, like the lily's flower.—B. Wilberforce, *Speaking Good of His Name*, p. 47.

A SERMON FOR SPRINGTIDE

'Consider the lilies of the field.'—Matthew vi. 28.

I like at this season of the year to speak sometimes on the ministry of nature, and to discover what that meant for Jesus.

I. In this matter there is one thing which strikes me, and that is the contrast between Christ and Paul. You never feel that Paul is at home in the country. You always feel that Paul is at home in the city. When he would illustrate the things of grace, he does not turn to the vine or the lily. He turns to the soldier polishing his armour; to the gladiator fighting before ten thousand eyes; to the free-born citizen whose civic charter had been won in the senate of imperial Rome. Not in the city did Jesus find His parables, save when He saw the children in the market-place. He found them in the lily of the field, with which even Solomon could not compare.

II. Again, if Christ is different from Paul in this matter, He is equally distinguished from His Jewish ancestry. Remember He was a Jew after the flesh. Yet when we read His teaching about nature, we feel we have moved away from the Old Testament. And I want to try to show you whereon that difference of interpretation rests, and what is the fact that underlies it.

1. Open your Old Testament, and tell me the aspect of nature which you most often find there. It is not the world of sunshine and of flower. It is the world of vast and mighty things. In things that were greater and grander than all others, in hurricane and storm, in wild and unmastered forces—it was in these pre-eminently that the Jew awoke to the presence and the power of God. Now turn to the teaching of the man of Nazareth—'Consider the lilies of the field'. It is no longer the things that tower aloft; it is no longer the things that shock or startle—it is not *these* that to the man of Nazareth are richest in Divine significancy. It is the vineyard on the sunny hill; it is the lily waving in the field. It is things common and usual and silent which no one had had eyes to see before. Never is love richer in revelation than when it consecrates all that is quiet and lowly.

2. One thing more, which helps to illuminate the mind of Christ. It is how often, when He speaks of nature, He deliberately brings man upon the scene. He could not look at the lilies of the field but He saw Solomon in all his glory. And it all means that

while the love of nature was one of the deepest passions in Christ's heart, it was not a love that led to isolation, but found its crowning in the love of man. There is a way of loving nature that chills a little the feeling for mankind. There is a passion for beauty that may be a snare, for it weakens the ties that bind us to humanity. But when a man loves nature as Jesus Christ loved nature, it will deepen and purify the springs of brotherhood, and issue in service that is not less loyal because the music of hill and dale is in it.—G. H. Morrison, *The Wings of the Morning*, p. 164.

References.—VI. 28.—W. P. Balfern, *Glimpses of Jesus*, p. 85. George Tyrrell, *Oil and Wine*, p. 286. T. Sadler, *Sermons for Children*, p. 135. E. C. Paget, *Silence*, p. 123. J. Martineau, *Endeavours After the Christian Life*, p. 39. J. Coats Shanks, *God Within Us*, p. 126. J. Service, *Sermons*, p. 136. W. H. Shawcross, *A Sermon Preached at a Flower Service*. C. Silvester Horne, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xliii. 1893, p. 308. C. Clay, *ibid.* vol. l. 1896, p. 103. G. A. Chadwick, *The Intellect and the Heart*, p. 83. VI. 28, 29.—E. White, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xl. 1891, p. 3. A. G. Mortimer, *One Hundred Miniature Sermons*, vol. ii. p. 296. S. Martin, *Rain Upon the Mown Grass*, p. 28. J. B. Mozley, *Sermons Parochial and Occasional*, p. 151. VI. 29.—F. Stanley Van Eps, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxviii. 1905, p. 189. VI. 28, 29, 30.—H. Scott Holland, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xlvi. 1894, p. 145.

CHRIST AND NATURE

'Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, shall He not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?'—Matthew vi. 30.

I. 'If God so clothe the grass.' There is a little faint tone of depreciation in that remark. Perhaps we have not detected it before, but the depreciation is contrastive. We must place the emphasis not on 'the grass,' but on the contrast which the grass is cited to vivify and exemplify. 'If God so clothe the grass of the field'—so small and insignificant a thing as the grass that grows under your feet—what will He do for you, His sons, His daughters, His children redeemed and in process of final anointment and sanctification? The argument is progressive, and is an instance of *a fortiori* reasoning. If in the little, how much in the great: a favourite teacher in the ministry of Jesus Christ. If ye being evil know how to give bread and comfort to your children, how much more—— That is the ascending argument. It outlines itself like a temple dome.

I wish we could believe this argument drawn from the grass. There is no want of beauty in the grass meadows. The landscape would be poor without the homely field where the cattle are, the cows and the sheep and other living things connected with home and farm life. Jesus did not despise the grass; He was only contrasting it with something other.

II. There is a religious mystery in all growing things. I do not know that there is much mystery, though there is a little, in a stone wall. A stone wall is a kind of proposition in geometry, but there is no ghostly margin, none of the stones seem to quake under a weight greater than their own, all the stones seem to be fastened in their places by a pressure more than fifteen pounds to the square inch; there is no religious mystery of a very perplexing or elevating kind about a stone wall, but there is about a nettle, that wasp of the vegetable world. 'If God so clothe the grass of the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven——' Here is something, you see, perishable, yet typical. The grass is always on the way to something else; not to nothingness. The grass may be on the way to the sustentation of life. All these grass-blades may go to feed the lamb, and the lamb goes to feed the man, and the man goes to feed the other Man, the ever-coming Man, the Adam of the eternal purpose.

III. The Saviour on another occasion, in the Gospel according to John, makes use of the same figure; He says, 'The fields are white unto the harvest'. Jesus Christ could never get rid of the harvest idea; you will be surprised if you gather together the passages in which the word harvest occurs in the utterances of Christ. 'The harvest truly is plenteous;' 'the fields are already white unto the harvest.' You say there are but three months to harvest; why, the harvest is ripe now—out with the sickle, forward to the field, reap sheaves for God.

The blessed Saviour could not have lived if He could not have seen the harvest. It is because He is the End that He can bear to be the Beginning. 'I am Alpha because I am Omega.' To be Alpha is to be in agony, to be both Alpha and Omega is to be at rest, is to exemplify and to realize the peace of God.—Joseph Parker, *City Temple Pulpit*, vol. v. p. 78.

References.—VI. 30.—H. Scott Holland, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lviii. 1900, p. 201. H. P. Liddon, *Sermons on Some Words of Christ*, p. 33; see also *Penny Pulpit*, No. 461. VI. 31-33.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. lii. No. 2973. VI. 31-34.—W. Leighton Grane, *Hard Sayings of Jesus Christ*, p. 87. VI. 32.—W. Boyd Carpenter, *The Great Charter of Christ*, p. 31. 'Plain Sermons' by contributors to the *Tracts for the Times*, vol. i. p. 109.

SEEKING GOD'S KINGDOM AND RIGHTEOUSNESS

(Septuagesima)

'Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.'—Matthew vi. 33.

With an endless choice of things before us which we can do if we please, we want some great rule to help us how to choose, and to make a plain pathway for us when everything seems so tangled and crooked. The text gives us Christ's rule. 'Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness.'

I. We are bidden to seek God's kingdom, and the first and easiest way of seeking it is by prayer; and that prayer Christ Himself puts into our mouths, 'Thy kingdom come'.

What then is God's kingdom? We may see our way a little toward answering that question by considering our own kingdom, that kingdom for which

we beseech God every time we offer up the prayer for the High Court of Parliament. It is our laws and government stretching themselves among us in ways which we too often forget, that keep our lives and goods in safety, and allow us to pursue our several callings in peace. But God's kingdom is over men's minds and spirits as well as their bodies: not one secret chamber of their hearts can they call wholly their own. His kingdom also is a kingdom of laws, and His Almighty power can never be put forth against His own laws; and the laws of the Gracious and Holy One must needs be gracious and holy too. All good human laws are faint and partial copies of His. And just as human laws bind members of one people to each other, and compel each man to respect the rights of his fellows, so the laws of God's kingdom bind men to each other by ties of the spirit, not of the body, by love and mutual trust and self-denial and devotion. Each of us obeys the laws of God's kingdom just so far as he performs the task in life which God has set him.

II. Christ sent His Apostles to preach the good news of the kingdom, and they rejoiced to declare that it was already come. But though it is among us, there is rebellion enough against it. God has given to men the power of choosing between good and evil. Any one who has thought or care for the welfare of the world must needs pray with all his heart that God's kingdom may come more and more, and that its blessed laws may be daily better known and better obeyed. And thus having begun with seeking God's kingdom by prayer he will go on to seek it in all his daily life.

III. But we are bidden to seek not only God's kingdom, but also His righteousness. For God's righteousness is itself the very spirit of His own kingdom. Christ does not here tell us merely to seek *righteousness*, though elsewhere we are thus bidden; but to seek *God's righteousness*. Any righteousness which is of our own making, which we try to gain by standing aloof from Him, is worth nothing at all.

'Seek ye *first* the kingdom of God and His righteousness,' says Christ. So far as we can make that the aim of our lives, so far shall we find our way straight and plain before our face.—F. J. A. Hort, *Village Sermons* (2nd Series), p. 81.

'The kingdom of God.'—Matthew vi. 33.

The kingdom of God, the grand object of Christianity, is mankind raised, as a whole, into harmony with the true and abiding law of man's being, living as we were meant to live.—Matthew Arnold.

'Seek ye the kingdom of God.'—Matthew vi. 33.

Every man is worth just as much as the things are worth about which he is concerned.—Marcus Aurelius.

'Seek ye first the kingdom of God.'—Matthew vi. 33.

'Above all things,' Professor Drummond once told the Harvard students, 'do not touch Christianity unless you are willing to seek the kingdom of heaven first. I promise you a miserable existence if you seek it second.'

We forget that there may be many duties, but that among them all there is a first and a last, and that we must not fulfil the last before fulfilling the first, just as one must not harrow without ploughing.—Tolstoy.

The whole of duty is modified when we change the hierarchy of duty. How significant is the etymology of 'prerogative,' the section that was asked first for its opinion! There lies the whole force of our ideal. *Which do you consult first?* Everything else will be different. . . . That which gives life its keynote is not what men think good, but what they think best.—Julia Wedgwood.

References.—VI. 33.—E. S. Talbot, *Sermons at Southwark*, p. 1; see also *The Kingdom of God*, vol. i. p. 17. J. Martineau, *Hours of Thought on Sacred Things*, pp. 17, 31. 'Plain Sermons' by contributors to the *Tracts for the Times*, vol. vi. p. 228. C. J. Vaughan, *Characteristics of Christ's Teaching*, p. 194. J. B. Mozley, *Sermons Preached Before the University of Oxford*, p. 275. H. C. Beeching, *Inns of Court Sermons*, p. 79. R. W. Dale, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. li. 1897, p. 230. G. A. Gordon, *ibid.* vol. liii. 1898, p. 254. R. J. Campbell, *ibid.* vol. lv. 1899, p. 392. E. Lyttelton, *ibid.* vol. lxiii. 1903, p. 173. H. Hensley Henson, *ibid.* vol. lxxi. 1907, p. 113. W. J. Knox-Little, *Church Times*, vol. xxx. 1892, p. 385. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxxi. No. 1864; vol. xliii. No. 2515. Beveridge, *Works*, vol. v. p. 413. Tillotson, *Sermons*, vol. vi. p. 149. Jay, *Short Discourses*, vol. iii. p. 395. J. C. Hare, *Sermons*, vol. i. p. 283. Isaac Williams, *Sermons*, vol. ii. p. 134. Lord A. Hervey, *Sermons*, vol. ii. p. 222. Fairbairn, *City of God*, p. 317. *Selections* from Pusey, p. 91. Kingsley, *Sermons for the Times*, No. xiii. Parker, *Inner Life of Christ*, vol. i. p. 213, and *Pulpit Analyst*, vol. i. p. 252, and *Homiletic Analysis of Matthew*. *Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. i. p. 349: vol. iii. p. 402. *Homiletic Magazine*, vol. viii. p. 64. *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. iii. p. 123; vol. vi. p. 128. Beecher, vol. xii. p. 164; vol. xvi. p. 133; vol. xviii. p. 388. Bruce's *Chief End of Revelation*, p. 297. Macleod's *Gentle Heart*, p. 87. *Pulpit Analyst*, vol. iii. p. 352; vol. v. p. 596. Alford, *Advent, Creation, and Providence*, p. 223. Dr. Alex. Whyte, *Expositor* (3rd Series), vol. ii. p. 224. Spurgeon, *Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, No. 1864.

'Seek ye the kingdom of God. . . . Take no thought for the morrow.'—Matthew vi. 33, 34.

Anxiety and *Ennui* are the Scylla and Charybdis on which the bark of human happiness is most commonly wrecked.—W. E. H. Lecky.

References.—VI. 33, 34.—A. G. Mortimer, *The Church's Lessons for the Christian Year*, part i. p. 203; see also *One Hundred Miniature Sermons*, vol. ii. p. 302.

ON WORRY

'Be not therefore anxious for the morrow, for the morrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.'—Matthew vi. 34.

Our Lord in this sentence, 'Be not over anxious about to-morrow,' which is an excellent instance of His homely teaching, warns us against the commonest of all faults, worrying ourselves about troubles that may never happen.

I. It cannot be concealed that people who are sound and orthodox in all their beliefs, who have no doubts about the Incarnation, the Resurrection, and so on, are often in practice discontented self-tormentors. Their religious being seems divided into two distinct compartments; one contains the doctrines confessed every Sunday, the other contains the precepts ignored all through the week. Do not let your faith only assure you of the truth of the articles of the Creed. The faith that is required of you is not only an intellectual assent to certain propositions, it is a living belief in a Father which should keep you from fretfulness and over-anxiety in common life.

II. Cast all your care upon Him. But it is useless to tell us to cast our care on God unless we really and truly believe that He cares for us. No man can cast his care upon an It. If a man does not believe in God, when the pressure of care becomes too heavy for him to bear it alone one of two results will follow; either the creed will break down or the man will break down. Hence we have so often seen unbelievers commit suicide. Take God out of the world, and you will have no one on whom you can with any hope of satisfaction cast your care.

But though we may never have said what the fool says in his heart, though rarely with his lips, 'There is no God,' do we really believe that 'God cares for *me*'? It is easier to believe that God cares for the universe as a whole than to believe that He cares for individuals. He is a Father, and He has room in His infinite heart for each one of us. It is a mistake to suppose that some cares are too insignificant to take to God in prayer.

And in so doing we shall often see our cares and worries in a different light and realize how unnecessary some of them are. For what is it, too often, that men worry about? Christ goes to the root of the matter. It is 'to-morrow'; almost always 'to-morrow'.

III. But move the subject up into a higher plane. Is it possible that Christ forbade men to be anxious about their moral and spiritual future? Did He say, 'Do not be over anxious about what awaits you after this life?' He guards Himself against any misconception in the same passage by saying: 'Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness,' and so on. If we give the first place in our thoughts and anxieties to the kingdom of God and to true righteousness, we shall find the little worries of life fall into the background of their own accord.—C. H. Butcher, *The Sound of a Voice that is Still*, p. 196.

Illustration.—I have read somewhere a very quaint proverb: 'White ants pick a carcase quicker and cleaner than a lion'. Do you see the force of the saying? It means that little cares may even more effectually destroy our peace than a single great trouble, if, in a mistaken reverence for God's greatness (which is really unbelief) we refuse to cast them upon Him.—C. H. Butcher.

AGAINST WORRY

'Take, therefore, no thought for the morrow.'—Matthew vi. 34.

I prefer the Revised Version for our text, 'Be not anxious for the morrow'; but, even so, this is one of the words of the Lord which absolutely startle us with the greatness of their claim. This is one of the words which brings it home to us how great and strenuous a matter it is to be a Christian man. 'Be not anxious for the morrow;' yet we remember that all the world, beginning with ourselves, seems to be clouded over with a great anxiety.

But, subtle as the temptation is to worry and to be anxious, there is no question that it is a quite different temper which the Christian man is bidden and expected to learn. There is no question about the Lord's phrase; there is no question for the Christian man about the absolute disloyalty of worry and anxiety.

Well, then, if Christ is true, it is the Father's intention to make of every life a great matter. Christ, with His miraculous power, brings the steadfast and sober spirit into our life—'See, there is not one thing that happens to Me without My Father; shall I not wait My Father's time?' If we could only believe that we mattered we could bear upwards through the pain, could we not? There, at all events, would be a foundation under us if we could know that the little things of little forgotten lives came home to an unforgetting God.

And think what Christ brought home, and brings home, to His own world, His own disciples. His character, His miracles, His words—they are all part of the same earnest assurance that God is alive, with a great and wonderful meaning for every person; and though the miracles have ceased—at least, some miracles have ceased, certain matters of outside miracles have ceased—yet the miracles were never more than a sign, the attention of the world was always taken from them right through to the thing they signified; and the one great thing that the miracles of Jesus signified was this—that we are the absolute assurance to the world of the Divine Providence, of its purpose, and of its power.

But there are two things which are necessary if this conviction of the Providence of God is to become a reality for us.

I. The first thing is that we should accept the Mastery of Jesus. It is to His disciples that He brings peace. Are we disciples?

II. And the second thing is the resolution to live one day at a time. 'Be not anxious for the morrow,' for, after all, it is only to-day that we have to live. We look forward and try and think out how we will act, and to-morrow it is all so different, and meanwhile we have exhausted the nerve and we have used the energy which God intended to give us anew for the fresh day's work. There was no gathering of the manna for more than one day at a time.

'Take no thought for the morrow.'—Matthew vi. 34.

What is content? The true answer to that is—A world of bliss and rest. It is not helpless submission

to necessity. It is not the fulfilment of all roving desires. It is a sublime condition, the product of knowledge and faith and hope and love. One of its conditions is the perception of our proper place in the universe, and the belief that we have strictly a vocation. Another is that cheerful humility of spirit which honour upholds, and which makes no extravagant demands on the universe or on Providence. Another is the alchymic eye to see much in little—the spirit which made the old woman say to Bishop Burnet, as she held up her crust, 'All this and Christ'! —James Smetham.

John Rosedew went to his home—a home so loved and fleeting—and tried to comfort himself on the road with various elzevirs. Finding them fail, one after another, for his mind was not in cue for them, he pulled out his little Greek Testament, and read what a man may read every day, and never begin to be weary; because his heart still yearns the more towards the grand ideal, and feels a reminiscence such as Plato the divine, alone of heathens, won.

John Rosedew read once more the Sermon on the Mount, and wondered how his little griefs could vex him as they did. That sermon is grander in English, far grander, than in the Greek; for the genius of our language is large, and strong, and simple—the true spirit of the noblest words that ever on earth were spoken. Ours is the language to express; and ours the race to receive them.

What man, in later life, whose reading has led him through vexed places—whence he had wiser held aloof—does not, on some little touch, brighten, and bedew himself with the freshness of the morning, thrill as does the leaping earth to see the sun come back again, and dashing all his night away, open the power of his eyes to the kindness of his Father?

John Rosedew felt his cares and fears vanish like the dew-cloud among the quivering tree-tops; and bright upon him broke the noon, the heaven where our God lives.—R. D. Blackmore, *Cradock Nowell*, chap. li.

'Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.'—Matthew vi. 34.

My thoughts are always rambling over past or future scenes; I cannot enjoy the present happiness for anticipating the future, which is about as foolish as the dog who dropped the real bone for its shadow.—Darwin.

References.—VI. 34.—J. B. Mozley, *Sermons Parochial and Occasional*, p. 38. H. Montagu Butler, *Harrow School Sermons*, p. 108. T. De Witt Talmage, *Sermons*, p. 96. H. Ward Beecher, *ibid.* (4th Series), p. 1. A. MacLeod, *Days of Heaven Upon Earth*, p. 119. A. M. Fairbairn, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. li. 1897, p. 257. R. C. Anderson, *ibid.* vol. lii. 1897, p. 171. H. Scott Holland, *ibid.* vol. lvi. 1899, p. 177; see also vol. lxi. 1902, p. 173; see also *Church Times*, vol. xlii. 1899, p. 319.

'Judge not, that ye be not judged.'—Matthew vii. 1.

'Next week, it is still but the 10th of April, there comes a new nineteen' to the guillotine; 'Chaumette, Gobel, Hébert's widow, the widow of Camille: these also roll their fated journey; black Death devours them. . . . For Anaxagoras Chaumette, the sleek head now stripped of its *bonnet rouge*, what hope is there? Unless Death *were* "an eternal sleep"? Wretched Anaxagoras, God shall judge thee, not I.' —Carlyle, *French Revolution*, Vol. III. book vi. chap. iii.

For myself, I no more call the Crusades folly than I call the eruption of a volcano folly, or the French Revolution folly, or any other bursting up of the lava which lies in nature or in the hearts of mankind. It is the way in which nature is pleased to shape the crust of the earth and to shape human society. Our business with these things is to understand them, not to sit in judgment on them.—Froude.

I sometimes wonder whether people who talk so freely about extirpating the unfit even dispassionately consider their own history. Surely one must be very 'fit' indeed not to know of an occasion, or perhaps two, in one's life when it would have been only too easy to qualify for a place among the 'unfit'.—Huxley.

Frederick Denison Maurice to his mother: 'Of all spirits I believe the spirit of judging is the worst, and it has had the rule of me I cannot tell you how dreadfully and how long. Looking into other people for faults which I had a secret consciousness were in myself, and accusing them instead of looking for their faults in myself, where I should have been sure to find them all; this, I find, has more hindered my progress in love and gentleness and sympathy than all things else. I never knew what the words 'judge not, that ye be not judged' meant before; now they seem to me some of the most awful, necessary, and beautiful in the whole Word of God.

Have it a fixed principle that getting into any scornful way is fatal.—Bushnell.

'The life of Harriet Martineau is strong upon me at present,' James Smetham writes in 1876. 'When the "orthodox" begin to frown and curse and malediet, and send everybody into blackness of darkness who does not hold their precise creed, that is more from beneath than above, and never over any good. And I must say that the lives of some "professors" are below the moral elevation of many who do not see the evangelic scheme at all. . . . God knows if H. M. was true to the core—I don't. I can't unwind her seventy-four years of act and thought, and if I could, who made me a judge or a divider? Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right? He grasps her now, and not an atom shall be wanting in the justice of Divine love

How often we forget in judging others the influences under which they have grown up! How can one expect a child to be truthful when he sees how servants, yes, often parents, practise deceit? How many children hear from those to whom they look up, expressions, principles, and prudent rules of life, which consciously or unconsciously exercise an influence on the young life of the child! Yet with how little of

loving introspection we pass our judgments?—Max Müller.

'The world is habitually unjust in its judgments of such men as Burns,' Carlyle protests. 'Unjust on many grounds, of which this one may be stated as the substance: It decides like a court of law, by dead statutes; and not positively but negatively, less as what is done right than as what is or is not done wrong. . . . Here lies the root of many a blind, cruel condemnation of Burnses, Swifts, Rousseaus, which one never listens to with approval. Granted, the ship comes into harbour with shrouds and tackle damaged; the pilot is blameworthy; he has not been all-wise and all-powerful: but to know *how* blameworthy, tell us first whether his voyage has been round the globe or only to Ramsgate and the Isle of Dogs.'

No man can say in what degree any other person besides himself can be with strict justice called wicked. Let any of the strictest character for regularity of conduct among us, examine impartially how many vices he has never been guilty of, not from any care or vigilance, but for want of opportunity, or some accidental circumstance intervening; how many of the weaknesses of mankind he has escaped, because he was out of the line of such temptation; and, what often if not always weighs more than all the rest, how much indebted he is to the world's good opinion, because the world does not know all; I say, any man who can thus think, will scan the failings, nay the faults and crimes, of mankind around him, with a brother's eye.—Burns.

It is curious to notice the kind of criticism indulged in by mechanics whom one meets at the exhibitions of modern pictures at Liverpool and elsewhere. There is no *love* in it. The men are for ever on the alert to find out something wrong, to detect faults, and no more.—Dr. Augustus Jessopp, *Arcady*, p. 70.

References.—VII.—C. Gore, *Church Times*, vol. xxxiii. 1895, p. 507. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxxix. No. 2312, vol. xlviii. No. 2803. VII. 1.—E. H. Eland, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxi. 1902, p. 158. C. J. Vaughan, *Characteristics of Christ's Teaching*, p. 214. VII. 1-5.—E. Lyttelton, *Studies in the Sermon on the Mount*, p. 305. VII. 1-6.—J. Oswald Dykes, *The Manifesto of the King*, p. 529. VII. 1-12.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—St. Matthew I.-VIII.* p. 324. VII. 1-14.—W. Boyd Carpenter, *The Great Charter of Christ*, p. 257.

JUST RECOMPENSE

'With what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.'—Matthew vii. 2.

These words are usually interpreted in their application to the relationship which we sustain to others. But the words enshrine a principle to which our Lord gave other and varied applications:—

I. 'Unto you that hear shall more be given.' The measure of your hearing shall be the measure of your listening. If you want to hear the voice of God, listen! The voice will grow clearer and clearer as your hearing becomes more earnest and intense. Listen to God's voice in conscience, and more and more pronounced and definite shall be its guidance. Do not listen much to conscience, and conscience will say less and less to you, until perhaps some day the hall where it ought to thunder shall be as silent as the tomb. This is a great law: 'Unto you that hear shall more be given,' and 'From him that hath not, shall be taken away even that which he hath.'

II. A person can read the Bible, and not listen, and to him there comes no eternal speech. The revelation is not given to the reader, but to the listener. If we turn to the Word with the spirit awake and alert, we shall be led from revelation to revelation, and from glory to glory.

III. 'According to thy faith be it unto thee.' The measure of our faith is the measure of the power we receive from our Lord. What is faith? 'Faith is the assurance of things hoped for.' Faith acts on the assurance that the thing hoped for is. 'Believe that you have received them, and ye shall have them.' That is faith. Such faith is power; and the more our faith increases the greater will be our power to pursue a quiet, faithful, and confident life.—J. H. Jowett, *Meditations for Quiet Moments*, p. 72.

'Why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye?'—Matthew vii. 3.

'In all my travels,' Cobden once wrote to Bright, 'three reflections constantly occur to me: how much unnecessary solicitude and alarm England devotes to the affairs of foreign countries; with how little knowledge we enter upon the task of regulating the concerns of other people; and how much better we might employ our energies in improving matters at home.'

Commenting, in his life of Milton, upon the poet's line, *On evil days though fallen and evil tongues*, Johnson protested that 'for Milton to complain of *evil tongues* required impudence at least equal to his other powers; Milton, whose warmest advocates must allow that he never spared any asperity of reproach or brutality of insolence.'

'Never yet,' says Dr. Augustus Jessopp, 'have I found an Arcadian who pleaded guilty to anything that was particularly *owdacious*, even though the recording angel had written it down in letters of flame for all the world to read; but never have I found the same Arcadian unable or unwilling to denounce somebody else!'

References.—VII. 3-5.—H. Hensley Henson, *Christ and the Nation*, p. 54. D. Fraser, *Metaphors in the Gospels*, p. 38. R. W. Hiley, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xli. 1892, p. 189. E. Lyttelton, *Studies in the Sermon on the Mount*, p. 311.

ON GUARDING HOLY THINGS

'Give not that which is holy unto the dogs.'—Matthew vii. 6.

Give not that which is holy unto the dogs—that is to say, never surrender the higher to the lower; never sink the celestial to the terrestrial; never desecrate that which has been consecrated. That

was the sound piece of advice that our Lord gave to men and women who were trying to aim at a higher life while they were living in and mixing with the world. That was what He put before them as something definite to aim at. In mixing with men and women you will find much that is holy, much that is beautiful and pure and spiritual, and you will find much that is unholy, much that is coarse, and ugly, and animal. And when you find it, when you come across it and meet it face to face, then never surrender good to evil, never sink the higher to the lower.

There is the advice, and this is the picture. It is the picture of a glorious and a great temple, the priests sacrificing some spotless lamb, and as they stand at the altar the picture is that of an Eastern dog—a coarse, cruel scavenger—creeping up the distance of the temple, and then the priest taking a piece of this pure spotless lamb and throwing it to the dog. Every Jew would regard it as a scandal, everyone to whom our Lord was speaking would know to what He referred.

I. The Holiness of Manhood.—First, I think, human nature itself. You are holy, human nature is holy—that which is unholy is inhuman. Human nature is holy because it is human. Man is holy, woman is holy, and am I not right in saying that there is a danger lest our manhood and our womanhood be flung to the dogs and treated recklessly as something unholy, as Satanic rather than as sacred? Manhood is holy, and yet men desecrate their manhood.

II. The Holiness of Womanhood.—And the same is true of womanhood. We know there are women who in one mad moment have thrown their holiest and their best to the dogs. We know their temptations, we know what it means to them. They have lowered the level of womanhood. They have desecrated the consecrated. They have made themselves a sort of right of way for the public to walk over. To them the Master says, as to the men, 'Give not that which is holy to the dogs'.

III. The Holiness of Childhood.—And may I say a word for the children? The children are holy; if ever there is a time in life when men and women have been holy it is when they were children. And yet look how children are by their parents literally thrown to the dogs, sent out into life unwarned of everything. What wonder that they go when they are sent to the dogs. I have read the story of a child whose after-life was the life of many a man. He was a judge's son, and he stood at last in a felon's dock, and the judge who was trying the case knew, and knew well, the man's father. And he said to the prisoner at the dock: 'Don't you remember your father as you stand in that dock?' 'Yes,' was the reply, 'I do remember my father, and the greatest remembrance that I have of him is that whenever I wanted a word of advice, whenever I wanted him to enter into my boy life, he replied, "Go away, and don't worry or bother".'

IV. The Holiness of Health.—'Give not that which is holy to the dogs.' What is it you are in danger of giving to-day? Think it out and ask whether you are doing your best to keep it whole and intact and unimpaired. I will take but one more illustration of what I mean—health. Health is holy. Don't fling away health as men and women do so wildly, so recklessly. In the prayer of all prayers, the Lord's Prayer, 'Give us this day our daily bread,' comes in before the plea for pardon. First the body, then the soul, because if the body is not kept right the soul is morbid and consequently is not at its best to resist what it has to meet in life. 'Give not that which is holy to the dogs.' Take care of the drugs, take care of the stimulants that are so easily to be had. Take care of the way you spend your recreation hours. Life is in that sense holy, and it is to be treated as you would treat a church or a churchyard. Fence it in from the dogs, fence it in from all that desecrates it. All life really is sacred and holy. Your interest, your work in life is holy; and our thought to-day is the thought the Master gave to men and women who, as we have to do, lived in and mixed with the world. 'Give not that which is holy to the dogs.'

'Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine.'—MATTHEW VII. 6.

I WAS always pleased with the motto placed under the figure of the rosemary in old herbals:

Sus apage, haud tibi spiro.

—COLERIDGE.

THERE is a Buddhistic parallel: 'Let not this doctrine, so full of truth, so excellent, fall into the hands of those unworthy of it, where it would be despised, shamefully treated, ridiculed, and censured'.

'MR. ERSKINE [of Linlathen],' Miss Wedgwood writes in her journal for 13 September, 1865, 'spoke of the connexion between Matthew VII. 1-5, "Judge not," etc., and the verses which follow, "Give not that which is holy to the dogs," etc., and then of the transition which seems in the ordinary acceptation of these later words so abrupt and almost contradictory, but which, as he understands it, is a harmonious development of the same idea. The instrument of judgment is the conscience; we judge ourselves by the conscience, and other men also, and the conscience is "that which is holy" in us; when therefore we present this holy thing in us to the service of malice, or of conceit, we are giving that which is holy unto the dogs, we are turning the good in us to the service of the evil in us, we are giving our light for the use of our own evil passions. The conscience is cast then as pearls before swine, the upper is made to serve the lower, both being in ourselves.'

REFERENCES.—VII. 6.—C. J. Vaughan, *Characteristics of Christ's Teaching*, p. 232. W. Boyd Carpenter, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xlv. 1894, p. 88. E. Lyttelton, *Studies in the Sermon on the Mount*, p. 313. D. Fraser, *Metaphors in the Gospels*, p. 50.

THE GOLDEN KEY OF PRAYER

'Ask, and ye shall have; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.'—MATTHEW VII. 7.

I. *Why should we pray?* I suppose that the first answer must be because of a deep inherited instinct which has been trained and fostered from our childhood by those we love. Whether a child would pray if it was never taught may fairly be questioned; but certainly there would always be in it that deep instinct for prayer. And, to reinforce the instinct of prayer, we have the voice of authority—the voice of One who came from heaven, and, therefore, must know what opens heaven's gate. When we ask the question, 'Why should we pray?' the answer is, 'We know that our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ'.

II. *How shall we pray?* What are the laws of the effective action of prayer?

1. *Faith.* You cannot pray, or you cannot enjoy your prayer unless you believe that, when you pray, you are coming to a Being who is absolutely perfect, absolutely good, absolutely just, and absolutely loving. It is faith in such a God as that which is the first secret of effective prayer.

2. *Unselfishness.* What does the Lord's prayer begin with? 'Our Father,' not 'My Father'. Selfishness chokes prayer.

3. *Loyalty.* Why does Jesus Christ trust His name to us to pray with? Why are we allowed to say 'for Jesus Christ's sake'? I answer that question by another. Why does a husband give his wife his name to use? On one condition, and that condition is that his interests are her interests, that his honour is her honour, and that her life is identified with his.

4. Effective prayer must be *persevering.* Why are those stories told us of the unjust judge and the selfish friend? To show us that, if an unjust judge or a selfish friend hears at last, then the God of love is certain to hear, and that if we persevere how much more will our heavenly Father give the answer to those that ask Him.

III. *What shall we pray for?* After the unselfish prayer which the Lord's Prayer teaches us to offer first, then we find that we are allowed to ask for the daily bread for body and soul, for the daily pardon, for the daily guardianship from the evil one for ourselves and for those we love.

And if people say, 'Why ask for these gifts of God? He will give them, surely, without asking,' our answer is, Does He do it in nature? The gold is the gift of God, but we dig for it, the coal is the gift of God, but we mine for it. The bread is the gift of God, but we sow for it and we reap for it. So with these other gifts of God—power, wisdom, strength, love. They are the gifts of God, but we have to pray for them; and therefore prayer comes to be the most beautiful work in the world, the most glorious work to be done with a method, to be done with perseverance and at regular times, and yet to pervade the whole life, so that in a true sense we 'pray without ceasing'.—BISHOP WINNINGTON INGRAM, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. LXVIII. 1905, p. 136.

Illustration.—I do not know that we can picture the authority on which we rest our prayers better than by recalling the touching scene in Sheffield when our late aged Queen in her last years had to open the gates of the Town Hall of Sheffield. It was thought well that she should not move from her carriage; so hidden electric wires were fastened to a golden key fitting into the lock which she could turn as she sat in her carriage. By an act of faith—and it came to that—by an act of faith she turned the golden key, and, as she turned the golden key, at some distance away, slowly, surely, the gates of the Town Hall opened. We cannot see the connecting wires which connect the golden key of prayer with heaven's gate, but a voice which we trust says to us, 'Turn the key; turn the golden key'. 'Ask, and ye shall have; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.'—BISHOP WINNINGTON INGRAM, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. LXVIII. p. 137.

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THE REASONABLENESS OF PRAYER

'If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask Him?'—MATTHEW VII. 11.

PRAYER with Jesus was straightforward and unhesitating petition, asking God to do something, and believing that He would do it. And when Jesus laid the duty of petition upon His disciples He went on to assert the reasonableness of a man asking and of God answering, by that argument from man to God which he loved to use and which is thoroughly scientific.

I. When we ask whether it is reasonable to pray, and not merely a fond superstition, it surely counts for something that prayer is an instinct. In the straits of life, however indifferent a man may have grown to prayer, or however keenly he may have argued against prayer, upon a petition he will fall back.

What does it mean that a bird has wings but that

there is air in which to fly, or that men are moved to pray in an orderly universe, but that there is a God to answer them?

II. 1. Granted, then, that men should pray, and that God will answer. What is given? Well, the answer may come, not in granting anything nor in taking anything away, but in a new state of mind. It is right to ask for such things as we need, and that we be saved from the things which we fear; but the chief of all prayers, in which all other are included, is this—'Not my will, but Thine be done'.

2. Again definite things may be given which are not visible. St. Paul's thorn in the flesh was not removed; but he received grace to turn it to good purpose, and was able to glory in his affliction.

3. Have we, then, no ground to pray for tangible things? For the healing of the sick, for deliverance from danger, for the welfare of our friends, for our daily bread? Are we to be politely laughed out of faith by clever writers making game of the 'sturdy beggar' type of prayer? Certainly the history of devotion affords some remarkably sturdy beggars who were not ashamed to beat at the door of God's palace and who refused to leave till they got an answer.

III. When God helps us He does not reverse the laws of nature, nor does He act without agents. When people in danger of shipwreck cry to God, it is not likely that the sea will be reduced to a calm, but it is likely that succour will come through the capacity of the captain. If it be God's will to grant the recovery of a sick person, it will be accomplished through the skill of a physician. In what particular are the laws of nature violated in such beneficent operations? Is anything more in keeping with human consciousness than action upon the mind from an unseen source, and is not the material the servant of the spiritual?—J. Watson (Ian Maclaren), *The Inspiration of Our Faith*, p. 227.

Illustration.—Müller of Bristol kept five large orphanages, besides circulating much religious literature, sending out several hundred missionaries, and teaching a hundred and twenty thousand children in his schools, at a total cost of £1,500,000, and he never had a subscription list or made an appeal for money. It is an absolute fact that he simply laid everything before God in prayer, and he never wanted for the support of his orphans. He is a witness to the success of prayer, acting in the physical sphere.—J. Watson (Ian Maclaren), *The Inspiration of Our Faith*, p. 236.

References.—VII. 11.—Andrew Murray, *The Children for Christ*, p. 210. VII. 12.—J. J. Tayler, *Christian Aspects of Faith and Duty*, p. 218. E. A. Lawrence, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xliv. 1893, p. 329. T. Sadler, *Sermons for Children*, p. 93. VII. 13.—A. Jessopp, *Norwich School Sermons*, p. 1. Marcus Dods, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. liv. 1898, p. 136.

'Enter ye in at the strait gate. . . . Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.'—Matthew vii. 13, 14.

'Now, Madam,' writes Samuel Rutherford to Lady Kenmure, 'I persuade you that the greatest part but play with Christianity; they put it by-hand easily. I thought it had been an easy thing to be a Christian, and that to seek God had been at the next door; but O the windings, the turnings, the ups and downs that He hath led me through, and I see yet much way to the ford.'

The straight and narrow way which Christ enjoined upon His followers indicates the moral path which each of us must observe in order to lead a blameless, consistent, and individual career. But the instant we try to survey the moral system of a whole people or race we are confronted, not by a single straight path, but by a vast plain, as it were, stretching from a dim light, far in the distance, with green, graceful hills skirting its base, to the wide plains dotted here with primeval forests, others with gardens of daintiest flowers, and cut up by manifold paths of various breadth running in seemingly contradictory directions. How one is bewildered by a sight like this!—Prof. Inazo Nitobe in *Japan for the Japanese*, p. 263.

I am suspicious of any religion that is a people's religion or an age's religion. 'Narrow is the way,' our Saviour says.—Newman.

'The straight and narrow way' is an expression that gathers up the whole meaning of the life of this people. It is true even in a geographical sense, the rocky path which leads from Egypt to Assyria is the promised land of the chosen people. . . . Israel has been called to be the prophet among the nations, and life in the present, for the prophet, is necessarily hampered and compressed within tiny limits.—Miss Wedgwood, *Message of Israel*, p. 56.

References.—VII. 13, 14.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—St. Matthew I.-VIII.* p. 342. E. Lyttelton, *Studies in the Sermon on the Mount*, p. 323. D. Fraser, *Metaphors in the Gospels*, p. 63. R. Winterbotham, *Sermons Preached in Holy Trinity Church, Edinburgh*, p. 320. D. M. Ross, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xliii. 1893, p. 6. J. Stalker, *ibid.* vol. lvii. 1900, p. 113. C. Gore, *ibid.* vol. lix. 1901, p. 171. 'Plain Sermons' by contributors to the *Tracts for the Times*, vol. ii. p. 233. J. R. West, *Plain Preaching to Poor People* (9th Series), p. 149. Eugene Bersier, *Twelve Sermons*, p. 19. C. J. Vaughan, *Characteristics of Christ's Teaching*, p. 272.

THE PLACE FOR CHRISTIAN ASCETICISM

'Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life.'—Matthew vii. 14.

I. Is, then, the religious life narrow? Our Lord does not say so; He says exactly the reverse—that it is only the entrance into it that is narrow. I have seen a commodious vehicle with a very narrow door; when once you got in you could travel with comfort over vast ground, but the getting in was a little embarrassing. You must not imagine that the straitenedness of which our Lord speaks lies in the vehicle; it lies outside the vehicle—in yourself.

II. His thought, as I take it, might be expressed thus: 'You are entering a chariot with boundless capacities for travel. The one obstacle is the getting in, and that obstacle lies in you. You have some-

thing in your hand which prevents you from finding the door wide enough; it is a mirror in which you see yourself reflected. You will never get through the aperture along with your mirror; it is too narrow for both of you together. Throw aside your self-reflector; break it; leave it in fragments on the causeway; and entering into the chariot free from encumbrances, you will journey over a limitless plain.'

III. That is in spirit what I understand Christ to mean. His motive is not the restraint but the enlargement of the soul. He has provided for it a conveyance with immense travelling powers; its name is Love, and its synonym is not narrowness, but wideness. Unfortunately the soul has a mirror whose name is Selfishness; it dandles that mirror, it will not let it go. But if the soul would enter the chariot it *must* let the mirror go. The door is big enough for itself alone, but not big enough for the accompaniment of its looking-glass. If it would enjoy the chariot it must sacrifice the looking-glass. In the interest of wide locomotion, in the interest of extensive sight-seeing, in the interest of reaching a road from which all barrier will be removed, the mirror must be left behind. That must be crucified which narrows me; that must be sacrificed which impedes me; that must be amputated which prevents me from soaring on the wing.—G. Matheson, *Messages of Hope*, p. 42.

THE REASONABLENESS OF CHRISTIANITY

'Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life.'—Matthew vii. 14.

The doctrine of the text is part and parcel of the spirit and substance of our common philosophy. There is reason under all Jesus says, and He calls upon us to testify that what He is requiring at our hands is only an extension of the principle which lies at the basis of our whole life.

I. 'Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, that leadeth unto life'—of every kind. You mistake theology, you mistake religion, you mistake Jesus Christ if you think that there is not underneath the whole something that you yourselves are doing every day. Let us illustrate this, and then apply it.

1. Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth to—*all learning* that is worth acquiring. It is said of one of the greatest speakers of the English language that he spent three days in teaching himself how most effectively to utter five words, but when he uttered them the assembly sprang to its feet; fire had touched them, a revelation in speech had been made to their minds.

2. The argument is *a fortiori*: If for a corruptible, then what for an incorruptible? Thus the great appeal is thundered from infinite altitude, not to discourage the children of men, but to encourage and cheer and welcome every patient toiler.

II. You thought that this arduousness applied only to the kingdom of God; but what kingdom is not God's? There is no kingdom of light, music, beneficence, purity, love that is not God's.

Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, that leadeth to all excellence. Yet you stood out and said, Why hath God made this gate so strait into His kingdom? It is the law of necessity; it is the necessity of a profound, complete, and beneficent education. There will, of course, always be genius, but that is not to rule the average line of human education and progress. We are called upon to do ordinary work, common everyday work, useful, necessary work, full of enjoyment, and full of high utility; but strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, that leadeth unto this.

III. Now will you come and accept the conditions? In striving after this entrance we shall show much weakness. If you are really striving to enter in, you are already in. You have heard what Jesus said to us: 'Ask, and it shall be given; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened,'—almost breathlessly, as if the words were continuous, as if they were indeed one solid word. Ask—thine; seek—find; knock—and the door flies back, and all heaven opens its treasures for your use. So the Lord judges us at the point of our growth. Some are young, some are strong, some are very weak; some cannot knock yet because they are groping for the door. When they get hold of the door then they will knock.—J. Parker, *The Gospel of Jesus Christ*, p. 151.

References.—VII. 14.—C. E. Jefferson, *The Character of Jesus*, p. 107. A Scotch Preacher, *The Strait Gate*, p. 1. George Tyrrell, *Oil and Wine*, p. 278.

'Beware of false prophets.'—Matthew vii. 15.

A Prophet is a man who speaks for God, how then can the word 'false' be put before 'Prophet'? What a sharp sword this is to the ministry! Is the slime of the serpent on the altar? Is the lie in the sanctuary? Eden was the sanctuary of God, the garden of the Most High, and the serpent entered there.

I. When you enter a Roman house at Pompeii, you see marked on the pavement, '*Cave Canem*'. Here at the very threshold of the Christian Church you have a '*Cave*,' for the Lord Himself has uttered it. He says, '*Beware of false prophets*'. He belonged to the New Covenant which fulfilled the Old. He speaks here in the language of the Old Covenant. But His Apostle Paul, he carries on the same caution. How does he look at it in the New Covenant of Grace? He says, 'Beware of false Apostles'. In the very early history of the Church there is this caution, 'Beware of false Apostles'.

II. And if this seems very hard on the pulpit, we too in the pulpit have our caution. We are to beware of '*False brethren*'. Surely the very term 'brother' proves that he should never be false to you. The one in whom you have fellowship, whose hands you shake, whose eyes you have looked into. He pretends to be what he is not, and he pretends not to be what he is, so that all is false on his side. And God who hates the false shekel, the false measure, hates the false prophet, the false apostle, the false brother.

III. Consider this in connexion with the Christian Church. The Christian Church is that society which is governed by the spirit of truth. If there were no spirit of truth, there would be no Church, and the spirit of truth is to lead the Church into all truth. Not for any expediency of position or popularity can the Church countenance a lie. A lie in the Church is an outrage on the Holy Ghost. The Church must be true, and speak in the truth.

IV. What is true of the Church of God must be true individually. God requireth 'truth in the inward parts'. You must not say you believe, because you take it for granted, or because you have been told you must believe. Be true men and true women. Do you really love the truth? If you love the truth, I will tell you what happens: As you seek it, it expands in front of you, enlarges, becomes an horizon of infinite capacity and joy. Beyond yonder hill there rises the horizon, and you say, 'If I get to that hill, I might be able to put my hand against the horizon'. But when you climb the hill, it is just as far. So, too, when you know one truth, you shall see another, and it ever expands and enlarges before you. Your reward is in your search, and in the joy of finding what is true.—A. H. Stanton, *Unpublished Sermon.*

THE VOICE OF THE CHURCH

'Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.'—Matthew vii. 15.

This is the solemn warning of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Our Lord had come to earth to win us grace and to open heaven, that we might reach the end to which God created us. He made Himself the Divine example of our life; and not only so, He came also to reveal to us the Truth. He gave us every proof of the truth of this great claim of His, and when He was about to leave this world, set up His Church and put into it the great instrument of teaching the world, Divine Truth. 'As My Father hath sent Me, even so send I you,' and for that purpose our Lord poured out His Holy Spirit. Wonderful, glorious promise of God!

I. Hear the Church.—It is said that it is so difficult for us to know what is true. Well; we must remember that it is not what this minister or that or the other may say; the question is, What does the Christian Church throughout all the world teach to-day? What it teaches to-day we know is true because Jesus left His Holy Spirit with the Church. That is the standard by which we are to judge. We have not ourselves the right to judge any man. You have not to judge whether your minister is a good or a bad man. However bad your minister may be, it does not affect your salvation, or the Divine Truth which he teaches, for it is not his but his Divine Master's. Thank God it is so. We have not to judge other people. We have only to beware that our ministers teach us the truth as it has always been taught from the time of the Apostles down to this very day. We judge by that.

II. The Church not Narrow.—It has often been said how narrow and hard the Church is to those outside. Not at all! We do not judge others; we do not judge those who perhaps have never had the chance that we have had to learn. All we have to be careful about is that we are not outside the Christian Church. We do not judge; it is not for us to judge; it is for God. He teaches us the truth. We do know the one true Apostolic Church, and we can know by a certain method of those who teach if they teach what is true.

III. Beware of False Teachers.—There never was a time when error was so subtle and the devil was so busy corrupting the faith of the children of the Church. We have to be on our guard against false teachers; against those who set up their own private opinions and their own judgments against the truth. They are, as our Lord says, 'wolves in sheep's clothing'. There is nothing so deadly as heresy; it is deadly for the spirit. The path that is open to us is that we should believe in the revelation of Jesus Christ.

References.—VII. 15.—W. Boyd Carpenter, *The Great Charter of Christ*, p. 279. VII. 15, 16.—J. Hughes, *The Saviour's Warning Against False Teachers*, a Sermon. VII. 15-20.—E. Lyttelton, *Studies in the Sermon on the Mount*, p. 333. D. Fraser, *Metaphors in the Gospels*, p. 70. J. Oswald Dykes, *The Manifesto of the King*, p. 595. VII. 16.—H. Montagu Butler, *Harrow School Sermons*, p. 97. H. Harris, *Short Sermons*, p. 179. VII. 16-20.—J. G. Greenhough, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxv. 1904, p. 273.

'Every good tree bringeth forth good fruit.'—Matthew vii. 17.

'When a man,' said Bacon, 'has proposed to himself the highest exemplars of noble words and virtues, this done, he need not set himself, like a carver, to make an image, but let his better nature grow like a flower.'

References.—VII. 17.—S. Baring-Gould, *Village Preaching for a Year* (2nd Series), vol. ii. p. 66. VII. 18; XII. 33.—R. E. Hutton, *The Crown of Christ*, vol. ii. p. 47.

'By their fruits ye shall know them.'—Matthew vii. 20.

The tree is known by its fruits; most truly so—but it depends for the maintenance of those fruits, yea, even for its own existence, upon its root in the soil beneath. The Christian life is judged of (and this with the strictest propriety) by that part of it which is seen, but it depends upon the part of it which is unseen for the hold it takes and keeps upon God.—Dora Greenwell.

The true evidences of Christianity are the public evidences, the effects upon history, and upon the world, and upon the lives of men in our own time. . . . If, when religion grew, morality increased in an equal measure, and the most fervent Christians were also the most honest and upright in business, the most innocent, the most friendly, we should not need treatises on evidence, for the lives of Christian men would be their own self-evidencing light. 'By their fruits ye shall know them.' The great and real source of doubt in which all lesser doubts seem to be swal-

lowed up is the apathy and indifference of Christian men, saying one thing and doing another.—Jowett.

References.—VII. 20.—A. G. Mortimer, *One Hundred Miniature Sermons*, vol. ii. p. 51. J. T. Bramston, *Sermons to Boys*, p. 1. F. W. Farrar, *Everyday Christian Life*, p. 190. S. D. McConnell, *A Year's Sermons*, p. 99.

'Not every one that saith unto Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of My Father which is in heaven.'—Matthew vii. 21.

This text brings very clearly before us that it is quite possible to know the name and the nature of the Lord Jesus Christ, and not to know His spirit. It is quite possible to be orthodox in expression, but not to be orthodox in life.

I. The expression 'Lord, Lord,' is a very proper expression of our faith. 'Ye call Me Master and Lord, and ye say well, for so I am.'

The expression 'Lord, Lord,' is the right expression of our relationship to Him. There is only one Lord, the Lord Jesus Christ, and so we say with David, 'Lord, I am Thy *servant*'; so with Paul, 'The *servant* of the Lord Jesus Christ'; so with James, 'The *servant* of the Lord Jesus Christ;' so with John, 'The *servant* of the Lord Jesus Christ'.

II. Let us take care when we say 'Lord, Lord,' we really mean it. When we pray, 'Through Jesus Christ our Lord,' let us mention 'Lord' in a vital way to our souls.

III. Let us take very good care that we use not these sacred words, 'Lord, Lord,' for our own interest. What harm has been done to religion when men have taken sacred words and used them as, what shall I say, stock-in-trade. Fancy taking the name of the Lord, Who was born in a manger, and died upon the gallows, and was put in a charity grave, for the sake of making yourself rich! Let us take care, again, that we never make use of religion to put ourselves in a higher position in society. Rise in society if you wish, but do not borrow the lever from Calvary. We must mind that the motive that lies at the bottom of it all is true; that when we say, 'Lord, Lord,' we are true men, and trust Him, and worship Him.

IV. What was the cause of the failure? What did these men not do? They used the right expression, but they did not do the right thing. For the eloquence of life must be always greater than the eloquence of words. If we be orthodox in expression, let us be quite certain we are orthodox in life. If we believe in the Master, let us try and have the Master's spirit. Be sympathetic, kind, gentle, tender, forgiving, and live for others. Be Christlike. Ask Him to make you like Him, 'Lord and Saviour, make me like Thee'. For the sake of God, let us be manly, and for the sake of man, let us be godly.—A. H. Stanton, *Unpublished Sermon.*

'Not every one that saith unto Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of My Father which is in heaven.'—Matthew vii. 21.

'They call me a great man now,' said Carlyle in his old age, 'but no one believes what I have told them.' The censors of modern literature are continually crying aloud for a new message. . . . Was ever age more rich in prophets and in great messages? But what have we done with them? Have we realized them in our lives, quite used up every available particle of their wisdom? And yet here are we hungry and clamouring again.—Richard le Gallienne.

References.—VII. 21.—C. J. Vaughan, *Characteristics of Christ's Teaching*, p. 288. R. W. Dale, *The Evangelical Revival*, p. 104. John Wills, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xlii. 1892, p. 133. H. Hensley Henson, *ibid.* vol. lxv. 1904, p. 91. W. C. E. Newbolt, *Counsels of Faith and Practice*, p. 114. H. P. Liddon, *Sermons on Some Words of Christ*, p. 63. E. Lyttelton, *Studies in the Sermon on the Mount*, p. 341. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xx. No. 1158. M. G. Pearse, *Thoughts on Holiness*, p. 120. Parker, *City Temple Pulpit*, vol. iii. p. 97. Dykes, *The Manifesto of the King*, p. 615. Parker, *The Inner Life of Christ*, vol. i. p. 265. Parker, *A Homiletic Analysis of the New Testament*, vol. i. p. 82. M. Dods, *Christian World Pulpit*, 22 June, 1881.

'Many will say to Me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Thy name? . . . And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from Me.'—Matthew vii. 22, 23.

Our Lord anticipates the time when active zeal for Himself will be no guarantee. And we may observe the difference between Christ and human founders. The latter are too glad of any zeal in their favour, to examine very strictly the tone and quality of it. They grasp at it at once; not so our Lord. He does not want it ever for Himself, unless it is pure in the individual.—Mozley.

References.—VII. 22, 23.—C. Perren, *Revival Sermons in Outline*, p. 161. E. Lyttelton, *Studies in the Sermon on the Mount*, p. 349. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xlviii. No. 2808. VII. 24.—A. Baker, *Addresses and Sermons*, p. 34. W. H. Frere, *Church Times*, vol. xlii. p. 26, 1899. VII. 24, 25.—A. Robertson, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxiv. 1903, p. 247. VII. 24-26.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—St. Matthew I.-VIII.* p. 353. VII. 24-27.—J. Oswald Dykes, *The Manifesto of the King*, p. 637. E. Lyttelton, *Studies in the Sermon on the Mount*, p. 358. A. Benvie, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxiii. 1903, p. 27. H. Scott Holland, *ibid.* vol. lxx. 1906, p. 245. D. Fraser, *Metaphors in the Gospels*, p. 87. Henry Varley, *Spiritual Light and Life*, p. 1. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xvi. No. 918. VII. 25.—H. E. Ryle, *On the Church of England*, p. 58.

'When Jesus had ended these words.'—Matthew vii. 28.

'I came away on Tuesday,' writes Cobden in 1857, 'after listening for two hours and a half to Disraeli. I wish there could be some Bessemer's power invented for shortening the time of speaking in the House. My belief, after a long experience, is that a man may say all he ought to utter at one "standing" in an hour, excepting a budget speech or a government explanation, when documents are read. The Sermon on the Mount may be read in twenty minutes; the Lord's Prayer takes one minute to repeat; Franklin and Washington never spoke more than ten minutes at a time.'

References.—VII. 28.—J. Barclay, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxxvii. 1890, p. 154. S. O. Tattersall, *ibid.* vol.

lxxx. 1906, p. 52. C. F. Aked, *Old Events and Modern Meanings*, p. 235. C. S. Robinson, *Sermons on Neglected Texts*, p. 248. VII. 28, 29.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture St. Matthew I.-VIII.* p. 363. F. E. Ramsdell, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lx. 1901, p. 139.

ONE HAVING AUTHORITY

'He taught them as one having authority.'—MATTHEW VII. 29.

I. THERE is an infinite pathos in this simple contrast between the teaching of Jesus and that of the scribes. His words had the ring of authority, and the people instinctively felt that that was not how their scribes spoke. The professional teachers lacked that note of authority without which all teaching is a mockery, not to say a crime. For is it not a crime to attempt to command the heart and conscience of another by the presentation of a truth which does not command and inspire our own? With Jesus, teaching was a matter of life and death; with the scribes it was a matter of profession. They looked upon the surface of the Old Testament, Christ looked into its heart. And is it any wonder that the people were astonished? As some one has said, Jesus spoke *with* authority, they spoke *by* authority. They quoted their rabbis; Jesus quoted nobody, because the evidence of the truth was in His heart, and the zeal for it consumed Him.

The hungry souls know very well whether they are being fed or not. Their teachers may array themselves in professional robes, they may give themselves professional airs, they may learnedly discuss religious difficulties, and show themselves conversant with the history of opinion, but to the soul that is striving for a word from God these things are nothing but a cruel delusion. The real question is, Can the teacher speak with authority? Do his words pierce and burn? Do they find me?

II. The great teacher is always rare. When he comes, we recognize him, not only as one who speaks with authority, but as one who is not as the scribes; that is, not as those other teachers whose special training and manifold opportunities should have enabled them to edify and astonish the people more than he. Clearly, there is more than learning and professional training needed to make a man a great preacher or teacher. What, then, is the secret of authoritative speech?

The thing most needful, and almost the one thing needful, is that the speaker should believe what he is saying. This seems an elementary demand; in reality it is the greatest of all demands. There are a hundred men who can speak, for one who really believes, and the only speech which strikes home and leaves its mark upon another soul is the speech of profound and passionate conviction. Man is more than mind, and belief is more than a thing intellectual. The teacher who covets earnestly the power of speaking with authority must believe his truth, not only with the understanding, but with the heart. He utters it, not as a proposition he can prove, but as a truth that has set his heart on fire. The impression he makes lies deeper than his words; it is the magnetism of the man—the inherent, transparent power of his message, and not the logic of his words—that carries conviction. The truth glows in his face, shines from his eyes. It does not so much belong to him as he belongs to it. It is not he that speaks, but a spirit that is speaking in him. He is not his own; he is urged on by an irresistible impulse to tell the thing he knows and lives by. He has mastered the truth, but the truth has also mastered him. He is the ambassador of the highest, and that is why he is lord, and why he can speak as one having authority.

III. And the truth which he believes and passionately utters must be truth by which a man can live. It is one thing to believe that two and two make four; it is another thing to believe that Jesus Christ rose from the dead. The latter belief will change my world for me, and the world of any other man whom I can persuade to accept it. But there is much so-called religious teaching that does not deal with the deepest things. It may tell us of the flowers and trees of Palestine, of the scenery upon which Christ daily looked from His Galilean home, of the manners and customs of those to whom He ministered, of the literary structure of the sacred books which He read. It is well to know these things; the more of them we know the better. But that is not religious teaching, and if the teacher does no more than that for us, he does nothing. It is not enough to tell us the pattern of the hem of Christ's garment. He must touch it, and he must speak to us with the glad enthusiasm of one who has been healed by the touch. He must wake in our hearts the dreams, the imaginations, the visions, the faiths, which throb and glow in the hearts of the men who wrote the Bible. Let him, by all means, do all he can to bring back that bygone world, and restore to us its ancient life; but let him not forget the most living thing of all—the souls of the men whose words he studies, and the mighty messages that came to them from their God.—J. E. MCFADYEN, *The City With Foundations*, p. 97.

THE SPRINGS OF CHRIST'S AUTHORITY

'He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.'—MATTHEW VII. 29.

WE can all feel the note of *authority* in this sermon. Authority is stamped upon every sentence of it. As Dr. Parker says, 'the mountain was a veritable king's throne, and the sermon spoken on it was the royal proclamation'.

I. The Authority of Character.—First of all, then, let me say, it was the authority of *character* as opposed to the authority of *office*. If it be *office* and *official* position that confer authority, then the scribe, and not Jesus, would have been the man to speak 'with authority'. For all the 'accidents' of authority, all the external badges and insignia of office belonged to the scribe.

In the long run there is nothing so commanding, nothing so regal, as a pure and holy manhood. 'As the *man* is so is his strength.' We are told that

those who listened to Lord Chatham always felt that there was something finer in the man than in anything he said. Accounting for the enormous power a certain preacher, who was neither eloquent nor brilliant, wielded over his people, a member of his congregation said to me, 'There are twenty years of holy life behind every sermon'. Men covet power. But *power comes from character*, not from any titles and dignities conferred upon a man from without. That was Christ's power. He was in no succession; He belonged to no order; He held no office. But he was without spot and without blemish. Men felt that He came from God. And in virtue of that perfect goodness, in virtue of that regal purity, He exercised a supreme and irresistible authority over the hearts of men.

II. The Authority of Knowledge.—Now pass on to a second element in the authority of Christ. It was not only the authority of character as against office; it was also the authority of *knowledge* as against the authority of *tradition*. 'Not as their scribes,' said the people. Now, as a matter of fact, in their own way the scribes were dogmatic and authoritative enough. But everything they said they said at second-hand! The scribes never delivered any authentic message of their own. They spent their lives in retailing what other people had said. But Christ was *not* as the scribes. For it was not second-hand truth He retailed, but a fresh and authentic message direct from God. Men recognized the note of reality, of conviction, of certitude in Christ's speech. They felt as they listened to Him that here was One who spoke what He knew, One who was at home amid the great realities of the unseen and eternal world.

III. The Authority of Love.—There was yet another quality about Jesus that lent immense authority to His speech, and that was *His Love*. What a contrast to the scribes Christ was in this respect. 'Not as their scribes,' no, thank God! Not harsh, unforgiving, loveless; but overflowing in pity, tenderness, and love towards all. You cannot read this sermon without feeling that the Preacher loves men. It is bathed in love, steeped in love, saturated in love. We can feel the love to-day, throbbing even through the cold, printed page! But how must they have felt it who listened to this sermon long ago, and heard the tones of the Preacher's voice, and saw the expression on the Preacher's face, and looked upon the light in the Preacher's eyes! They felt the Preacher loved them, and they yielded to love.—J. D. Jones, *The Gospel of Grace*, p. 56.

CHRIST'S SUPREME SWAY

'He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.'—Matthew vii. 29.

It is just this character of authority which lifts Jesus Christ high above the level of comparison, and reveals Him, as He is indeed, the Son of God.

I. And yet it is not difficult to discover what are the springs of that authority which gives to Christ the unquestioned obedience of the lives of His followers.

1. Chiefest of all is the convicting truth of His doctrine, which carries the conscience and forces acknowledgment, even from the most unwilling, that He is right in what He says.

2. It is not, however, mere wisdom which gives to Him His authority, but rather expressed knowledge substantiated by manifested character. The inherent quality of His life attested the truth of His doctrine. He not only taught the truth but *was* the Truth, and hence did not say to men in the formula of the scribes, 'This do and thou shalt live,' but rather, 'Follow thou Me,' and 'He that followeth Me shall have the light of life'.

3. His teaching is the conjunction of perfect ideal with adequate dynamic. He brings to men not merely light but life, so that the one who sets himself to obey the teaching becomes possessed of a power which makes the doing of His will possible. His word is not only enlightenment but enablement—not only guidance, but grace.

4. Further, the strength of His authority is attested by the present power of His Word when brought to bear upon the lives of men to-day.

II. But to draw closer to Him is to discover for ourselves—and that by personal experience—what is the compelling force of this His unique authority. All else is lost sight of and explained in the supreme fact of His love, for love is the greatest power and exercises the vastest authority in the universe. It is the man whose love is recognized whose rule will also be recognized. He who warms the heart with his own affection can always wield the sceptre as unquestioned sovereign. We cannot read the record of Christ's life without recognizing how true and sympathetic is the affection which animated Him, and we cannot stand at the foot of the Green Hill without realizing how deep is the love which took Him thither for men. Calvary's Cross has become love's throne from whence issues the pure stream of Christ's regal authority.

III. This recognition of His authority is not academic nor unpractical, but is the reservoir of all moral force, for love seeks to express itself 'not in word nor in tongue, but in deed and in truth'. The one who loves cannot but labour, and he to whom Christ is Lord will himself become a servant and saviour of men.—J. Stuart Holden, *Redeeming Vision*, p. 40.

'He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.'—Matthew vii. 29.

Taught them with authority, that is to say, with the title to command, and with the force of command. If God has given us a revelation of His will, whether in the laws of our nature, or in a kingdom of grace, that revelation not only illuminates but binds.—W. E. Gladstone.

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THE HEALING OF THE LEPER

'And Jesus put forth His hand, and touched him, saying, I will; be thou clean.'—MATTHEW VIII. 3.

THESE words, spoken to a leper, were the very last words that anyone, save He Who spake them, would have dreamed of saying. Most men, if they had spoken at all, would have bidden him keep his distance; some few might have flung to him a word or two of passing pity; one here and there might have bestowed an alms on him; but not one would even for a moment have thought of saying, 'Be thou clean'. It was left for Jesus to say to the poor wretch at His feet, crying for mercy, 'Be thou clean'. The words might have been words of mere advice to seek the best-known remedies; or words of encouragement to hope for the best; or words of fanaticism, assuming a power to heal, which could only have mocked the misery which it could not remove. But the words on the lips of Jesus were words of real authority, and a mysterious virtue went forth simultaneously with them from the Speaker, and made the leper whole—'Immediately his leprosy was cleansed'.

I. As we listen to His words there rises up before us the outline of a great example to be followed. The words of Jesus not only express the tenderest pity for the sufferer, but likewise His abhorrence of the disease which caused his suffering. When He pronounced deliverance to the sufferer, He likewise pronounced His ban upon the foul disease. 'Be thou clean' means not only 'I abate thy sufferings,' but also 'I hate thy disease'. But what of example can there be to us in this? The mind of Christ is to be the mind of His followers. If it was His mind to wage war upon disease, it is to be the mind of His followers too. If, in His abhorrence of disease, He said those words to the leper, 'Be thou clean,' He means us to say similar words, and it is possible for us to say these words and say them with power.

Every man who refuses to indulge to excess the cravings of his body at the expense of the laws of health; everyone who, by temperance and self-restraint, seeks to defend his body from the attacks of disease; every doctor who studies his science with the view of fighting disease; every community which erects and maintains hospitals to help the poor in their warfare against disease, which attends to drainage, ventilation, and pure water; every landlord who takes good care that his houses are sanitary, and not nests in which disease is bred—all these, in their measure and degree, are taking up Christ's words, following His example, and saying, 'Be thou clean'. They are bidding defiance to disease, not with the Almighty power of the Son of God, but with a power that is real and true. They are, like the Master, dealing blows at disease, and in proportion to their self-denial and zeal they will invite His blessing, and succeed. Modern philanthropy and the enthusiasts of sanitary science have learned their best lessons and taken their best watchword from Him, Whom some of them repudiate, Who said, 'Be thou clean'.

II. But when Christ spake those words, He not only pointed out one direction in which He would have us follow His example, He likewise taught us the deep spiritual truths which concern us every one. It was a leper to whom He spake, and leprosy was God's own picture of the soul's disease which He calls by the name of sin. When then Jesus said, 'Be thou clean,' and by His Divine power made the leper clean, it is to us a most blessed revelation of how the cleansing of the soul can be brought about.

III. Remember that it is the cleansing of Repentance which is the one sure guarantee of the cleansing of Pardon. How do you know that God has forgiven you your sins? You may think it to be true; you may hope it; your stirred emotions may persuade you that it is so; but to know of a certainty that the Divine Voice, 'Be thou clean,' has stopped and healed the disease that was corrupting your whole being, this is the great distinguishing message of the Gospel of our Redeemer, and the conviction that God has cleansed and pardoned you, even you, for the sake of Him Who died for your sins upon the Cross, that is God's unmistakable dominion, and is His gift. The Voice of Christ still says to us, 'Be of good cheer, thy sins be forgiven thee'; but He says it upon the one condition which can never be left out of sight, that thou art ready, and willing, and anxious to forsake thy sins; when thy penitence is sincere, and when thou hast placed the sacrifice of thy penitence at the foot of the Cross, then the Voice comes forth, 'Be of good cheer, thy sins be forgiven thee'.

'And Jesus put forth His hand, and touched him, saying, I will; be thou clean.'—MATTHEW VIII. 3.

MEN shrink more from skin diseases than from any others. Jesus could have cured him with a word. There was no need that he should touch him. *No need*, did I say? There was every need. For no one else would touch him. Of all men a leper, I say, needed to be touched with the hand of love. Spenser says, 'Entire affection hateth nicer hands'. It was not for our master, our brother, our ideal man to draw around him the skirts of his garments, and speak a lofty word of healing that the man might at least be clean before he touched him.—GEORGE MACDONALD.

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THE MINISTRY OF KINDNESS

'Jesus saith unto him, I will come and heal him.'—MATTHEW VIII. 7.

I. Jesus Christ, the Healer and Comforter, is our Example.—As Christ hath loved us, we ought to love one another. To us as members of the Holy Church, the great Christian Brotherhood, Jesus has committed this ministry of kindness. To His priests the Lord says, 'Give ye them to eat'. A starving world is fed at the Altars of the Church. To every member of the Church is the command given, 'Be kindly affectioned one to another'. Pure religion is defined as leading us to comfort the sick and suffering, the fatherless and widows, and to keep ourselves unspotted from the world.

II. The Christian's Attitude Towards Sinners.—The legend of the Holy Grail tells how one of Arthur's knights set forth to seek the mystic chalice of the Last Supper which had disappeared. As the knight left his house he saw a leper at the gate, and scarcely heeding him, cast a small piece of money to him. After long years' vain search in foreign lands, the knight returned, chastened and softened by what he had endured. At his gate he found the same leper, but now he pitied this stricken one, and taking the wooden bowl from the well, gave him water. Then suddenly the common bowl was changed into a shining chalice—the Holy Grail, and the leper was no longer visible, but the Lord Jesus stood in his place. 'As ye have done it unto the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me!' Do not go about among those who have fallen into sin with stones of reproach, but with words of comfort and of kindness.

III. The Christian's Attitude Towards the Sick and Afflicted.—In our times of sorrow and spiritual sickness we need those who are healers, who bring love with them, who are a comfort to us. It has been truly said that many people belie their religion in church by their manners at home. If our religion does not make us gentle, patient, long-suffering in everyday life, it is not true. Let us remember that *manners* have a great deal to do with Christianity. A disagreeable person has no claim to the character of a Christian.—H. J. WILMOT-BUXTON, *Notes of Sermons for the Year*, pp. 75-80.

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SOME ASPECTS OF HUMILITY AS SUGGESTED BY THE STORY OF THE CENTURION

(Third Sunday after Epiphany)

'I am not worthy.'—MATTHEW VIII. 8.

Is there anything weak, or mean, or contemptible in that Roman officer, as he is presented to us in our Gospel, seeking help from Jesus for his sick slave? He is head of an important household, but is full of courtesy and consideration for the slaves in it; surely we should say here is an open-handed, courteous, considerate officer and gentleman, and yet his whole attitude towards Jesus is marked by two striking features—faith and humility.

I. When our Lord would go with him to his house, he cries out, 'I am not worthy'. Does any one of us look down on him because of his humility? Is it not a robe of honour to him? Men are oftentimes rather flattered than otherwise when they are accused of pride. Poor and rich alike, humility is popular with neither, and yet God's Word teaches us plainly that 'God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble'.

There is indeed a counterfeit humility, which is most odious, that which is mere hypocrisy and servility, whilst the heart within is full of pride and hatred. To see what humility is, in all its beauty and perfection, you must look to Jesus.

II. The example and history of the centurion suggests some of the aspects of this virtue.

1. Observe how it affects his manner of approach to our Lord. The wondrous truth has come home to him, as it has not yet done to any in Israel, that He is Divine, that the power of the Godhead is His, so that all things obey His word, hence he draws near with the deepest sense of his own unworthiness, even while he casts himself on the love of Jesus.

2. How was it the centurion knew about God at all? It was because humility led him to use every opportunity of hearing truth.

3. Does not the centurion stand forth as essentially a man of action of good and holy work? He is evidently an active soldier from his own words; and more, he is the builder of a synagogue for the worship of God, and the eager seeker after help for one in sickness; and so it is even with true humility, it is not slothful or cowardly, it does not shirk from responsibilities, but whilst it is full of weakness, it leans on the strength of God and makes that its own. The man who begins some work with trust in self is soon daunted by difficulties, and gives up, and turns back. He who begins with distrust of self and trust in God will persevere to the end.

The secret of effort and work which will endure is this utterance of humility, 'I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me'.—W. HOWELL EVANS, *Sermons for the Church's Year*, p. 44.

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FAITH

'For I am a man under authority, having soldiers under me; and I say to this man, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it. When Jesus heard it, he marvelled, and said to them that followed, Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel.'—MATTHEW VIII. 9, 10.

OUR Lord witnesses to the special virtues in the

spiritual character of this Roman centurion. He had a faith at which our Lord marvelled. He said that it was the greatest faith He had yet found in all His ministry. We may well, therefore, ask ourselves the question, What is faith? 'Faith,' says the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews, 'is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen'. Faith is a superior property bestowed by God whereby the truth is apprehended without the evidence of experience or argument proved; it belongs partly to the understanding and partly to the will.

I. Distrust Brought Sin.—What was it that induced our first parents to eat of that which was forbidden? It was not altogether the desirableness of the thing itself—that was the motive that had to be reckoned with; it was distrust of God, and in that one thought of distrust there lay all the future disobedience of the world. All seems to be centred in that one thought of distrust.

II. Trust Brings Righteousness.—Just as in the one thought of distrust there lies every possible sin, so also in the one thought of trust there lies every possible good. Thus we see why the faith of the centurion was accounted unto him for righteousness, because in that one thought of trust there lay all the activity of his service—'Speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed'. There is something very practical in that thought that God the Father does accept our trust, and does reckon it to us for righteousness. We are not to be saved so much for the accuracy of our theology, or for the correctness by which we take in our dogmas; but we are to be saved by a simple trust which can be common alike to the ignorant and the learned; to the man and to the child. That which God the Father asks of us is not so much that our lives shall correctly state all the truths concerning Him and His, and that relationship which lies between Him and His; but that we may stammer with our lips, in childlike ignorance perhaps, but still that our lips should be striving to frame and utter, that one word 'Father,' which seems to convey the existence of the immense love of Almighty God.

III. It is the Foundation of all Spiritual Life.—We see in the centurion the great example of this virtue, that simple faith and childlike trust in God is the foundation of all true spiritual life. He had probably never seen Christ before, but he was ready to accept Him as the Son of God. It is quite true that faith is the gift of God, but it is a gift which we can in a large measure increase by our own co-operation. We look down the roll of God's saints, whose faith has been the wonder of the world, and we see there representatives of every type of temperament, every class of intellect. We cannot say that faith depends on the natural temperament alone; it depends to a very large extent on our moral training.

IV. It Needs the Discipline of the Will.—What is the principal disposing cause of faith? We can learn a lesson from the centurion. In his reply to our Lord there was just one thing brought out, and that is the wonderful state of discipline in which everything connected with him seemed to be. The man seemed to have learnt self-discipline, and we should all of us know the utter hopelessness of attempting to discipline the lives of others without first acquiring power over ourselves. 'I am a man,' he says, 'under authority, having soldiers under me.' He was a man who had learnt to obey and to command. Notice his wonderful humbleness—he called attention first to the fact that he was a subordinate. Are we not all in the same position? Are we not so much so that we may say 'I am a man under authority'—under the authority of God—'and just in proportion as I have learned to recognize His authority, and to obey His laws, so shall I be able to command my will'. These faculties, this power that is given to soul and body, this possibility of good and evil, these thoughts, and words, and deeds—as we look upon them and think what a rebellious army they are, and how difficult they are to command, can we not see that our work is to discipline them all? There is only one way in which we are able to get that command strong and clear, and that is by recognizing and obeying a superior authority; by accepting the commands of God and the Church; by obeying the dictates of our own individual conscience.

V. The World to Conquer and Heaven to Win.—We have the world to conquer, and we have heaven to win. St. John tells us the victory which overcometh the world—even our faith. We must lay this foundation first, and then we can go on to learn those other things of hope and love. Step by step we can climb to higher things, faith, hope, and love, the three steps to God, of which St. Paul tells us the greatest is love, yet the foundation on which all the other is to be built is this faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.

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FAITH THE TITLE FOR JUSTIFICATION

(Easter)

'Many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven.'—Matthew viii. 11.

We may humbly, yet confidently say, that where there is true faith, there justification shall be; there it is promised, it is due, it is coming, somehow, somewhile. Whether, as the saints of the Old Testament waited, and were not gifted with Gospel justification till Christ's first coming, these faithful souls will be received into the glory and grace of the Church at His second coming; or whether they enter into the

kingdom upon death; or whether, by an extraordinary dispensation unknown to us and to themselves, they receive the gift here; or whether in this world their eyes shall at length be opened, and the Church revealed to them, as the true treasure-house of grace and home of refuge to all believers, and they be led to seek it, and renounce the sect of their birth or of their choice—any how, they have a title; if they call, they shall be answered—if they knock, it shall be opened to them. *Who* have this true faith we cannot tell, any more than *when* God rewards it; no, nor what measure of assistance, what power of spiritual influence He gives to those who nevertheless, like the Jews, have not the peculiar gifts and endowments of the Covenant of the Gospel. Yet it is a great comfort to believe that God's favour is not limited to the bounds of His heritage, but that, in the Church or out of the Church, every one that calleth on the name of the Lord with a pure and perfect heart shall be saved.—J. H. Newman.

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LIFE'S FEVER

'And He touched her hand, and the fever left her.'—Matthew VIII. 15.

It is beyond dispute that when our Lord worked physical cure there was underneath the miracle another purpose. On one occasion He said: 'And that ye may know that the Son of Man hath power on earth to forgive sins, I say unto thee, take up thy bed and walk'. There our Lord Himself goes out of His way to accentuate the fact that the miracle is an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace. Let us look at the text in that light.

I. Life's Fever.—So many people realize nowadays that life is a fever, life is something infectious; there is something in it which seizes hold of a man's body, soul, and spirit, and if he cannot resist, and if the Divine hand does not touch him, he will die of the fever.

(*a*) *The voice of history.* I look into history, and I find that all men who have spoken truthfully say that life is a fever. We think of the great Roman who said that he had been everything, but that nothing was of the least use. We think of our own great Shakespeare. 'Out, out, brief candle! Life's but a walking shadow.' There never was a more cheerful man than Charles Dickens, yet he had to write at the end, 'Of all sad dreams life is the saddest'. Where can you find a life more full of joy than Walter Scott's, yet he wrote, 'Years ago my heart was broken, and although the pieces were handsomely put together I shall bear the cracks until I die'. If you take your part in the world's rush and bustle and in life's tragedy the fever will catch you, and it will go hard with you unless Christ touches your hand.

(*b*) *The social life.* The joys of social life are great, but one thing always strikes me as particularly trying in connexion with it. There is the fuss and fever of life all about one almost before the day has really begun. You are going to see a Mr. and Mrs. So-and-So, and all the rest of it. After all, there are a great many things that must be done, and weightier matters of life should come first. If the fever of life once catches you it will spoil you for the best things.

(*c*) *In political life.* Too often the popular thing to do is to legislate in a panic. Whatever is the latest newspaper scare the cry is: 'Legislate, legislate; remedy this; remedy that!' It is a fever. Legislation is not thought out; it is not considered; it is simply pandering to the cry, 'Something must be done'.

(*d*) *Then amusements.* What a rush they all are! To get into your day as much as you can crowd and then call it amusement!

(*e*) *Finally, there is the religious life.* When other people are on the 'go,' that strange feeling that we must rush too comes over us, whatever may be the latest development of religious energy.

II. And its Remedy.—The remedy is in the text. Now let me point out one or two ways in which we can follow the text.

(*a*) *There is the life of silence.* Out of the thirty-three years of our Lord's life thirty were spent in silence. Just imagine what people would say to-day. 'You call yourself a teacher, and out of thirty-three years you have spent thirty years in silence! Here

are souls to be saved, here are hearts waiting to be mended, and you deliberately go and shut yourself up.' But these thirty years were years of preparation. You and I want more silence. We are always talking, pursuing, doing something. What we need is quiet —silence.

(*b*) *Association with Nature.* Why did Jesus so often go in His boat on the Galilean lake? Why was He always going to those strange, deserted places? Surely because he wished to teach us that Nature was the mantle of God, and that we ought to plunge ourselves among those beautiful things to see that He is speaking to us for everything. In this you will find a rest and a cure for the fever of life.

(*c*) *The possession of loyal friends.* Is not the power of friendship a wonderful thing? We are told that Jesus loved Lazarus, that He loved St. John, and that He loved the rich young ruler. Why are there so few modern friendships? Because there are so few modern friends. Friendship means sacrifice, devotion, self-deprivation. You know what the French people say about friendship: 'Friendship is love without its wings'. If you had one or two real friends behind you the fever of life would die down; you could hope, you could suffer, you could die if you felt that behind you there was that strong power which St. John felt when He leaned on the Lord's bosom at supper. The modern life has no time for such friendship.

(*d*) *A tolerant spirit.* Is it not strange that men should be so intolerant? A man complains that another man does this or does that, thinks this or thinks that, goes here or goes there. What is it to thee what thy brethren do? The question is, 'Am I a Pharisee?' not 'Is my brother a Pharisee?' You will find that the most tolerant people are those who are devoted to the highest ideals. There never was but one sinless One, and when the woman, stained with her sin, was brought before Him, He said: 'Neither do I condemn thee; go and sin no more'. If only you were more tolerant you would not have all that fever of unquiet; you would not look out upon other lives, but would recognize that your business was to live up to your own possibilities.

(*e*) *The touch of Christ.* But the greatest cure for the fever of life is in the healing touch of the Divine finger. He is with us always—in our triumphs, in our failures, in our broken hopes, in all the disillusions that come to us. The Sacred Presence never leaves us. 'I am with you always.'

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CHRIST STILLING THE TEMPEST

'And when He was entered into a ship, His disciples followed Him. And, behold, there arose a great tempest in the sea . . . even the winds and the sea obey Him!'—MATTHEW VIII. 23-27.

AGES ago, the man whose hand was as skilful on the harp as it was mighty on the sword and battle-axe, sang thus to it: 'By terrible things in righteousness wilt Thou answer, O God of our salvation, Who art the confidence of all the ends of the earth, and of them that are afar off upon the sea; which by His strength setteth fast the mountains, being girded with power; which stilleth the noise of the seas, the noise of their waves, and the tumult of the people'. This sublime language was prophetical of the Divine action on the tempest-riven sea of Galilee.

I. The peril of the disciples seemed very real. On the evening of a long day of continuous teaching by the sea-side, Jesus beckoned to His disciples to pass over to the other side. They had not been long on the water when its face, which had been calm as a mirror all day, gave signs of agitation and storm. The Sea of Galilee was an inland sea, and, like all inland seas, was subject to violent hurricanes of wind, which rolled unexpectedly down the gorges of the mountains surrounding it, and created a furious tempest on the waters, which frequently engulfed the small craft floating thereon, and caused the sacrifice of many precious lives. Such a tornado now swept over this sea and lashed it into madness. But, apart from natural causes, who raised this fearful storm? Was it an accident—one of those effects that seem without a cause? No; there was 'a Divinity' in it. But this storm occurred not as that which fell on the sea, and tossed 'the ship going to Tarshish,' in which Jonah was fleeing from duty, until 'it was thought to be broken'; the disciples were doing just as Christ enjoined them; they were in the course of duty, and He was therefore with them; and it was because He was with them that this storm arose. What lessons are here for us!

II. But the Master was asleep. His human nature was exhausted by his Godlike acts; and glad indeed was He to take a piece of sail-cloth for His pillow, while angels spread their broad, white wings over Him, and so fall to sleep. Here is a certain proof of His perfect humanity. Because of such proofs, people, 'in the days of His flesh,' would not believe in His Divinity. If they were to see Him now, as John saw Him on the Isle of Patmos, clothed with a splendour brighter than the sun, and holding in His hand the sceptre of the universe, they would not believe in His humanity (Heb. II. 9-18).

III. The cry of the disciples showed that they realized their peril. St. Matthew says that his dis-

ciples awoke Him, saying, 'Lord, save us; we perish!' St. Mark says that their cry was: 'Master, carest Thou not that we perish?' St. Luke has their cry thus: 'Master, Master, we perish!' All the Evangelists record what they heard. A number of the disciples cried one thing, and a number the other; and doubtless all the Gospels are correct. But what fear their cry indicated! The storm was no ordinary one, and their fear corresponded with its fury.

IV. The chiding of the Saviour was full of tenderness. But why chide at all? Was not the fear of the disciples natural, and also inevitable under the circumstances of their great danger? Yes; but they, in the height of their fear, forgot that their Almighty Saviour was on board, and thought only of the raging tempest. His chiding, therefore, was followed immediately by His acting. 'He arose, and rebuked the winds and the sea; and there was a great calm.' What a contrast!—the sea one moment all storm, as if it had never been otherwise; the next, all calm, as if neither fierce storm nor evening zephyr had ever swept over it! So the wildest tempest hushed by heaven produces the profoundest calm for the believer. The lions' den has often become to him the vestibule of glory — the burning fiery furnace the presence-chamber of the Son of God!

V. The marvel of the men may next be noticed. 'What manner of Man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey Him?' This exclamation evinces their deep feeling. Men who are fearful in the storm should be grateful in the calm. Yet it is not always so: ten lepers were cleansed, one only returned to give thanks; all were glad that they were healed, one only was personally grateful. Gratefulness is sublime, whether felt on sea or on land; it is the virtue which makes heaven musical for ever. 'Oh, that men would praise the Lord for His goodness, and for His wonderful works to the children of men?' (Ps. cvii. 21).

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THE GREAT CALM

'There was a great calm.'—Matthew viii. 26.

I. The Storm and the Calm—a Parable of Life.—The disciples were saved from the storm because they cried unto the Lord. So the Church weathers the storm which beats upon it, because of the prayers of the faithful. The Church is tossed and buffeted, like that boat upon the lake, but not overwhelmed. As it was said of the city of Troy—'Conquered, it shall conquer, and overthrown, it shall yet rise again'. 'There was a great calm! It is the voice of God speaking to our troubled hearts, which alone can calm them.

Men sometimes laugh at religion while the sun shines, but the tempest drives them to their Lord right humbly. When our ship of life sails calmly over smooth seas, we are tempted to forget that Jesus is with us, but when the sudden tempest arises, we say, 'Master, save us, we perish'.

II. Jesus Manifested as the Ruler of the Spirit World.—There are some in these days who talk as though the power of evil and of Satan were pre-eminent, but Satan is not the ruler of this world, he is the master only of those who choose to serve him. People who foolishly and ignorantly dabble with spiritualism, instead of praying to God, fall into this error. The sacrifice of the swine may have been an object lesson to show the awful results of falling into the power of Satan. The swine, as soon as the devils entered into them, became mad and rushed headlong to destruction, the man who allows Satan to take possession of him is no longer himself, but maddened by angry lusts and passions which drive him to ruin.

III. The Choice.—The people who saw the miracle of our Lord, and His Divine power manifested, begged Him to depart out of their coasts.

Those men in the Gospel preferred their swine to their Saviour, and there are among us now some who would choose a pig-sty instead of a sanctuary, the foul slavery of sin rther than the glorious freedom of the Son of God.—H. J. Wilmot-Buxton, *Notes of Sermons for the Year*, pp. 81-86.

'Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith?'—Matthew viii. 26.

It is our duty to be on our guard against panics. Panics are the last infirmity of believing souls. It is, of course, easy to denounce them from the standpoint of a philosophical unconcern as to all religious interests; calmness is a cheap virtue when you have, or when you suppose yourself to have, nothing really at stake. It is not, in this sense, that panics are to be deprecated; the most irrational panic of an unlettered peasant who believes that his creed is in danger, is, beyond all comparison, a nobler thing than the tranquil indifference of a Talleyrand. But panics are to be deprecated, not because they imply a keen interest in the fortunes of

religion, but because they betray a certain distrust of the power and living presence of our Lord.—LIDDON.

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ARISE!

'Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee.'—MATTHEW IX. 2.

THE miracle is a parable for the Church in every age. Its teaching is inexhaustible.

1. It should make the heart of the hypocrite, the double-minded man, shrivel.

'Our God is a consuming fire.' Jesus knew their thoughts.

2. It unfolds the Divine power, the personal knowledge of every secret burden of our hearts, the tender individualizing love, of the compassionate Jesus of Nazareth.

Eternity would scarcely be long enough to reveal the fullness of that one word, 'Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven'. This Jesus, by Whom the words were spoken, is 'the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever'. What a comfort there is in that one thought.

3. It suggests to us the unspeakable blessing that is always waiting for every penitent and believing soul, whenever the Bride of Christ, speaking in the name of the Lord, utters the word of Absolution. 'As my father sent Me, even so send I you.' 'Whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth, shall be loosed in heaven.' 'Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven; depart in peace.'

This passage teaches us the power, not merely of Christian intercession, but of Christian fellowship; the force that is brought to bear upon the individual soul, wherever a few believers are gathered together with one accord in one place, with one voice proclaiming the glory of God, and with one heart remembering before God those words of the charter of the New Dispensation, 'Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them'.

'Jesus, seeing their faith, said unto the sick of the palsy, Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee'. If miracles of healing are to be wrought in our midst, Christians must be found together with one accord in one place, speaking good of the Lord, ascribing glory to His name, praising God.—G. H. WILKINSON, *The Invisible Glory*, p. 89.

BE OF GOOD CHEER

'They brought to Him a man sick of the palsy.'—MATTHEW IX. 2.

THE first thing that must strike us all in reading to-day's Gospel is the kindness of his friends to the sick man. They brought him to the Saviour. Is there no one *you* can bring? Directly Andrew knew the Lord, he brought his brother to Him (John I. 41, 42). When the woman of Samaria knew the Christ, she tried to lead her neighbours to Him (John IV. 29). Remember that it was *on seeing the faith of his friends* Jesus healed the man sick of the palsy (James II. 18).

Consider:—

I. His Word of Comfort.—'Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee' (v. 2). He makes him see his affliction in the true light—the loving discipline of a father to his child (Heb. XII. 6, 7)—that it yields the peaceable fruits of righteousness to them which are exercised thereby (Heb. XII. 11; Is. XL. 1, 2). He tells him that the cause of his trouble—his sin—is removed. Only let us know that our iniquities are forgiven, and though there may be affliction afterwards, still there is joy and peace in believing (Ps. XXXII. 1, 2; see Hezekiah, Is. XXXVIII. 17).

II. His Word of Reasoning (vv. 3-5).—Some murmured when Jesus assured the man of his present forgiveness. They knew nothing of His love to sinners (Luke XV. 2; Matt. IX. 13). They knew nothing of His power to forgive (Luke I. 77). But Jesus says, 'Whether is it easier to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Arise and walk?' If He has power by His word to give new life and energy to one who is beyond human cure, He must be God; so also if He gave pardon of sin; for *salvation belongeth unto the Lord* (Is. XLIII. 11).

III. His Word of Power.—'Arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thine house' (v. 6). Life and healing accompanied the word (v. 7). Those who are healed by Jesus are immediately called to show their new life by its exercise. They must walk in resurrection-life (Eph. v. 8; 1 Peter II. 9). They must show to others what God has done for them; and where should they first display His grace but in their own homes? (Luke VIII. 39; 1 Tim. v. 8).

Have you learned the power of Jesus to forgive? It is the first step in happiness (Ps. LXXXIX. 15). You may learn many other things; but this alone makes us of good cheer (Rom. v. 1).

COURAGE, CHILD

'Jesus said to the paralytic, "Courage, child".'—MATTHEW IX. 2, with MARK II. 3-12.

Of all the words of grace that proceeded out of the mouth of Jesus, few are more precious than those which He spoke to the man that was sick of the palsy. There the unhappy man lay, stretched upon his couch, sick at heart, and weak in body, a burden alike to himself and to his friends, unable to move unless they chose to move him. For him the future could be but one long stretch of misery. There was only one hope: if Jesus could but see him and touch him—the wonderful Jesus, who had already shown such strange love for sick folk and such mysterious power over the diseases that vexed them—perhaps he might yet be made well again. It may be that the man himself had no hope; but his friends hoped for him, and earnest friendship availeth much. They were in deadly earnest: and, though under the circumstances a meeting with Jesus was hard to secure—for the place was crowded to the door and He was preaching—they yet contrived, with an ingenuity sharpened by affection, to bring their helpless friend right into the presence of Jesus.

I. What will Jesus say? He was deeply cheered by the faith the friends had shown, and He would not let such faith go away disappointed. So, turning to the helpless man upon the couch, He said, 'Courage, child'. He said more, but He began by saying that. And we can imagine how these two simple words, each in its own way, began to touch the springs of life and hope in the wasted body before Him. The man, if a great sinner, may have been accustomed to words of reproach, or to that cold and shallow consolation which stings more keenly than reproach; and now he is told to take heart again. Here is One who speaks to him as if He believed in the possibility of his physical and spiritual recovery, One who appeals to his slumbering hope and heroism. And so tender an appeal too! He calls him 'child'. Many a year had passed since he had been anybody's 'child'; and the tenderness of the Speaker, no less than His first great, authoritative word, goes to the heart of the unhappy man. His inner world is transformed; a new life courses through his veins, and it will not be long till he will be upon his feet, and going upon his way rejoicing. In the presence of this mysterious One, who speaks to him hopefully, who bids him be brave, who assures him of the forgiveness of sins, and who calls him child, old things are passed away, and a new day has dawned.

II. Doubtless this was one of the favourite words of Jesus. When the woman who had been ill twelve years fell trembling at His feet, after touching the hem of His garment, He reassured her with the words, 'Courage, daughter'. When the disciples, after a tempestuous night, were terrified by what seemed like a spectral figure moving towards them over the waves, their fears were met by a familiar voice, 'Courage, it is I: do not be afraid'. And, when by their Master's death, those same disciples were to be launched upon a still more stormy sea, His parting message to them was the same: 'Courage: as for Me, I have conquered the world'. And this was the message with which He still continued to brace and visit men, after He had risen from the dead. When His servant Paul was in danger of being torn to pieces by a fanatical mob, from whose hands he was only rescued by the forcible intervention of Roman soldiers, 'the following night the Lord stood by him, and said, Courage'; and the intrepid career of Paul is the proof that His Master's call to courage kept for ever ringing in his heart. He knew well that the fierce activities and persecutions of his missionary life were killing him, and once and again, on sea and on the land, he had been face to face with death. 'Nevertheless,' he says, 'we are courageous at all times; yes, we are courageous, I say'—twice over—'and well pleased to leave our home in the body, and to go away to be at home with the Lord.' Death had no terror for this man, he faced it with good courage; for it but took him into the nearer presence of his Lord.

III. These experiences, sickness and sorrow, anxiety and death, lie before us all; and in them how can we be better cheered and heartened than just by the kindly word of Jesus, 'Courage, child'. In our Gospels, as we now have them, the words were first spoken to a weak man and to a sick woman. Such we have always with us; and to the world's weak and sick folk those are the words of Jesus for ever. 'Courage,' He said to those who were tossed upon the sea; and still He says 'Courage' to all who are tossed, to all who are sailing through a black and stormy night, made more awful by the presence of spectres. The spectre which strikes a chill into our hearts is but Himself disguised by the mists. 'It is I,' He says; and the moment we are sure of this, we may well take heart again. 'Courage, it is I, do not be afraid.'

Courage, then, for God is good. Courage, for Jesus is with us on the sick bed, and with us in the storm. Courage, for He overcame, and we shall overcome in Him.

He was brave as He was gentle, and gentle as He was brave. He is touched for evermore with a feeling of our infirmities; and while He appeals to our latent heroism, He yet deals with us as little children. Many a gracious word of His rises to our hearts as we think of Him; but with especial gratitude do we remember Him for this brave and gentle word. And in every hour of pain or fear or desolation may we have grace given us to hear that dear voice saying to our troubled hearts, 'Courage, child'.—J. E. McFADYEN, *The City With Foundations*, p. 157.

REFERENCES.—IX. 2.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—St. Matthew IX.-XVII.* p. 1; see also *Creed and Conduct*, p. 15. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. lii. No. 3016. IX. 2-7.—*Ibid.* vol. xxxix. No. 2337. IX. 2-8.—W. M. Taylor, *The Miracles of Our Saviour*, p. 122. IX. 4-6.—A. G. Mortimer, *One Hundred Miniature Sermons*, vol. ii. p. 121.

FORGIVEN

'Arise.'—MATTHEW IX. 6.

I. At almost every stage of the Christian life the call to arise to a higher standard is preceded by a sort of paralysis.

This paralysed man was lying there, helpless; and then the word was spoken, 'Arise!' So it is with us. We have gone on very well; we have been good, moral, honest people. Suddenly, we begin to fail in everything. We are inclined to give up in despair. It is the paralysis that God is allowing, to make us ready to receive the free forgiveness through Jesus Christ, the free mercy of God, bestowed without money and without price.

Later on in life, we prided ourselves, perhaps, on our love to others. Suddenly, we found our temper becoming bad. We were more impatient and irritable; less kind and tender-hearted. It is the paralysis that is to prepare us for seeking, not natural affection but the Divine gift of charity, as portrayed by the Holy Ghost in the thirteenth chapter of First Corinthians.

So all through life. If we are to be prepared for receiving Sacramental truth, there often comes such an utter impotence of will, such an inability to realize heavenly things, that we are obliged to seek more Divine life; and so the man who used only to come to the holy table at Christmas or Easter is seen among the communicants, month by month, and then begins to yearn for yet more frequent celebrations. The Voice has found him paralysed, and the Incarnate God has said, 'Arise!'

But when the word is spoken, faith is required. Numbers come to the point of paralysis, and remain there all their life, and pass into the other world.

II. How is this faith to be obtained? How did faith give strength to this man, so that he arose?

By listening to the Word of Jesus Christ. There was a spark of faith, probably, before. It was the Word of God that kindled that spark into a burning flame. There was the germ, to begin with; the germ was developed by that one word, 'Arise!' And this is what we are taught by the Holy Spirit in the Epistle to the Romans. Faith, we are told, is not a mere natural confidence; that is, not the mere assent of the understanding. It is that Divine gift of God which enables us practically to realize, as if we saw them, the things which are unseen. 'Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.' Faith is, to the higher part of our being, what the natural eye is to the body. And 'faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God'.

Faith is developed by taking a single text or passage, praying over it, turning it into thanksgiving, reading it, marking it, learning it by heart, and inwardly digesting it, till we have laid hold of the particular portion of everlasting life which God intends at that time to communicate.

III. Just as the paralysed man laid hold of the portion of physical life which was laid up for him in Jesus Christ, so we receive, at different points in our spiritual education, out of the fullness of life which is laid up for us in Christ Jesus, the special portion of spiritual life which we need. 'Out of His fullness have we all received, and grace for grace.'

We receive it by believing, by taking a promise, feeding upon it, listening to it, till it has become incorporated with our being, and the strength has flowed down into the paralysed organs, and we can rise up in hearty willing response to the call of the Everlasting Father.—G. H. WILKINSON, *The Invisible Glory*, p. 99.

REFERENCES.—IX. 6.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—St. Matthew IX.-XVII.* p. 8. C. A. Brigg, *The Incarnation of the Lord*, p. 3. R. H. McKim, *The Gospel in the Christian Year*, p. 125. G. W. Herbert, *Notes of Sermons*, p. 187. J. M. Neale, *Sermons Preached in a Religious House*, vol. ii. p. 535. W. J. Knox-Little, *The Perfect Life*, p. 301.

THE CALL OF CHRIST

'And as Jesus passed by from thence, He saw a man, called Matthew, sitting at the place of toll: and He saith unto him, Follow Me. And he arose, and followed Him.'—MATTHEW IX. 9.

I BELIEVE there is no time, no set of circumstances, in which a man may find himself, but if Jesus speaks in his own heart he may [illegible] there respond.

I. The Unlikely [illegible] Matthew that Jesus t[illegible] is the unexpected ma[illegible] expect to go out after Christ. Here is [illegible] the very middle of the paraphernalia of his daily calling, he is in the place where he is making his money. He is in the place where his character is known, where his past is known, and what a past it is!

II. What Must be Left.—Though Jesus took this man just as he is, it meant leaving something. It meant leaving everything for this man, and it will mean leaving something for most of you. It means leaving self-will, the ordering of one's life in the way that seems right to his own eyes, and it means the welcome of Christ as the controller of the spirit and as the guide of the life.

III. It also Meant the Confession of Christ's Mastership in the World.—Charles Kingsley, one of the bravest, brightest spirits that this country ever had, said, 'Lest I should play the coward I determined to put myself into a position from which I could not retreat,' and that is what a good many will have to do before they will save their souls alive.—G. C. BRITTON, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. LXXII. 1907, p. 294.

THE APOSTLE'S CONVERSION

'And as Jesus passed forth from thence, He saw a man, named Matthew, sitting at the receipt of custom: and He saith unto him, Follow Me. And he arose, and followed Him.'—MATTHEW IX. 9.

ST. MATTHEW was one of the earliest converts to the truth as uttered by Him who was 'the Truth'.

I. The Call of the Man.—Note—

(*a*) *The unerring prescience of Christ.* Nothing left to chance. He Himself knew what He would do.

(*b*) *The Divine mercy of Christ.* Matthew, a tax-gatherer, despised by the Jews, was selected by Jesus Christ from the teeming multitudes of Capernaum as a special object of His compassion and love! Ah! there never yet was a sinner He would not and could not save. The greater the sinner, the greater the Saviour.

II. The Response of the Saint.—Artful cunning, avaricious greed, love of gold—all, all forsook the heart of the publican under the steady burning gaze of Jesus.

(*a*) *An amazing conversion.* The Spirit of Jesus immediately wrought the sinner into the saint; this was truly an amazing conversion—of more importance than the creation of a thousand worlds!

(*b*) *Conversion was followed by Divine command.* 'Follow Me.' It was there and then obeyed. St. Luke's account of St. Matthew's immediate response is very explicit: 'And he left all'—gold, and silver, and accounts, and office—'rose up, and followed Jesus'. Where? Everywhere the Master led him until His ascension.

THE DIVINE CALL

(For St. Matthew's Day)

'And as Jesus passed forth from thence, He saw a man, named Matthew, sitting at the receipt of custom: and He saith unto him, Follow Me. And he arose, and followed Him.' —MATTHEW IX. 9.

THERE is but one subject that can occupy our minds to-day—the wonderful call of the Apostle Matthew to be Christ's disciple. We find the man sitting at the receipt of custom: we see him absorbed in his worldly calling, and possibly thinking of nothing but money and gain; but suddenly the Lord Jesus calls on him to follow Him, and become His disciple. At once St. Matthew obeys: he 'makes haste and delays not' to keep Christ's commandments (Ps. CXIX. 60). He arises and follows Him.

I. With Christ Nothing is Impossible.—He can take a tax-gatherer and make him an Apostle: He can change any heart, and make all things new. Let us never despair of any one's salvation. Let us pray on, and speak on, and work on, in order to do good to souls, even to the souls of the worst. 'The voice of the Lord is mighty in operation' (Ps. XXIX. 4). When He says by the power of the Spirit, 'Follow Me,' He can make the hardest and most sinful obey.

II. St. Matthew's Decision.—He waited for nothing; he did not tarry for 'a convenient season' (Acts XXIV. 25); and he reaped in consequence a great reward. He wrote a book which is known all over the earth; he became a blessing to others as well as blessed in his own soul; he left a name behind him which is better known than the names of princes and kings. The richest man of the world is soon forgotten when he dies; but as long as the world stands millions will know the name of Matthew the publican.

III. The Lessons for Ourselves.—

(*a*) *The Divine call comes to each one of us.* We sing:—

> Day by day His sweet voice soundeth,
> Saying, 'Christian, follow me'.

Has that call made any impression at all upon our lives? Are we conscious of a daily striving to follow in the footsteps of the Master? Or are we still shutting our hearts against His call?

(*b*) *The Christian life consists in following Christ.* We may be very careful in all the outward observances of our religion, but unless we are fashioning our life upon the life of the Master, we are not truly His disciples.

(*c*) *Obedience to the call involves self-sacrifice.* St. Matthew forsook all. We are not necessarily called upon to do that, but we are called to give all temporal things a second place in our thoughts and lives. The Collect for this day expresses what should be the Christian attitude on such questions. We ask for grace 'to forsake all covetous desires and inordinate love of riches,' and to follow Christ. Covetousness is a sin which destroys the Christian life; and in regard to wealth, we have to remember that at the best it is not our own; we are but stewards. How many a Christian has fallen away because the love of riches has been too strong for him. Self-sacrifice, self-renunciation, self-surrender—these things represent the spirit which animated St. Matthew, and they must be the dominant features of our life if we would follow him, even as he followed Christ.

'He saw a man, named Matthew.'—MATTHEW IX. 9.

SEE Ruskin's fine exposition of Matthew's call in the first supplement to *St. Mark's Rest*, apropos of Carpaccio's picture.

REFERENCES.—IX. 9.—A. G. Mortimer, *One Hundred Miniature Sermons*, vol. ii. p. 253. N. Adams, *Christ a Friend*, p. 35. J. Fraser, *University Sermons*, p. 275. H. J. Wilmot-Buxton, *Holy-Tide Teaching*, p. 165. J. Stalker, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lvii. 1900, p. 211. J. A. Hamilton, *ibid.* vol. lviii. 1900, p. 135. S. Baring-Gould, *Village Preaching for Saints' Days*, p. 170. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xlii. No. 2493. IX. 9-11.—A. B. Bruce, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xlvi. 1894, p. 282. IX. 9-17.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—St. Matthew IX.-XVII.* p. 18. IX. 10.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. l. No. 2889. IX. 11.—S. Pendred, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxxviii. 1890, p. 406. J. A. Bain, *Questions Answered by Christ*, p. 1. W. J. Knox-Little, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxiii. 1903, p. 217. IX. 12.—D. Fraser, *Metaphors in the Gospels*, p. 95. G. W. Herbert, *Notes of Sermons*, p. 239. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xi. No. 618.

MERCY PREFERRED TO SACRIFICE.

'Go ye and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy and not sacrifice.'—MATTHEW IX. 13.

THE text is a quotation from Hosea, in which God declares to His people the conditions on which they would obtain acceptance with Him. The word there rendered *mercy* is equivalent to *piety* or *holiness*. Idolatrous systems only required the regular observ-

ance of a prescribed ritual; Jehovah was satisfied with nothing less than the devotion of loving hearts.

God prefers mercy to sacrifice:—

I. Because it Indicates More Clearly Man's Relation to Himself.—We cannot judge of a man's character by his regard for outward ordinances; but when a man struggles against sin, denies himself, and takes up his cross, we recognize him as a follower of Christ.

II. Because it is More Serviceable to our Neighbours.—Religious exercises may do *us* good; but when we lead a pure, godly life, and lay ourselves out for deeds of benevolence and love, we are conferring blessings on those around us.

III. Because it Brings the Greatest Happiness to Us.—The worship of God is a source of delight to the sanctified heart; but doing good to others affords an amount of joy and gladness never experienced before. —F. J. Austin, *Seeds and Saplings*, p. 64.

References.—IX. 13.—H. Ward Beecher, *Sermons*, vol. ii. p. 77. IX. 14.—J. A. Bain, *Questions Answered by Christ*, p. 7. IX. 14, 15.—T. C. Price, *What is Lent? Sermons*, 1872-73. IX. 16.—G. A. Chadwick, *Christ Bearing Witness to Himself*, p. 95. IX. 16, 17.—D. Fraser, *Metaphors in the Gospels*, p. 106. IX. 17.—C. Gore, *Oxford University Sermons*, p. 34. IX. 18.—A. G. Mortimer, *One Hundred Miniature Sermons*, vol. ii. p. 153. W. H. Brookfield, *Sermons*, p. 136. IX. 18, 19.—W. Howell Evans, *Sermons for the Church's Year*, p. 39. Archbishop Trench, *Notes on the Miracles of Our Lord*, p. 149. IX. 18-26.—John Laidlaw, *The Miracles of Our Lord*, p. 338. B. D. Johns, *Pulpit Notes*, p. 134. W. M. Taylor, *The Miracles of Our Saviour*, p. 230.

THE HEM OF CHRIST'S GARMENT

'And, behold, a woman came behind Him, and touched the hem of His garment.'—Matthew ix. 20.

The fact upon which the writers focus our thought is that the woman touched only the hem of His garment.

I. What is the hem of Christ's garment? Where is the hem of Christ's garment to-day? The hem this woman touched was one of the four tassels of blue which hung from the fringe of His coat. The robe with its fringe no longer passes down our streets. But the hem of Christ's garment can still be touched. For what was this hem, and what is this hem, but that through which His virtue passed out of Him? All the world of things seen, all that is beautiful and uplifting and inspiring, all holy influences and wise thoughts and gracious words, are but the channels through which the virtue of Jesus passes to the healing of the issues of body and mind and spirit.

II. Some of the ways in which Christ's virtue passes out of Him:—

1. *Think of the hem of Christ's garment in nature.* Nature is the visible garment of God, wrought, as Goethe said, by God's fingers in time's roaring loom.

2. *Think of the hem of Christ's garment in art.* By art I include all that is pure and lovely and noble in literature, in architecture, in music, in sculpture, and painting, and in all the works of men done under the inspiration of the Spirit of God. There are some who never see a lovely hillside but they think of it as a place to parcel out in profitable allotments. These are the soldiers who cast lots for Christ's garment at the foot of the cross. These are becoming fewer every day. Yet there are still many who do not realize that art is also the hem of Christ's garment.

3. *Think of the hem of Christ's garment in the Word.* This is the tassel of blue which most have touched. The Word of God is the closest garment of His thought. It is significant that Christ is called the Word, simply because God in Christ passed out to reveal Himself, and to work His miracles, in and by a word.

4. *Think of the hem of Christ's garment in the ministries of the Church.* Newman has a sermon with the arresting title, 'The Church a home for the lonely,' in which he shows, in his own deep and simple and lucid way, how solitary, and outcast, and disappointed men find in the service and fellowship of the Church the help and solace they need. There are issues often shameful, sometimes secret, sometimes exhausting, which Christ heals through the ministries of the Church. He heals them as He healed the woman, secretly and with a touch.

5. *Think of the hem of Christ's garment in the Sacrament of the Supper.* Nothing else brings us so near Christ, and through nothing else does His virtue pass so immediately as the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper.—W. M. Clow, *The Cross in Christian Experience*, p. 281.

'And, behold, a woman came behind Him, and touched the hem of His garment.'—Matthew ix. 20.

Towards the close of Hazlitt's essay *Of Persons one would wish to have seen*, he describes how Charles Lamb declared, 'I would fain see the face of him who, having dipped his hand in the same dish with the Son of Man, could afterwards betray Him. . . . There is only one other person I can ever think of after this,' continued Lamb; but without mentioning a name that once put on a semblance to Mortality. 'If Shakespeare was to come into the room, we should all rise up to meet him; but if that person was to come into it, we should all fall down and try to kiss the hem of His garment.'

References.—IX. 20.—J. Ker, *Sermons*, p. 186. IX. 20, 21.—R. Winterbotham, *Sermons and Expositions*, p. 97. IX. 20-22.—W. M. Taylor, *The Miracles of Our Saviour*, p. 243. Archbishop Trench, *Notes on the Miracles of Our Lord*, p. 157. John Laidlaw, *The Miracles of Our Lord*, p. 229. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. lii. No. 3020.

THE HEM OF THE GARMENT

'If I may but touch His garment, I shall be whole.'—Matthew ix. 21.

This story records a most remarkable instance of our Saviour's treatment of ignorance and superstition. It was a poor conceit of this woman, says good Bishop Hall, that she thought that she might receive so

sovereign a remedy from Christ without His heed, without His knowledge. While yet her faith was wholly real and practical, her conception of the manner of the working of Christ's healing power was ignorant and material. Christ healed, so she supposed, not by the exertion of His holy will, but rather by a certain magical influence and power which she thought dwelt in Him. But while this woman's ideas were thus wholly wrong, being tinged with much superstition and ignorance, the result of her practised faith was wholly excellent, for immediately, we read, her issue of blood was stanched, and she felt in her body that she was healed of that plague.

And then Jesus turned, and, while He gently showed her how mistaken were her thoughts of Him, He accepted her because of her faith.

I. There is a very frequent temptation for us, to whom has been granted, as we rightly consider, a purer revelation of Christian faith, to think harshly and intolerantly of those avowed Christians whose minds are as yet unenlightened on many points of Divine truth. We are tempted to regard their superstitions as a gulf across which we cannot embrace our fellow-Christians. It is good, therefore, to remind ourselves of this miracle of Jesus Christ's—a miracle where faith and love were so prevailing, even where there was so little knowledge, where a poor woman had faith sufficient to cure her sickness although she had not sufficient knowledge to consider that she could not hide herself from the All-seeing Eye of God. Her faith went before her knowledge; her faith was the first to receive the blessing. Each of us, indeed, as we read this story, can see that there is much spiritual worship in much apparent superstition; and, still more, that there is much spiritual idolatry in that pride of better knowledge which can only think scornfully of our fellow-Christians because, in their guileless ignorance, they have been accustomed to bow their knees before a statue, or to attribute fictitious power to an image of stone. When Henry Martyn, the great and holy missionary, saw once in Spain a poor old crone bowing down and reverently kissing the feet of a stone image and bathing it with her tears, he reflected that, however much his understanding of the scheme of Redemption might be better than hers, very probably in faith and love she was his superior; and it is by our faith and by our love that we shall be accepted in the Last Day. Even when the idolatry is definite and certain, we shall oftener find it the consequence of dullness of intellect rather than of real alienation of the heart from God.

II. Faith and love—these are what we require for this world and the next. We know how human love will invest everything that belongs to its dear ones with a peculiar sanctity, so that any trifle—even the hem of a garment—will easily become identified with the object of its love. So does faith in things Divine; and nothing can show the nobleness and excellence of this poor woman's faith more than this—that she saw a healing in spite of superstition. Thus, wherever there is human distress to heal and human faith to gain a blessing, the goodness and the power of God will overflow the ignorance and render faith a healing power.

III. There was nothing in the hem of Christ's garment more than in the hem of any other to convey a blessing. A multitude was thronging all round Him, hustling against Him, and yet receiving no benefit. Only one woman in all of that crowd believed that His Sacred Person was full of healing blessing, so that if only she could come in contact with Him she would be at once healed. She recognized that one touch of Christ could overcome all the powers of darkness of this world. And He in turn recognized that touch of timid faith, even amid the pressure of the crowd. It is thus to-day within the Church of Jesus Christ. The Christ still conveys strength and healing to us through outward means. And if the hem of Christ's garment had such power to heal and bless when touched by faith, how much more shall the Body and Blood of Christ, received by faith in our hearts, have power for the strengthening and for the refreshing of our souls!

References.—IX. 21.—B. Wilberforce, *The Hope that is in me*, p. 25. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxx. No. 1809. Trench on the *Miracles*, p. 200. Dean Hook on the *Miracles*, vol. i. p. 242. Hall, 'The Bloody Issue Healed,' *Contemplations*. Cox, 'Healing of Veronica,' *A Day With Christ*, p. 141. J. O. Davies, 'Jesus Touched by the Way,' *Sunrise on the Soul*, p. 101. Allon, 'Healing Virtue of the Christ,' *Vision of God*, etc., p. 75. Maclaren, 'Power of Feeble Faith,' *Sermons Preached in Manchester* (2nd Series), p. 294. Beecher, 'Healing Virtue in Christ,' *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. iv. p. 161. W. C. Smith (with Isaiah xlii. 3), 'Survival of Fittest and a Higher Law,' *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. x. p. 177, and in *Three Hundred Outlines on the New Testament*, p. 34. Mellor's 'The Hem of Christ's Garment,' *Sermons*, p. 1. 'Desperate Faith,' *Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. i. p. 256. 'Confident Timidity,' *Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. ii. p. 556. T. Sherlock, 'The Woman Who Touched,' *Homiletic Magazine*, vol. vii. p. 150.

THE REWARD OF FAITH

'Daughter, be of good comfort; thy faith hath made thee whole.'—Matthew ix. 22.

The incident recorded in this passage concerning the woman who came to Jesus is more fully related in St. Luke's Gospel; and we must consider what St. Luke has to say about the striking features in the narrative. They all go to show the preciousness of faith—what it will overcome in getting to Jesus, and what it apprehends in reaching Him. Notice—

I. How Many were this Woman's Difficulties.—There was her own bodily weakness (Ps. xxxviii. 3-8; Mark xiv. 38). There was the crowd thronging round the Saviour (Luke viii. 45). What an impediment is the world! (Luke xix. 3; Matt. xiii. 22; 2 Tim. iv. 10). There was the opinion of man. It was clear that the physicians had pronounced her incurable (Luke viii. 43; Ps. lx. 11; cxviii. 8; Eph. v. 6). She had, besides, no invitation (Eph. iii. 12); cf. the resolution of Esther (chap. iv. 16). She was,

moreover, unclean, and by the law therefore prohibited from approach (Lev. xv. 2; cf. Eph. II. 13).

II. How Simple was this Woman's Faith.—She believed that Jesus could do *all* for her (Mark IX. 23; Rom. VIII. 32; Phil. IV. 19). She therefore pressed through the crowd and *touched* Him. What was in *her* touch? Many others thronged and touched Him; but they did *not* do so *intentionally*. She put out her hand as wishing to receive. That is what faith does. It simply *takes* what God *has given* (Eph. I. 3; 2 Cor. I. 3). We think very little is in a touch; but all through the Bible God shows how important it is (Gen. III. 3; Exod. XIX. 12; Lev. V. 2; Is. VI. 7; Luke XXII. 51).

III. How Complete was this Woman's Cure.—Our Lord said to her, 'Daughter'. She was, therefore, acknowledged as a child of the family (2 Cor. VI. 17, 18; 1 John III. 1). 'Be of good comfort.' There is no fear in coming to Jesus (2 Tim. I. 7; 1 John IV. 18; Is. XLI. 10). 'Thy faith hath made thee whole.' The believer appropriates *all* the blessings that are in Christ (Ps. CIII. 2-5). 'Go in peace.' There is no care for the soul that has come to Jesus (1 Pet. V. 7; Phil. IV. 6, 7). 'He is our peace.'

We have two thoughts, then, here for us in connexion with precious faith: (1) What Jesus can do for us—*everything* (Eph. III. 20). (2) That *nothing* should stop us in coming to Him (Mark. I. 17-20).

REFERENCE.—IX. 23, 24.—S. Baring-Gould, *Village Preaching for a Year*, vol. ii. p. 246.

'Thou son of David, have mercy on us.'—MATTHEW IX. 27.

NEVER speak of God without speaking to God. On religious subjects the best meditation is prayer. To have prayed is to have thought. I should almost have preferred not to have had any theology. The best is that which is summed up in the words, 'Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me'.—VINET.

REFERENCES.—IX. 27-30.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxiii. No. 1355; vol. xxvi. No. 1560. IX. 27-31.—Archbishop Trench, *Notes on the Miracles of Our Lord*, p. 163. IX. 27, 38.—J. Laidlaw, *The Miracles of Our Lord*, p. 240. IX. 29.—J. Llewelyn Davies, *Christus Imperator*, p. 108. IX. 32, 33.—W. M. Taylor, *The Miracles of Our Saviour*, p. 187. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xlii. No. 2482. IX. 35.—H. P. Liddon, *Sermons Preached on Special Occasions*, 1860-1889, p. 304. J. Parker, *The Gospel of Jesus Christ*, p. 9. A. F. Winnington Ingram, *Under the Dome*, p. 203. IX. 35.-XI.—H. Hensley Henson, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lx. 1901, p. 328.

THE COMPASSION OF CHRIST

'But when He saw the multitude, He was moved with compassion on them.'—MATTHEW IX. 36.

WHEN did He see the multitude? He saw the multitudes before there were any multitudes to be seen: I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the First and the Last: 'I was with God before there were any fountains abounding with water.

I. When Jesus saw the multitudes, therefore, He was in eternity, in His own sanctuary of solitude; He was a philanthropist before there was a man created to be pitied. God knew from all eternity that the finite must weep, the finite must suffer.

The compassion of Christ was from eternity, therefore it could take effect in time, and therefore it will continue to take effect until time's last sunset has glowed upon the world. It is eternity that gives explanation and completeness to the Atonement. We are apt to think that the Atonement took place at a time which could be dated; we discourse much about Friday night, and the whole Saturday in the grave, and the dawning of the first day of the week. It is all puerile; any comment dealing with these facts is a comment to be dispensed with; we live in God's eternal purpose, the Atonement was rendered before the sin was done; 'before Abraham was I AM,' and I AM has no time.

II. Compassion is not sentiment, it is redemption. There is a sentiment no bigger than its own tear; there is another sentiment that signifies redemption, something done for the sinner. That was the redemption wrought out by Jesus Christ. He did not cry over men, He died for them. He did not say, It is a pity; He said, I will go down, and I will tread the winepress alone, and I will make suffering the way into the highest eminences and noblest sanctuaries of life and service. To Christ we owe the sentiment that completes itself in redemption. Away with your tears that have no depth! Welcome the love that would die for the prodigal!

III. What a view was that which Jesus Christ took of the multitudes! He saw the multitudes exactly as they were. It was a multitudinous misery, a multitudinous sin, a multitudinous helplessness. We see throngs, and remark on the number: Christ saw multitudes, and remarked on their misery. Alas! there is no gathering of human beings that does not represent a gathered pain, a gathered helplessness: where two or three are gathered together there is at least one broken heart. The street looks well, it is filled with bunting and with festoons, with spring flowers or summer grandeur; but in every house in that decorated street there is a broken heart. Jesus Christ did not see the bunting flying from the windows, He saw the hearts that were dying within the bosoms of human grief: He had compassion.

IV. How was it that Jesus Christ spoke to multitudes and spoke of multitudes? The answer is plain: Jesus Christ was not one of many, He was many in One; that is the explanation. We are only wise in our statesmanship in the degree in which we are Biblical; we must go to God to know what the condition of the world is. That condition has been represented in Scripture in the most graphic and in the most awesome and appalling terms.—JOSEPH PARKER, *City Temple Pulpit*, vol. I. p. 190.

REFERENCES.—IX. 36.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—St. Matthew IX.-XVII.* p. 41. H. C. G. Moule, *My Brethren and Companions*, p. 41; see also *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxvi. 1904, p. 233. T. T. Munger, *Character Through Inspiration*, p. 97; see also *The Freedom of Faith*, p. 131. G. Tyrrell, *Oil and Wine*, p. 149. W. H. Murray, *The Fruits of*

the Spirit, p. 290. J. Marshall Lang, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxxix. 1891, p. 193. J. Morgan Gibbon, *ibid.* vol. xlv. 1894, p. 316. C. Gore, *ibid.* vol. l. 1896, p. 113. IX. 36, 37.—J. Wright, *The Guarded Gate*, p. 89. IX. 36-38.—J. O. Johnston, *Church Times*, vol. l. 1903, p. 443. Hugh Ross, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xlvii. 1895, p. 374. N. D. J. Straton, *ibid.* vol. lviii. 1900, p. 85. T. Barker, *Plain Sermons*, p. 284.

'The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few.'—MATTHEW IX. 37, 38.

PÈRE GRATRY writes on this text: 'If there is one thing clearer than another, it is that there are a thousand times too few men who are consecrated to the religious and moral education of the human race. An incalculable moral wealth is lost, over all the earth, for lack of labourers in the harvest of souls. "The harvest is plenteous," said Christ, "but the labourers are few." This lack of true workers is one of the characteristic features of the world's history, and we see it in our own day. That is why all the works of men, without exception, are in a backward state. "Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest that He will send forth labourers into His harvest." That is the world's chief need; that is what we must ask from God. I do not know any wiser enthusiasm than that which stirs men up to become labourers for God.'

REFERENCES.—IX. 37, 38.—H. Price Hughes, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. liii. 1898, p. 308. Lyman Abbott, *ibid.* vol. lxii. 1902, p. 33. A. E. Garvie, *ibid.* vol. lxxiv. 1908, p. 353. D. Fraser, *Metaphors in the Gospels*, p. 112. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xix. No. 1127. IX. 38.—F. E. Paget, *Helps and Hindrances to the Christian Life*, vol. ii. p. 221. E. Fowle, *Pray ye the Lord of the Harvest, Sermons*, 1872-1873. X. 1, 2.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xii. No. 702.

LIST OF THE APOSTLES

'Now the names of the twelve apostles are these; The first Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother; James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother; Philip, and Bartholomew; Thomas, and Matthew the publican; James the son of Alphæus, and Lebbæus, whose surname was Thaddæus; Simon the Canaanite, and Judas Iscariot, who also betrayed Him.'—MATTHEW X. 2-4.

I. THERE are several pairs of brothers: Peter and Andrew; James and John; Judas and James. This points to (1) the need of companionship in Christian work, as solace, and as a curb to excessive individualism. (2) The allowableness of special friendships among Christian workers. (3) That Christianity is more beautiful when the natural bonds of love and kindred are sanctified. It is meant to heighten these and they to provide channels for its operation. (4) But also Christianity separates and dissolves natural ties.

II. There were wide varieties in the characters of the men chosen, which shows that there is room for all diversities in Christ's service and the uniting power of the Christian faith. Christ Himself in His living presence as the centre held all in unity.—A. MACLAREN.

REFERENCES.—X. 3.—H. J. Martyn, *For Christ and the Truth*, p. 75. X. 4.—J. E. Roberts, *Studies in the Lord's Prayer*, p. 106. A. F. Winnington Ingram, *The Men Who Crucify Christ*, p. 11. X. 5.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—St. Matthew IX.-XVII.* p. 55. X. 5-16.—*Ibid.* p. 68. X. 6.—H. Ward Beecher, *Sermons* (2nd Series), p. 179. X. 7.—H. A. Stimson, *The New Things of God*, p. 267. Lyman Abbott, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xlviii. 1895, p. 372. X. 7, 8.—E. White, *ibid.* vol. xlv. 1894, p. 389. W. M. Sinclair, *ibid.* vol. xlvi. 1894, p. 56.

THE CONDITION AND OBLIGATION OF SERVICE

'Freely ye have received, freely give.'—MATTHEW X. 8.

I. The Condition, the Source, the Inspiration of Service.—'Freely ye have received;' and here I cannot, dare not, attempt to speak about the greatness of the giving. He who told us most about it called it unspeakable; the riches of the grace are unsearchable, the love beyond all faith's measurement; we can only kneel before it and adore. But about our receiving we may speak, for that, alas! is too often a measurable quantity, and yet upon that depends all the power and willingness of service. It is not the magnitude of the grace, but the proportion of its inflow, that determines all the issues of the Christian life; the sun-rays are poured as plentifully upon the barren rock as upon the vine which creeps around it, but it is the measure of reception that makes the difference between the dead, profitless stone and the living tree that quivers into fruit-bearing. Glad giving comes out of full receiving. Loving God is letting God love us; the outgoings of our love are just the overflow of the Divine love in us. The Apostles tell us often in glowing, rapturous words of God's wonderful gifts to them, but they tell us quite as frequently of their own receiving. It was that which had made the miracle of their lives: 'Out of His fulness we all received, and grace upon grace'.

People who merely move among the crowd about Christ, who stop short of touching the hem of His garment, who perhaps see only His shadow as it passes by, who hardly open the narrowest chink of their being to the healing of His power, cannot be expected to lavish costly ointment at His feet. Only those give Him of their best, and give it with raptures of gratitude, who have been much healed and much forgiven; then they lay at His feet their ointment, or their tears, or their very blood-drops, if He asks, and think it all too small. If we measure with sparing, reluctant hands every coin that we drop into His treasury, every hour that we give to His worship and work, every meagre self-denial which His service imposes, there needs no further proof of the feeble hold which He has upon us and our scant reception of His grace.

II. The Obligation of Service.—Our receipts make our debt. The Lord tells us here, and His words are echoed and repeated in all the confessions of His disciples, that we have received for the very purpose of giving. The Gospel of the blessed God has been committed to us in trust. We are not absolute owners, we are responsible trustees. 'As every man hath received the gift, so minister the same one

to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.' The men who had learned directly of Christ never regarded their spiritual endowments save in this aspect. They never once supposed that the heavenly light had been kindled in them solely for their own glory, that the Divine treasure had been bestowed upon them simply for their own enrichment, and that for their own sakes alone they had been singled out for a benefit so vast, a mercy so wonderful, a salvation so grand and complete. How could they suppose that, unless Calvary had developed in them the Pharisee's pride or the miser's greed? How could they entertain that thought, unless they had been plunged in a blinding maelstrom of intolerable self-conceit? What had they done to deserve this signal grace and the promotion from rude fishermen to companionship with the King of Kings? No, they knew that the Divine love which had fixed itself on them was felt as fully and as freely towards the whole human race, and that the light had shown on their hearts first that through them the illumination might spread everywhere. It was not their own. It was the most sacred and responsible of trusts. It belonged to all men. To withhold it would be to rob men of what God had made their right. Nay, it would be to deny and forfeit their own calling. 'Woe is me if I preach not the Gospel.' And every one feels this who has truly understood and rejoiced in God's great gift. If it has not yet penetrated and suffused the hearts of all Christians, it is because the selfish human elements have counteracted the workings of the Divine, and because man's littleness has brought God's great thought down to the measure of the market and the shop.—J. G. Greenhough, *The Cross in Modern Life*, p. 162.

References.—X. 8.—James Baldwin Brown, *The Divine Life in Man*, pp. 321, 344. E. Y. Mullins, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxviii. 1905, p. 168. H. Montagu Butler, *ibid.* vol. lxx. 1906, p. 97. H. A. Stimson, *The New Things of God*, p. 245. F. Paget, *The Spirit of Discipline*, p. 234. X. 10.—J. O. Wills, *The Dundee Pulpit*, 1872, p. 185.

'And into whatsoever city or town ye shall enter, seek out who in it is worthy.'—Matthew x. 11.

'There are some men,' says Mrs. Oliphant in her *Life of Edward Irving*, 'who seem born to the inalienable good fortune of lighting upon the best people—"the most worthy," according to Irving's own expression long afterwards—wherever they go. Irving's happiness in this way began at Haddington. The doctor's wife seems to have been one of those fair, sweet women whose remembrance lasts longer than greatness. . . . The Annandale youth came into a little world of humanizing graces when he entered that atmosphere; and it was only natural that he should retain the warmest recollection of it throughout his life.'

Reference.—X. 12, 13.—R. E. Hutton, *The Crown of Christ*, vol. ii. p. 565.

'And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear your words, when ye depart out of that house or city, shake off the dust of your feet.'—Matthew x. 14.

Compare Wesley's account of how he left Georgia, being hampered by the authorities in his work. 'I saw clearly the hour was come for leaving this place. and as soon as evening prayers were over, about eight o'clock, the tide then serving, I shook off the dust of my feet, and left Georgia, after having preached the Gospel there (not as I ought, but as I was able) one year and nearly nine months.'

Reference.—X. 14, 15.—F. E. Paget, *Sermons for The Saints' Days*, p. 205.

'Be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves.'—Matthew x. 16.

Compare Amiel's remarks on prudence, as part of love to men. 'Be ye simple as the dove, and prudent as the serpent,' are words of Jesus. Be careful of your reputation, not through vanity, but that you may not harm your life's work, and out of love for truth.'

It was what he called his wisdom of the serpent, says Mr. Morley, that gave Cobden his power in the other arts of a successful agitator, which are less conspicuous but hardly less indispensable, than commanding or persuasive oratory. He applied the same qualities in the actual business of the League that he brought to bear in his speeches. He was indefatigable in industry, fertile in ingenious devices for bringing the objects of the League before the country, constantly on the alert for surprising a hostile post, never losing a chance of turning a foe or a neutral into a friend, and never allowing his interest about the end for which he was working to confuse his vigilant concentration upon the means.

References.—X. 16.—J. H. Newman, *Sermons Bearing on Subjects of the Day*, p. 331. D. Fraser, *Metaphors in the Gospels*, p. 118. J. Stark, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxxix. 1891, p. 241. J. Stalker, *ibid.* vol. lxi. 1902, p. 41. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxiii. No. 1370. X. 16-31.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—St. Matthew IX.-XVII.* p. 74. X. 19.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons Preached in Sackville College Chapel*, vol. iv. p. 256. X. 22.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. x. No. 554.

THE CHRISTIAN PALLIATION OF PAIN

'When they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another.'—Matthew x. 23.

I. The days of persecution are past; has this text lost its meaning? No, it is to my mind the revelation of an eternal fact—a fact which distinguishes Christianity from all other religions. Christ's remedy for the immediate pressure of grief is one peculiarly His own. Consider the remedies proposed by some other faiths. The Buddhist says: 'When you are oppressed by any sorrow, think how all your desires will be stilled in death'. The Brahman says: 'When you are oppressed by any sorrow, remember how all finite things are illusions'. The Stoic says: 'When you are oppressed by any sorrow, keep your mind on things that suppress emotion'. The Jew says: 'When you are oppressed by any sorrow, seek

out and expiate the sin you have committed'. Christ says none of these things. His recommendation is: 'When you are oppressed by any sorrow, rest your thoughts as much as possible upon some joy that remains; when you are persecuted in one city, flee into another'.

II. Our danger in grief is that of forgetting our untouched joys. We have all some city of refuge—some spot left green. Christ says our first duty is to flee thither. He says we shall be better able to remedy any stroke of fortune if in the first instance we seek comfort in another direction. He practised this Himself in His cures. A paralytic came to be healed; Jesus said, 'Thy sins be forgiven thee'. Was not that irrelevant—to promise a man forgiveness of sin who wanted cure for paralysis? Yes, but in the irrelevancy lay the beauty. The best prelude to curing a man's paralysis is to get him over to the sunny side of the street—to fix his mind upon an actually existing joy.

III. So, too, when Christ tells the labouring and laden in body that He will give them rest to their *souls*, it seems an irrelevancy; but it is not. What better prelude to a medical cure than a flash of sunshine in the soul; what better preparation for a physical improvement than a state of inward rest? Our Lord would have us first get out from the persecuted into the unpersecuted city and brace ourselves for struggle by an hour of peace.—G. Matheson, *Messages of Hope*, p. 149.

'When they persecute you in one city, flee ye into another.'—Matthew x. 23.

If religion be the doing of all good, and for its sake the suffering of all evil, *souffrir de tout le monde et ne faire souffrir personne*, that Divine secret has existed in England from the days of Alfred to those of Romilly, of Clarkson, and of Florence Nightingale, and in thousands who have no fame.'—Emerson, *English Traits*, xiii.

References.—X. 24.—W. J. Knox-Little, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. li. 1897, p. 250. X. 24, 25.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—St. Matthew IX.-XVII.* p. 83; see also *Creed and Conduct*, p. 89. X. 24-26.—H. Ward Beecher, *Sermons*, vol. ii. p. 195. X. 26.—A. Martin, *Winning the Soul*, p. 181. X. 26, 27.—H. Scott Holland, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xli. 1892, p. 49. X. 27.—E. Griffith-Jones, *ibid.* vol. liii. 1898, p. 195. C. Silvester Horne, *ibid.* vol. liv. 1898, p. 85. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xlvi. No. 2674.

'Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear Him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.'—Matthew x. 28.

Compare Carlyle's account, in the first volume of his *Cromwell*, of Prynne, Bastwick, and Burton, being mutilated, by order of Archbishop Laud, and of how, 'Bastwick's wife, on the scaffold, received his ears in her lap and kissed them. Prynne's ears the executioner "rather sawed than cut". "Cut me, tear me," cried Prynne? "I fear thee not; I fear the fire of Hell, not thee."'

'Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father.'—Matthew x. 29.

Nature herself has not provided the most graceful end for her creatures. What becomes of all the birds that people the air and forest for our solacement? The sparrows seem always *chipper*, never infirm. We do not see their bodies lie about. Yet there is a tragedy at the end of each one of their lives. They must perish miserably; not one of them is translated. True, 'not a sparrow falleth to the ground without our heavenly Father's knowledge,' but they do fall, nevertheless.—Thoreau, *A Week on the Concord*.

THE PROVIDENCE OF THE TRIFLE

'Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered.'—Matthew x. 29, 30.

We are so earth-bound that *we half-suspect the competence of any being to exercise a Providence over motes, atoms, and infinitesimal details.* We are not sure that we honour the Infinite by such a conception.

I. Our *own carelessness about details* in the lives that crowd our daily pathway makes it difficult for us to believe in Christ's doctrine of a Providence that regulates trifles. It is only a point in the unmeasured area of human life, not to speak of other uncounted realms of life, that we can touch by our sympathies. How incredible that God should fulfil a Providence that includes the meanest things in nature!

The indifference that warps our judgment of this question is made up of two things—*sheer selfishness and rigid limitation of power and opportunity.* Selfishness shrivels resource, and the shrinkage of resource seems to justify our selfishness.

II. It is often intimated that our theories of Providence are frequently *discredited by the actual facts we see around us.* The government of the world often looks as though it were impersonal. The universe, we are tempted to say, is ruled by a necessity that takes no account of the individual. All facts point in that direction.

Could we get into God's secret chambers we should see how He puts Himself into the blindest forces of the universe, and makes them move the fine threads of His counsel, and work out His deepest and most complex designs.

We cannot gauge God's providence over the little things of life by His apparent indifference to the time and circumstance under which the stream of breath in a man ceases. It is His hand which controls that breath, and His hand never forgets its cunning.

Much of our terror of death is due to ignorance of what death is, and to the assumption that it can come to any one of us as mere fate. To God and to us death must seem very different things. We are held in its chain, or at least seem to be. He holds

death in chains, and never lets the key of the grim monster's fetters pass for a moment out of His possession.

III. Belief in a Providence that is informed in incalculably minute sympathies is *necessary to our habitual communion with God.* If God cannot or will not care for little things, we have no encouragement to come to His feet and pour out our tale before Him.

Our belief ought to give *calmness in our work and authority to the message* we are sent to deliver. Every part of the elect life is under a sacred ordination, and God watches over all the things that concern us as we do His will. We often lack a due sense of our vocation because our belief in a guiding Providence is feeble.—T. G. Selby, *The Lesson of a Dilemma*, p. 82.

References.—X. 30.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. iv. No. 187; vol. xxxiv. No. 2005. James Vaughan, *Sermons Preached in Christ Church, Brighton* (7th Series), p. 151.

ON CHURCHGOING

'Whosoever therefore shall confess Me before men, him will I confess also before My Father, which is in heaven.'—Matthew x. 32.

We are told to confess Christ. 'Whosoever therefore shall confess Me before men, him will I confess also before My Father which is in heaven.' Nor is this all. This is only half the truth. There is the dark side as well as the bright one. 'But whosoever shall deny Me before men, him will I also deny before My Father which is in heaven.'

I. In an age when everybody is allowed to believe what they like, the constancy of the martyr and the cowardice of the renegade are alike impossible. Confessing Christ before men is done by all respectable churchgoers, as you may say; what can any one require more? I think God will require much more. And here I would enter a protest against a form of cowardice common at this day. How many among us reverse the language of the prayer and 'profess and call themselves *non*-Christians'? You hear repeatedly men and women say, 'I don't profess to be a Christian, but I look after sick people. I don't profess to be a Christian, but I am always ready to help. I don't profess to be a Christian, but you will not hear any slander or evil-speaking from me.' This is a common line for people to take up just now, even if they do not put it quite so plainly in words. Examine it, and it means something like this. I will copy the teachings of Christ's gracious life, but I will not acknowledge their source. For who taught the world to seek out the sick and the sorrowing? Who taught the world to help the poor? Who made it a duty to refrain from guileful speech, and to be gentle, compassionate, tender-hearted? Jesus Christ of Nazareth! This fact, however, must be ignored; we must pretend that it is our own superiority that enables us to lead the higher life.

II. We constantly find people taking a sort of pride in assuming this attitude of aloofness about religion. They seem to consider it a mark of intelligence to deny the superior claims of Christianity over other faiths. Buddha, Mohammed, Moses, or Jesus are all treated with the same patronizing approbation. It is a revival of the saying of the Roman cynic, 'All religions are equally false'. To entertain no preference for the best thing in the world is not dignity, but dullness.

People are denying the Master in a new way, and while taking all they can from His system, they revile it and call it outworn and dying.

III. A *public* profession of Christianity is what is wanted. Since the days of the Apostles it has been the rule that all Christians should assemble themselves together on the first day of the week in open acknowledgment of their allegiance to Christ.—C. H. Butcher, *The Sound of a Voice that is Still*, p. 160.

References.—X. 32.—S. Martin, *Westminster Chapel Sermons*, p. 1. C. Perren, *Revival Sermons in Outline*, p. 173. X. 32, 33.—F. E. Paget, *Sermons for the Saints' Days*, p. 55. X. 32-42.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—St. Matthew IX.-XVII.* p. 94.

THE SWORD OF DOUBT

'I came not to send peace, but a sword.'—Matthew x. 34.

Our Lord tells us here that the preaching of the Cross is like a sword. When St. John saw the Son of Man is his vision, 'there went a sharp two-edged sword out of his mouth'.

It sounds like a paradox that the Lamb should bear a sword. Yet we know that the preaching of the Cross, wherever it sounded, cut men to the heart, leaving deep divisions and awakening sharp animosities.

I. Now may we not say that this sword of the Lamb is Doubt. In the mind of the seeker after light it is the anguish of indecision. And in the case of the persecutor it is at bottom the same thing.

Ever since the advent of our Lord you find doubt in the world. The leaven immediately began to work, and it worked with great violence, causing a turmoil, a civil war, in the soul, such as had never been experienced before.

What did our Lord do to create this horrid spectre of Doubt and let it loose upon the modern world?

If we are to understand why He sent not peace but a sword, we must fix our attention on the deepest and most characteristic feature of His work and doctrine, and this is certainly to be found in the Cross. It has always been a supreme difficulty, and there is nothing in the whole body of Christian doctrine that has excited so much hostility, so much repugnance, or so much derision, as the notion that vicarious suffering can have any moral value or can in any sense be called a duty or a Divine law. It does not seem reasonable, it does not square with our empirical conception of justice, and it is the very last thing that men desire. Yet it is the specific mark of Christianity, and deep within our hearts there is a voice that tells us that it is Divine and that through it lies the way to the right understanding of God and

of life. Here, and here only, we see the full meaning of the sword of the Lamb. Alone of all teachers He dared to proclaim as the goal of human aspiration not happiness nor tranquillity but Life, Life attained through pain and working in Pain, Pain not passive but active, not borne with stoic resignation but cheerfully accepted and sought for, as a ransom for the souls of others and through those others of ourselves. Such a doctrine is exquisitely painful. It offends at every point. It affronts our reason, our dignity, our freedom, our conduct, our physical weakness. Yet no man reads the history of the Passion without feeling its truth.

II. Pain indeed suggests the one and only doubt which is worth a moment's consideration.

Pain is undoubtedly a grave problem, but for this very reason it is of vital importance that it should not be presented in a false or exaggerated light. Nature strikes many people as cruel, yet the suffering which forms part of her system is never inflicted, in the first instance at any rate, from a mere delight in barbarity. Animals are not cruel unless they are depraved. Aimless ferocity is a vice in them as it is in man. They kill for food as man himself does, and almost always in the shortest and least painful manner. Again, it is highly probable that the lower animals are not so susceptible of pain as man himself, and the pain of violent injuries is not to be compared with [illegible] torments of disease. Pain is not really [illegible] from speaking of the [illegible] and hideous torture-chamber.

The difficulty of pain is almost entirely modern. It is hardly to be found in Scripture, except perhaps in the phrase of St. Paul about the whole Creation groaning and travailing in sympathy with the evil of man. Our Saviour never touches upon this theme, and the old Psalmist writes without hesitation, 'the lions roaring after their prey do seek their meat from God'.

III. We may say that pain is not an evil because it shortens life but only when it degrades it, that it never degrades the brute and only accidentally degrades man. But still there will remain an unanswered doubt. Why did a good God order His universe in this way? Why did He not content Himself with framing painless angels and leave suffering beasts out of the scheme?

If we fix our eyes on the lower parts of Creation we can discover no satisfactory answer. We do not know the brutes. But man we do know, and in his spirit we can find a law that brings peace, the law of the Cross. And not in his spirit only. The Cross reaches up to heaven and brings suffering into contact with God Himself. As we look upon Calvary we see pain transfigured; it is no longer a burden, but a wing. It is the cement of all society, the spur to all progress, the main link between man and man, and man and God.

Why it should be so we cannot tell. We cannot fully solve those or any other mystery, nor can we banish mystery from life. There is darkness around us, above us, within us. But there is also light; and though it be but a glimmering point, the wise man will turn his face towards it. Aristomenes of Messene, when he was condemned to die and cast into the dark pit, at first gave way to despair. But as he strained his eyes around the black recesses of the Ceadas he caught sight of a thread of sunlight, crawled towards it on hands and knees, and finally escaped through a fox's earth. And this is a parable of the Christian pilgrim. Only he must have faith, that is to say, he must believe that there is open day and freedom, and that the little spark of brightness points the way towards the sun.—C. Bigg, *The Spirit of Christ in Common Life*, p. 21.

NOT PEACE, BUT A SWORD

'Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword.'—Matthew x. 34.

I. Not Peace, but a Sword.—The words are written in the whole history of the Church from then until now. The martyrdom of Stephen was the first occasion for the extension of the Gospel, and the law of its progress has never varied. For three centuries Christianity maintained an open struggle with the strongest power which the world has ever seen. The victory was won, the triumph exceeded all human hope; but peace was not yet.

II. Not Peace, but a Sword.—For three more [illegible] poured over the fairest [illegible] uncon- [illegible] ept over [illegible] cure above them. So again the victory [illegible] w family of nations was gathered in the fold of Christ: but peace was not yet.

III. Not Peace, but a Sword.—The nations were Christianized, but the poor were forgotten. The history of the Middle Age is a long record of conflicts between the spirit of the Gospel and the spirit of dominion. When the full time was come the outward unity of Christendom was broken. Christian was armed against Christian in an unnatural strife. But we now are allowed to look back upon that age of the Reformation and see how men, who owned no fellowship on earth, were yet enabled to work out each some fragment of Divine truth and hand it down to us. But with the larger view of the capacities of Christianity, and the truer view of its adaptation to every variety of thought which we owe to them—larger and truer, I believe, than was ever vouchsafed to any earlier age—we have received also an inheritance of division: *not peace, but a sword.*

IV. But they have also another and a more personal sense. They speak to each one of us in our own peculiar work. In that our battle is to be fought; in that the critical power of Christianity for us is to be manifested; in that we shall find that the Gospel comes not with the soft voice of rest, but with a sterner call.

V. Not Peace, but a Sword.—But the words cheer us when we find the conflict of life hardest. It is Christ's will that it be so.—B. F. Westcott, *Village Sermons*, p. 298.

THE SENDING OF THE SWORD

'I came not to send peace, but a sword.'—Matthew x. 34.

There seems to be a glaring contradiction between this word and some other words of Jesus. Life proves many a proposition to be true that logic would readily demonstrate as false. And the strange thing about the words of Christ is, that while they seem to contradict each other at the bar of reason, they link themselves together into perfect harmony when we go forward in the strength of them. They are words of life; meant to be lived out.

I. The coming of Christ sends a sword into the heart. Now this is exactly what I should have expected when I remember the penalties of gain. For everything a man achieves there is a price to pay. There comes a wound with everything we win. All knowledge, whatever joy it brings with it, brings with it in the other hand a sword. All love, though it kindles the world into undreamed-of brightness, has a note in its music of unrest and agony.

To receive Christ is to receive the truth; it is to have the Spirit of Love breathing within us; and if truth and love always bring sorrow with them, I shall expect the coming of Christ to be with pain.

II. There are three ways in which the coming of Christ into the heart sends a sword there.

1. Christ opens up the depths of sin within us. We see what we are in the light of His perfection. We were tolerably contented with our character once, but when Christ comes we are never that again.

2. Christ calls us to a lifelong warfare. The note of warfare rings through the whole New Testament. The spirit is quickened now to crave for spiritual things, and the flesh and the spirit must battle till the grave.

3. Above all, it is by heightening our ideal that the old peace goes and the pain begins. It is in the new conception of what life may be that the sword-stroke cuts into the heart.

III. Christ comes to send a sword into the home. Did you ever think how true that was of Nazareth? Did you ever reflect on our text in the light of that home? It might have been so peaceful and so happy if God had never honoured it like this. But Jesus was born there, and that made all the difference. It could never be the quiet home again. Gethsemane was coming, Calvary was coming; a sword was going to pierce through Mary's heart. He came not to send peace, but a sword.

Develop love, and you develop sorrow. Deepen the heart-life, and you deepen suffering. It is by doing that, through all the centuries, that Christ has brought the sword into our homes.—G. H. Morrison, *Sun-Rise*, p. 158.

Illustration—I notice in the engines of our river-steamers that there are rods that move backward as well as rods that move forward. A child would say they were fighting with each other, and that half of the engines were going the wrong way. But though half the engines seem to go the wrong way, there is no question that the ship is going the right way: out of the smoke and stir of the great city into the bays where the peace of God is resting. So with the words of Christ that seem to oppose each other. Make them the driving power of the soul, and the oppositions will not hinder progress, and the contradictions will reveal their unity, and you shall be brought to your desired haven.—G. H. Morrison, *Sun-Rise*, p. 159.

'I came not to send peace, but a sword.'—Matthew x. 34.

What said Jesus—that He came to send a sword? Of course He did. Every idea is a sword.—W. Hale White.

References.—X. 34.—J. Neville Figgis, *The Gospel and Human Needs*, p. 145. W. Garrett Horder, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxiv. 1903, p. 204. A. G. Mortimer, *The Church's Lessons for the Christian Year*, part ii. p. 247. *Selected Sermons of Schleiermacher*, p. 295. X. 36-38—C. G. Finney, *Sermons on Gospel Themes*, p. 319.

THE SUPREME CLAIM OF CHRIST

'He that loveth father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me.'—Matthew x. 37.

It seems to me that the supreme claim of the Lord Jesus Christ rests at least upon three bases. The first basis of His claim is in His own character; the second basis of His claim is in the need of him upon whom He makes the claim; and the third basis is in the need of the world for him upon whom He makes the claim.

I. His Own Character.—Christ claimed it for Himself, mark you, not for a moral ideal, but for Himself as a living Person, and He claimed the same kind of love as we give to father, to mother, or to child. I say that claim was based upon His own character, for Christ was conscious of having an absolute commission from God to men.

He claimed it because He was conscious of His ability to guide men, and all men, and all kinds of men in all kinds of conditions. Christ brings us a message from God, that we know from experience is the last message, not only of God as a Creator, or as a Judge, or even as a Father, but Christ's message as of a forgiving Father, and of a forgiving Father to the uttermost.

II. The Needs of the Individual.—No man ever saw the needs of men as the Lord Jesus Christ beheld them. He saw the individual need—some one to take the supreme place in man's affection. Man needs a ruler who will save him from himself. Every man living knows that he longs for someone to save him, not from the world, not from the temptations without, but from himself; not only to put out the fires which our own stupidity have kindled, but to bring out the treasure that we know God has deposited within us, and which we cannot dig out ourselves.

There are four ways in which we can use our ware. That boy who had the loaves and fishes could have done four things with them. He could have thrown them away; he could have eaten them himself; or he could have distributed them himself among his friends, or as he did—give them to Christ. And we may do these four things with our lives. And that is why Christ claimed the first place in men's lives, because He knew that life must of necessity be a tragic failure without that influence of Divine grace upon it.

III. The Claim of Others Upon Us.—The world has certain demands upon us. We realize it as we never have realized it before, and the supreme claim of Jesus Christ is based upon the claim of other lives upon us. No man who does not live in communion with God can give an original contribution to life. We owe supreme allegiance to Christ in the interest of the world. We owe it in the interests of the unity of the world as well.—J. Douglas Adam, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxxii. 1907, p. 86.

'He that loveth father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me.—Matthew x. 37.

In his Anglican days, Newman wrote thus of the Roman Church: 'Considering the high gifts and the strong claims of the Church of Rome and its dependencies on our admiration, reverence, love, and gratitude, how could we withstand it, as we do, how could we refrain from being melted into tenderness, and rushing into communion with it, but for the words of Truth itself, which bid us prefer It to the whole world? "He that loveth father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me."'

References.—X. 37.—R. Flint, *Sermons and Addresses*, p. 166. X. 37, 38.—H. Ward Beecher, *Sermons* (2nd Series), p. 585.

'He that taketh not his cross, and followeth after Me, is not worthy of Me.'—Matthew x. 38.

To repel one's cross is to make it heavier.—Amiel.

To take up the Cross of Christ is no great action done once for all; it consists in the continual practice of small duties which are distasteful to us.—Newman.

References.—X. 38.—R. H. McKim, *The Gospel in the Christian Year*, p. 166. H. J. Wilmot-Buxton, *Holy-Tide Teaching*, p. 92. X. 38, 39.—T. B. Dover, *Some Quiet Lenten Thoughts*, p. 95. X. 39.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—St. Matthew IX.-XVII.* p. 102. J. Vickery, *Ideals of Life*, p. 181. J. H. Jowett, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxiv. 1903, p. 209. H. A. Stimson, *The New Things o God*, p. 65.

'He that receiveth you receiveth Me.'—Matthew x. 40.

For a long time past I have seen into a something most wondrous, in what I fear so many think the *accident* of our circle of friends. It is no accident. If it be true, 'He that receiveth you receiveth Me,' in one sense, it is also in this. God draws nigh in our friend-circles.—Smetham.

Reference.—X. 40.—W. J. Knox-Little, *The Perfect Life*, p. 289.

THE EXALTATION OF THE OBSCURE

'He that receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward; and he that receiveth a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man's reward.'—Matthew x. 41.

One of the noticeable features of our Lord's earthly ministry was His tender regard for the obscure and undistinguished men and women by whom He was surrounded, closely connected as this feeling was with an unshaken belief in the undeveloped, yet developable, spiritual capacities of the average mass of mankind.

I. So long as we keep Christ's image in view we can never degenerate into pessimists or cynics. The more we know of Him, and the more truly we believe in Him as representing God and man, the greater will be our reverence for the image of God in our fellow-men, and the more clearly shall we see how out of the very fact of men's seeming insignificance may come opportunities of special faithfulness and of service to God and to man. But in order to see this as Christ saw and revealed it, we need first to be changed in ourselves. And some such generous faith in the higher possibilities of commonplace men and women, implied as it is in the doctrine of the Incarnation, is necessary for our own moral support.

II. There is a peculiar glamour about great talents and powerful individualities. Hence comes a natural tendency to undervalue commonplace qualities, and even to assume that those who are not possessed of any remarkable gifts, however worthy they may be individually, are destitute of significance, and hardly count at all as factors in the moral and spiritual advance of mankind.

The same false estimate sometimes has a benumbing effect on character by leading people to disparage their own powers of usefulness.

Strictly speaking, the great question for every man is, not whether he has commanding powers, but what use he proposes to himself, with God's help, to make of the gifts entrusted to him. Be those gifts great or small, few or many, the main concern to each of us is that they are our gifts, given to us by God Himself, a part, therefore, of our own distinct personality, and they are the measure whereby our faithfulness will be tested.

III. But Christ's words carry us even further than this. Not only do they bring encouragement to the hearts of all those who live faithfully a hidden and an obscure life. They lay down the broad principle of an equivalence of reward as between the eminent and the obscure. They tell us that he who welcomes a prophet simply because he is a prophet, out of regard for his prophetic character, shall receive a prophet's reward, and he who welcomes a righteous man for the simple reason that he loves and reveres righteousness, shall receive a righteous man's reward. The words are of a figurative character, but their meaning is plain. They reveal a law of identification by moral sympathy of humble and holy men of heart with the great characters to whom their highest homage is given.—J. W. Shepard, *Light and Life*, p. 60.

A PROPHET

'He that receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward; and he that receiveth a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man's reward.'—MATTHEW X. 41.

I. A Prophet—a man sent from God to teach us absolute truth concerning our relations with God. Christ was pre-eminently such: the Way, the Truth, and the Life. He still continues to give this knowledge from heaven. No man spake like this Man. No books speak like these books of Holy Scripture: Christ speaks in them from heaven. The real evidence of Christianity is in the Bible; the Word made flesh can only be known through the word made letter as in the writings of the Lord's Apostles.

II. Righteous Men—such as might go forth in God's name. Men's character might be told more by their attitude to the Bible than by anything. The righteous man is one who lives in Christ, and though he may not even be able to read he cannot help saving others—he radiates the saving energy.

III. The Idea of Receiving a Prophet who is able to teach others. The old word 'parlour,' our little social parliament, has given place to the modern term, 'reception room'. Who comes there? Those who like you. Receiving means taking into your confidence, mind, heart, those who are drawn toward you by your character. That man only receives a prophet who receives him to closest intimacy and helps him. To receive a righteous man is to draw him to yourself and help him.

IV. Reception of Prophets; our sympathetic help ensures for us certain participation in their reward both here and hereafter. The reward seems too great, as if the shepherds of Bethlehem should be rewarded for listening to the angels' song by being made angels themselves. But receiving a righteous man goes very deep into character. The impulse to a noble, sympathetic act gains the reward of an inward approving conscience, which is, in fact, the approval of the universal conscience—the love of God. There was no praise in the universe so hearty and vital as God's.

There are many forgotten attributes of God, such as His intensely human sympathies, His love of being loved, the enthusiasm with which He beholds noble and self-sacrificing character.—EDWARD WHITE, *British Weekly Pulpit*, vol. II. p. 77.

REFERENCES.—X. 41.—W. Ewen, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xliii. 1893, p. 220. W. Boyd Carpenter, *ibid.* vol. lviii. 1900, p. 113. 'Plain Sermons' by contributors to the *Tracts for the Times*, vol. viii. p. 25. X. 41, 42.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—St. Matthew IX.-XVII.* p. 110. X. 42.—H. Harris, *Short Sermons*, p. 221. B. D. Johns, *Pulpit Notes*, p. 21. XI.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xlvii. No. 2708. XI. 2.—T. Barker, *Plain Sermons*, p. 224. XI. 2, 3.—F. D. Maurice, *Lincoln's Inn Sermons*, vol. iii. p. 33. G. Jackson, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xlvii. 1895, p. 67. T. F. Lockyer, *The Inspirations of the Christian Life*, p. 76. XI. 2-5.—H. Varley, *Spiritual Light and Life*, p. 145. G. Salmon, *Non-Miraculous Christianity*, p. 1. A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—St. Matthew IX.-XVII.* p. 121. J. B. Stedeford, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxxviii. 1890, p. 129. XI. 2-19.—A. B. Davidson, *The Called of God*, p. 230.

IMPATIENCE

'Art thou He that should come, or do we look for another?'—MATTHEW XI. 3.

I. IT was not by want of faith that the Baptist erred, but by Impatience, which is a different thing, except in so far as it may be said to imply distrust in the Divine wisdom. It is impatience when we would go faster than God, when we would force His hand either to destroy what is evil or to advance what is good, when we complain that He does nothing and hides Himself, because He does not ripen the grain and reap the harvest directly after seed-time. The cause of it is not so much want of faith, as over-estimate of our own insight and power; it arises not so much from lack of devotion as from that most subtle and dangerous temptation, excess of zeal. It is the fault of the too ardent soldier who chafes at the restraints imposed by experience, and starts before his commander gives the word.

It is the fault not of bad men only but of the good, even of the best.

There is another kind of impatience against which we are warned in the Gospel. 'Tell us,' the disciples asked Jesus, 'what is the sign of Thy coming? If Thou wilt not now take Thy power and reign, if Thou wilt not now strike down the wicked, when wilt Thou come and avenge Thy people?'

You will remember the answer. First there will come false Christs, false prophets—not one but many. Who will they be? Will they not be the Christs of the impatient? And who will they be? Will they not be men who promise to save men, not from themselves, but from suffering: and to do it by short, and easy, and violent methods. Our Lord says, Go not after them; believe them not. First the Gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations. He does not say that it shall prevail in all the world: only that it shall be preached, and be a witness.

II. At all times impatience has been a fruitful source of mischief. It has prompted every persecution there has ever been in pagan ages and in Christian. In our own day there are not a few who have abandoned the Gospel altogether, not because they want to live vicious lives, but because the Gospel is not swift enough and not drastic enough for them, because the kingdom seems too far off, while an earthly millennium can be set up at once by the law without the Gospel.

But there are two axioms that ought never to be forgotten. The first is that the good is always the enemy of the better. Men cling to the lower blessings which they know, and shrink from the higher, which they do not know and therefore fear.

The second is that the best is often the enemy of the better. The vision of the best may be given in a moment, but its realization is a long and arduous process, marked by stages which follow one another in a definite order. It was said by a great soldier that all

generals alike desire victory; but that a good general differs from a bad one in that he does not take the second step before he has secured the first. To do otherwise is to court defeat. The rule is of universal application.

III. The best remedy for impatience is to be found in the intelligent study of Scripture. It is necessary that the study should be intelligent because only by the scholarly use of the Bible can we discern the patience and long-suffering of God, the slow certainty with which His mills grind, the vast and orderly changes which His spirit has wrought. And the next best is history which, though it may make little mention of God, yet describes accurately His method in the education of the world.

Now what is the teaching of history so far as it throws light upon our present purpose?

1. That, from the remotest past to which our knowledge extends, there has always been progress, slow, intermittent, not always in a direct line, involving much that strikes us as waste, yet progress.

2. That the slowness of the onward march has an explanation, which applies in a degree to Nature, but is more easily discernible in the realm of thought.

IV. May we say that the order of progress in the education of mankind exhibits an alternation of two very different factors? First we have the idea, then the testing, dissemination, assimilation of the idea, then again a new idea, and so on. First the prophet, or revealer, or man of genius; then the patient teacher. It is the second of these—it is the work of the teacher—that takes so much time.

Every teacher, like John the Baptist, prepares the way of the Lord. Not all can be great discoverers, there is perhaps no school of the prophets, nor is it possible to manufacture genius. But all can show what makes the great scholar, the love of truth—patience, humility, reverence. Add to these knowledge of character and sympathy, and you have the great teacher, whose beneficent office it is to 'turn the hearts of the children to the fathers,' to enable the children to grasp and to prize the rich heritage of the wisdom of the past.

And for the learner. Good teaching will greatly expedite your progress, but it will not enable you to fly; you must still go by the road; you will still have need of diligence and self-discipline. Avoid impatience, avoid sloth. Without haste, without rest. Chain up the beast; and seek wisdom before all things. At every step resolutely practise all the truth that you know, and ever, as you go on, be ready to correct the old truths by the new.

These are cardinal rules for all learners. But Christ is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. All truth is His, all discipline is His, all power is His. Absorb Him by growing faith, hope, and love. Let Him be your ideal, and your method, and your zeal.—C. Bigg, *The Spirit of Christ in Common Life*, p. 153.

LOOKING FOR THE COMING ONE

'Art thou He that should come, or do we look for another?'—Matthew xi. 3.

The first thing we remark in reading the Gospel for to-day is that—

I. John the Baptist was Looking for the Coming One.—It is taken for granted that One should come (Ps. cxviii. 26; Is. lix. 20). But why should John ask such a question? He knew Jesus to be the Saviour. He had declared Him to be *sent of God* (John iii. 34), *the Lamb of God* (John i. 29, 36), *the Son of God* (John i. 34), *the Baptizer with the Holy Ghost* (John i. 33). Perhaps, now that he was in prison (v. 2), his faith had begun to waver (v. 6). It is so with many (Matt. xiii. 21; 2 Tim. i. 15; iv. 16). At all events he was looking for Christ, and would have his faith increased (Heb. xii. 2; Mark ix. 24; Luke xvii. 5). But I think it is more probable that he wished his disciples to know who Christ was (Luke xxii. 32), and would lead them from himself to look for the coming One (John iii. 30, 31). We know his one word with regard to Christ had been 'Behold!' (John i. 29). So all who are looking to Christ and for Christ will teach others to do the same (John i. 41, 42). Christ is to be known as the Saviour by His works (vv. 4, 5; John v. 36). There can be no doubt in looking to Scripture (Is. lxi. 1, 2).

The next thing we have to dwell upon is—

II. The Character of John the Baptist as Looking for the Coming One.—There must be some decided marks of holiness in the character of one who is looking for a coming Lord. The faithful servant will be doing his Master's will (Matt. xxiv. 45, 46). The soul full of hope becomes full of purity (1 John iii. 3). The true convert turns from the service of idols to that of the living God (1 Thess. i. 9, 10). Mark how it was with the Baptist. *He was a man of firm resolution.* Not like a reed blown about by every wind (Eph. iv. 14). He was firm before the priesthood (John i. 20), firm before Herod (Mark vi. 18), firm before all (Luke iii. 7). *He was a man of great self-denial.* There was no luxury in him (v. 8; 1 Pet. ii. 11). He stood out as one separate (Matt. xix. 21; Luke ix. 23; Rom. xiii. 14). *He was a man of faithfulness in telling of Christ* (vv. 9, 10). Never do we find him hesitating boldly and fully to declare the coming One (John i. 7). And in this we have a proof of his faith (2 Cor. iv. 13).

To make this personal, let us see that we know Christ from what He has done for us (Hos. vi. 3), and then let us see that we are looking for Him (Ps. cxxiii. 1, 2).

References.—XI. 3.—J. A. Bain, *Questions Answered by Christ*, p. 15. H. Harris, *Short Sermons*, p. 118. J. Denney, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xliii. 1893, p. 250. J. Stalker, *ibid.* vol. liv. 1898, p. 100. A. G. Mortimer, *Studies in Holy Scripture*, p. 207. Benson, *Hulsean Lecture* (1820), p. 55. Parker, *Inner Life of Christ*, vol. ii. p. 162, and *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xix. p. 8. Raleigh, *Little Sanctuary*, p. 110. Beecher, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxiv. p. 19. Bruce, *Expositor* (1st Series), vol. v. p. 11; and see *Expositor*, vol. ix.

p. 122. *Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. ii. p. 404. J. O. Davies, *Sunrise on the Soul*, p. 169. James Denney, *Gospel Questions and Answers*, p. 19. XI. 3, 4.—W. Ross Taylor, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxxvii. 1890, p. 341. XI. 3-6. (R.V.).—T. B. Strong, *Christian Ethics*, p. 47.

'Jesus answered and said. . . .'—MATTHEW XI. 4.

IT is an excellent observation which hath been made upon the answers of our Saviour Christ to many of the questions which were propounded to Him, how that they are impertinent to the state of the question demanded; the reason whereof is, because not being like man, which knows man's thoughts by his words, but knowing man's thought immediately, He never answered their words but their thoughts.—BACON, *Advancement of Learning*, xxv. 16.

REFERENCES.—XI. 4, 5.—E. M. Goulburn, *Occasional Sermons*, p. 191. S. D. McConnell, *A Year's Sermons*, p. 181. XI. 5.—B. F. Westcott, *The Incarnation and Common Life*, p. 295; see also *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xl. 1891, p. 401. J. Guinness Rogers, *ibid.* vol. xlii. 1892, p. 255. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. iii. No. 114. XI. 5, 6.—W. C. Magee, *Penny Pulpit*, vol. xiv. No. 845, p. 437; see also *The Gospel and the Age*, p. 205. XI. 6.—W. J. Knox-Little, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. li. 1897, p. 270. J. Denney, *ibid.* vol. li. 1897, p. 140. A. F. A. Hanbury Tracy, *Church Times*, vol. xliv. 1900, p. 729. F. E. Paget, *Sermons on Duties of Daily Life*, p. 83. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxiv. No. 1398. XI. 7.—F. E. Paget, *Sermons for Special Occasions*, p. 41; see also *The Preacher in the Wilderness*, A Sermon. S. Baring-Gould, *Village Preaching for a Year*, vol. i. p. 29. H. P. Liddon, *Church Troubles*, p. 21; see also *Expository Sermons on the New Testament*, p. 12.

'What went ye out for to see? A man clothed in soft raiment?'—MATTHEW XI. 8.

IZAAK WALTON, describing Hooker's parsonage at Bourne, tells how that scholar had not been settled a year before 'his books, and the innocency and sanctity of his life became so remarkable, that many turned out of the road, and others—scholars especially—went purposely to see the man, whose life and learning were so much admired: and, alas! as our Saviour said of St. John Baptist, "What went they out to see? a man clothed in purple and fine linen?" No, indeed: but an obscure, harmless man; a man in poor clothes, his loins usually girt in a coarse gown, or canonical coat; of a mean stature, and stooping, and yet more lowly in the thought of his soul.'

COMPARE also Newman's description of John Davison, who was 'an instance of the secrecy and solitude in which great minds move, as if they were calling on the world, if it thought it worth while, to "go out into the wilderness after them". In the preface to these *Remains* it is observed of their author that "perhaps his character might be cast in a mould of severer goodness than this age could easily endure".'

SINCERITY IN RELIGION

(*For St. John the Baptist's Day.*)

'For this is he, of whom it is written, Behold, I send my messenger before Thy face, which shall prepare Thy way before Thee.'—MATTHEW XI. 10.

FEW figures in the Bible stand out so impressively as that of St. John the Baptist. Everything we read about him commands our attention. He was a great man in every sense of the word. Above all men, St. John the Baptist stands out as a conspicuous instance of the all too rare virtue of sincerity. I should say that a deep sincerity is the first characteristic of a great man.

I. Every Life to be Sincere must be Animated by a Great Principle, and it is because St. John the Baptist knew a great principle and dedicated himself to it that he gives to us so conspicuous an example of sincerity. Let us ask ourselves, have we any guiding, dominant motive in life, any principle to which we can give ourselves, and which we can recognize as *the* fact in existence? The principle of the Christian life, the dominant controlling force in all our experience, should be the coming of the kingdom of God.

II. But the Baptist's Sincerity did not save him from Doubt.—There are few more pathetic incidents recorded in the whole of history than that of St. John the Baptist, the model of sincerity, the man who was ready to forfeit life in order to do the work to which God had called him, now that he is languishing in prison losing confidence in the message of Christ. But again, the doubt of the Baptist was the doubt of a sincere man. He goes at once to the source at which his doubt may be resolved. He is not the man who has difficulties and is rather pleased to have them. As a sincere doubter he goes straight to the Lord Jesus Christ.

It is very strange that this virtue of sincerity is so rare when it might be so common. Some of the graces, indeed, seem to be so hard to obtain, but no one can say that he is not called upon to practise the grace of sincerity. Here is a challenge to every one in every sphere of life. And yet we feel how hard it is.

III. Sincerity is not merely Truthfulness, not merely Common Honesty.—It is purity of motive which comes from having one dominant principle in life. How simple it is!—so simple that in its moral grandeur it stands like some great mountain reaching up to heaven above all the virtues for which saints are canonized. Sincerity is the motive force of all true action in politics, social life, commerce, and in our own apprehension of God.

IV. Sincerity does not always Ensure Success.—In the Baptist's case it meant failure. Nothing could seem more incongruous than that this life of absolute sincerity should be ended to please a cruel and licentious woman. You are never told in the New Testament to be successful. You are told to be sincere. Let us resolve that we will so act that when life's tasks are over we shall at any rate be able to feel that they have been faced with a sincere desire to do our duty.

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Pulpit, vol. lv. 1899, p. 152. J. Farquhar, *The Schools and Schoolmasters of Christ*, p. 101. Henry Alford, *Quebec Chapel Sermons*, vol. v. p. 32. W. Leighton Grane, *Hard Sayings of Jesus Christ*, p. 37. XI. 11-14.—R. E. Hutton, *The Crown of Christ*, vol. i. p. 53.

'The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force.'—MATTHEW XI. 12.

SUDDEN conversions, with the ecstatic warmth of feeling which follows upon them, are derided, but only by those who know, even as regards natural things, little of the secret powers, the reserved forces of the human spirit, and are unaware that in the depths of ignorant and hardened and weary and distracted souls, there is still a Strength, blind and fettered like that of Samson, needing a shock to set it free. 'The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force.' Methodism has entered into the heart of this saying.—DORA GREENWELL.

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THE HOMELINESS OF JESUS

'The Son of man came eating and drinking.'—MATTHEW XI. 19.

THIS was a strange thing for the Lord to say of Himself. His enemies found in these words an opportunity of vile abuse—'a man gluttonous,' 'a friend of publicans and sinners'. For good or harm, few things are more powerful than a name: a good epithet has determined the fate of many a great effort.

This was how He came, 'eating and drinking,'—the homely, brotherly Jesus interested in the common business of our life. This homeliness meets us everywhere.

I. See this Purpose in the Circumstances of His Birth.—Here in the manger was the Brother of the poorest, the gift of God's love to the whole world, to Whom whosoever will may come—no door to keep back, no attendant to whisper a forbidding word.

II. In His Coming as a Public Teacher.—Wherever Jesus went the people felt the welcome of that great brotherliness. Little children, sinful women, trembling lepers were at home with Jesus.

III. In the Choice of His Disciples.—Men with broad Galilean brogue and simple ways and peasant's dress.

IV. In the Teachings of the Lord. — He told simple exquisite stories which children and the poorest understood.

V. In His Miracles.—Power would only amaze men: He sought to *win* them. This real Saviour understands us, is at home with us, knowing all the worst, and yet loving, and willing to help.—MARK GUY PEARSE, *The Sermon Year Book*, 1891, p. 375.

'Then began He to upbraid the cities. . . . I am meek and lowly in heart.'—MATTHEW XI. 20 and 29.

THE man of true humility will not spare the vices and errors of his fellow-creatures, any more than he would his own; he will exercise manfully and without fear or favour, those judicial functions which God has committed in some greater or less degree to every member of the human community . . . but, whilst exercising that judgment in no spirit of compromise or evasion, he will feel that to judge his brother is a duty and not a privilege; and he will judge him in sorrow.—SIR HENRY TAYLOR, *Notes from Life*.

REFERENCES.—XI. 20.—C. Vince, *The Unchanging Saviour*, p. 75. A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—St. Matthew IX.-XVII.* p. 138. XI. 20-30.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xlvi. No. 2704. XI. 24.—H. Hensley Henson, *Christ and the Nation*, p. 147.

THE OBVIOUSNESS OF THE ESSENTIAL IN QUESTIONS OF FAITH

'At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes.'—MATTHEW XI. 25.

I. WHILST the spiritual rulers of the nation rejected our Lord, the unlearned and childlike people understood and accepted Him. The notion must not be allowed to possess us that it is only through scholarship and subtlety that men reach the secret of revelation. In California in the old days deep-level gold-mining was the fashion; it seemed reasonable to suppose that the gold must lie deep, and be difficult to acquire; yet, in the end, deep-level mining proved an expensive failure. A more careful exploration nearer the surface was then tried, and in almost every instance bodies of ore were found that had been overlooked in the eagerness to penetrate to unknown depths—the searchers missed the gold by getting below it. It is easy to fall into a similar mistake in our treatment of Holy Scripture. The history of theology shows how the truth may be missed through yielding to the temptation of a pretentious profundity. The childlike vision and expression are truest. Theology is a science, yet for the profoundest science simplest words suffice. The obscure may justly be regarded as the mark of the non-essential. The obviousness of revelation must to the utmost be repeated in theology. The river of the water of life is as clear as crystal.

II. This obviousness of the saving truth is a fact to be remembered in evangelization. The gracious truths of Christ appeal to the man in the street, and he may at once discern them to the saving of the

soul; the dustman may as readily apprehend them as the duke, the illiterate as the scholar, the outcast as the honourable. Salvation does not filter through the upper strata of rank, genius, and opulence, down to the lower strata of illiteracy and labour; rather, as in Nature, the living water finds its way from the depth to the eminence. The essential truth is on the surface, immediately available for the unsophisticated, whether rich or poor.

III. It is no doubt deeply interesting to get under the earth with the miner, to grope about the roots of things with the geologist; but when all is said, the surface of the earth is the main matter to the million The mere surface expresses the sum total of all that lies beneath it, as the spirit of man expresses itself in the sparkle of the eye and the bloom of his skin.—W. L. Watkinson, *Themes for Hours of Meditation*, p. 58.

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'Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in Thy sight.'—Matthew xi. 26.

This is the text inscribed in the churchyard of Zermatt, on the tombstone of Mr. Hadow, who perished, at the age of nineteen, in the terrible Matterhorn accident of 1865. Signor Guido Rey, in his book *The Matterhorn*, says: 'On the tomb of Hadow, the youthful victim, his parents, with admirable resignation, wrote this verse from the Gospel: "Ita, Pater, quoniam sic fuit placitum ante te".

THE SECRET OF THE SON

'No one knoweth the Son, save the Father; neither doth any know the Father save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son willeth to reveal Him.'—Matthew xi. 27.

I. The Loneliness of Christ.

Blade of grass stands close to blade of grass, but peak is sundered from peak by miles of intervening valley; and here was One who towered above all the rest, and was solitary accordingly.

'No one knoweth the Son—' Yes, One, but no finite mind: God knew Him, and only the Father *could* know the Son. From the coldness, and unresponsiveness, even the well-meaning dullness of work-aday humanity, Jesus was always able to retreat into the solitude which for Him was filled with the beatific Presence of that One by whom He knew Himself understood.

Loneliness is the lot of greatness, but it comes to others besides the great. We all need to set our minds more than we do upon gaining this sense of the presence of God, to be communed with—a Presence which we do not summon, but which we may enter at will, if we have learned the way.

II. Who Knows the Father?—For now we approach the real centre, and what many may feel to be the real difficulty, of our saying. 'Neither doth any know the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son willeth to reveal Him.'

Now that consciousness which enabled Jesus to strike this note, to interpret Godhead as Fatherhood, not in a formal sense, but as the symbol of deepest love—that consciousness was something new, which Jesus brought into the world; it was unique, for only He who knew Himself as Son could know God as Father. And only as we become sons can we know that Fatherhood.

III. Next to Jesus Himself, only those know the Father to whom He reveals Him. How does He do so? In the first place, it is He who has in His own Person and character so shown forth the character of God as to assure us of His paternal love beyond all uncertainty; it is just Christ's perfect Sonship that guarantees to us God's perfect Fatherhood.

But there is more than this; we are to exert ourselves, we are to do something, to live a certain kind of life, to acquire a certain spirit ere we can know—really know—the Father. 'Be sons,' Jesus says, 'and you shall know God as Father.' Live the life, do the will, and you shall know of the doctrine; treat God as though He was indeed a parent, and the fact of His being even so will grow more and more clear to you.—J. Warschauer, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxxii. 1907, p. 169.

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NATURAL AND SUPERNATURAL RELIGION

'All things are delivered unto Me of My Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any Man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal Him. Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.'—Matthew xi. 27, 28.

A very important contrast is presented in these passages; it is a contrast between natural and supernatural religion. We may take the Bible as the textbook of our study and the standard of our morals, and yet our religion may never rise above the natural. We arrive at the supernatural when the truth which we have in the letter of the Holy Scriptures becomes a revelation of the Word. Natural religion is based upon a man's effort to come to the knowledge of God; supernatural religion has its foundation in the fact that God has come down to man, and revealed Himself to the soul in the person of Jesus Christ. No river can rise higher than its source! The source of all natural religion is its mental effort and moral sagacity; but the source of all supernatural religion is God by His Spirit revealing Himself in the person of His Son to the souls of men. Revelation means

God coming down; natural religion means men seeking to climb up.

There are two or three things which you may learn from the passage chosen.

I. God's Method of Bringing Man to Himself is by Revelation.—We do not at first take in the meaning of that word: we do not grasp its meaning. What is it to reveal? It means to unveil. Two thoughts are involved in the word 'unveil'. First there is the unveiling itself; then there is the object from which the veil is to be removed. We think of some beautiful work of sculpture which is finished and now a veil is over it. You are close to it, but do not see it! Now the day comes for the unveiling; the veil is taken away and you behold the beautiful object beneath. So it is in religion! God has sent His Son, and has fulfilled His word. God is there in all the fullness of His glory, the richness of His grace, the greatness of His love. There can be no addition to His character, but there is the veil. Men do not see that glory; they try to imagine God, they make efforts to follow after Him; that is natural religion. 'No man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal Him.' Now that is the truth that we have running all through the whole of God's Word. This saving knowledge of the Word of God comes by spiritual unveiling. God has given His Son, redemption is there, yet men do not see it! Does this not strike you as something very cold and repellent? Not if you read the next verse: 'Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest'.

II. Natural Religion cannot really meet Man's Need.—Do you remember that prayer in the Psalms—'Lead me to the rock that is higher than I'? That is the cry of the supernatural! Nothing on the same level, however intellectual it may be, can satisfy the needs of my soul, so you see that salvation does not come to us as a human attainment. What can I do, how can I find my way up to God? Can man by searching find his way to God? He has revealed Himself to the world, but the world does not see it. It is necessary for us to notice that all things have been delivered into the hands of Jesus Christ.

III. The Secret of Seeking and Finding God is not an Effort of the Intellect, but is a Submission of the Will, and the possession of faith. If you would know God you must believe, and you must come to Christ. Your submission must come through Him; it is the way to grace. He calls us—'Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest'.

REST FOR THE WORKERS

'Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.'—MATTHEW XI. 28.

IN these words our Divine Master asserts His Divinity. No *human* being—of such a character as Jesus of Nazareth, 'the Truth'—would venture to offer to every age, and to the dwellers in every land, rest: rest to the weary body and to the troubled soul.

I. How then does the Lord Jesus Christ give rest to the workers? By the power of the Holy Spirit. Christ has gone up on high, and has sat down at His Father's right hand. His work in man's heart, and in the Church at large, is carried on through the instrumentality of the Holy Spirit. By the Holy Spirit Jesus Christ conveys rest to all who are called to labour.

Here let us be very careful not to narrow the words to what is technically called religious work. It applies, of course, to all who are working for Jesus Christ in a more direct manner. But the application is universal. 'Come unto Me, *all* ye that labour'—in parliament, in business, in the home, in the farm, in the counting-house, in the street, sweeping a crossing.

II. How does He give this rest?

1. By enlightening our understanding. All emotion that is not built upon knowledge must sooner or later perish. Religion based merely upon emotion is like a house founded on the sand. Therefore the Lord Jesus Christ, by means of that Blessed Spirit Who is emphatically given to be our Teacher, first enlightens our understanding.

He shows us, first of all, that *our work is part of a Divine plan.* He shows us that, whether the work in which we are engaged is what men call noble or commonplace, it is part of a great plan by which Almighty God is establishing on earth the kingdom of Jesus Christ. He teaches us that He, the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, very God and very Man, is guiding all this complex machinery; that we are under the direction of a living Head, all-wise, all-loving; with infinite and unfailing resources upon which He can draw. The sense of a crushing weight resting upon us, the sense of everything depending upon our own miserable effort, is removed when the eyes are opened and we see Jesus Christ.

2. He teaches us another great principle, which may be expressed by some such words as 'the law of limitation'. In other words, He shows us that Almighty God is pleased, for reasons known to Himself, to allow every human being in this world to be limited; limited by health and strength, limited by the want of full mental power, limited by the shortness of the period in which he has to work. The Lord Jesus shows us that as long as we live on earth we shall never fully carry out our ideal; we shall be hindered by the devil, hindered by other people, hindered by our own miserable imperfections.

And then, when we have laid hold of that law, the failure in our own special department ceases to perplex and distress and crush us. The mere knowledge that we are only suffering that which is the lot of all humanity, that the particular failure which depresses is only one of the thousand failures which God and the angels are seeing every day, even among the most earnest, gives a calm.

III. Once more. The Lord Jesus Christ, by the Holy Ghost, unveiling to us the meaning of the Bible, lifts us up to see that *the victory is certain;*

that what we consider important may be found afterwards utterly unimportant; that we may have failed in certain departments; that there may have been times of utter crushing discomfiture; but that, in the long run, the victory is certain.—G. H. Wilkinson, *The Invisible Glory*, p. 23.

REST FOR THE SUFFERERS

'Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.'—Matthew xi. 28.

All the troubles of body and heart and mind and spirit are included in these words: everything that depresses—the weather, poverty, failure, disappointment. There is not a phase in human life which is not liable to a secret trial; and those who have the power of self-restraint know well that the hardest trials are those which we would not allow any human being to share. Everything, great and small, everything which commands human sympathy, and everything which is so commonplace that we should be despised if we were to acknowledge how it affected our happiness—all is known to our God and Father.

I. And how is this promise fulfilled? Through the agency of God the Holy Ghost. Our Lord Jesus Christ, in those wonderful chapters which record His last conversation with His disciples, brings forward perpetually this thought; that it would be by the personal comforting, the personal tender leading and guiding of the Holy Ghost, that He would strengthen them amid all the troubles which were coming on them.

II. The New Testament gives us a distinct teaching on the subject in the book of the Revelation of St. John.

Our Lord Jesus Christ, in the glory of His Ascension life, takes a man like unto ourselves, our 'brother and companion in tribulation,' and places him on a lonely island. And then, before He begins to instruct him, He says, in His tender compassion for you and for me, 'Write these things'; let them be written in a book, that they may be handed on to each succeeding age of sufferers.

And how does our Lord give rest to the mind of St. John? He first teaches His Apostle that *there is a secret necessity for suffering*. He lifts up the veil, and explains to him, by a number of striking pictures, that there must be, for a certain time, war, famine, pestilence, death, perplexing events, triumph of evil; the devil apparently conquering; the world-power beguiling even God's own people; heresy, divisions, misery of every kind. He teaches him that all this does not come from God, but that it is, for a mysterious purpose which cannot be explained, permitted.

Now do you see the force of all this? We conquer nature by obeying her. We can guide and direct when we find out any of her laws. And so, when once it is understood that suffering is a condition of our humanity, every intelligent man will submit.

III. Our Lord teaches St. John this second principle: that *suffering is limited* by God.

IV. In that same book He reveals the *ultimate triumph of good*. He teaches St. John that this suffering, though a necessity, is limited, not only in amount, but in length of endurance: in other words, that a day is coming—and may dawn to-morrow—when the thin veil shall be lifted up, and this dispensation of trial and disappointment shall be over, and the Christ shall appear.—G. H. Wilkinson, *The Invisible Glory*, p. 31.

REST FOR WEARY FEET

'I will give you rest.'—Matthew xi. 28.

The world is always full of weary feet, and the days of the Nazarene were no exception. The souls that gathered about Him numbered a great many weary ones, tired self-nauseated, faint. He looked upon them, and saw their weariness, and was moved with infinite pity, and thus appealed to them: 'Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest'.

Let us look at one or two types of weary feet to which this Saviour will, with infinite gladness, bring the gift of rest.

I. There is no weariness like the weariness which gathers round about a *selfish heart*. I am inclined to believe that a great deal of the tiredness and weariness of the world, perhaps more than we commonly think, is only the sickly loathing and self-disgust arising from a morbid selfishness, however much we may strive to attribute it to something else.

Listen to the Master: 'Come unto Me ye weary, selfish ones, and I will give you rest'. And how will He do it? By taking us away from ourselves, by giving us leisure from ourselves, by making us unselfish. Jesus will give you rest by giving you His yoke, He will add to your burden, and so make your burden light. He will enlarge your thought to take in others, and so give you leisure from yourselves. He will take away your jadedness, and give you His own rest.

II. The *anxious* soul moves with weary feet, and would fain meet with one who had the gift of rest. The Master saw how many souls there were who were troubled and anxious about the unknown. And *He* knew the great secret which, if accepted, would set all their hearts at rest. What did He know? He knew God! If everybody knew God, nobody would be anxious. And so He seeks to turn weariness into rest by the unveiling of the Father. And in what strangely beautiful ways He made the Father known! He told them that to Providence there were no trifles, that God did not merely control great things, and allow smaller things to go by chance. 'The very hairs of your head are all numbered.' Nothing is overlooked; all is full of thought and purpose. To come to Jesus is to take His revelation of the Father, and to live in the inspiration of it, and such inspiration would turn fear into confidence, and confidence into peace. Come unto Me, all ye weary, anxious ones, and I will reveal to you your Father, and in the beauty of the revelation ye shall discover the

gift of rest.—J. H. Jowett, *Apostolic Optimism*, p. 87.

'Come unto Me.'—Matthew xi. 28.

In Cicero and Plato and other such authors I find many an acute saying, many a word that kindles the emotions; but in none do I find these words, Come unto Me, and I will give you rest.—Augustine.

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'Learn of Me; for I am meek.'—Matthew xi. 29.

After meeting Dr. Chalmers in the autumn of 1818, Erskine of Linlathen wrote to him: 'I hope I have benefited by my visit to you. Certainly I was much struck with some circumstances in your conduct, and I will tell you what these are. You have been much followed, by great and small, by learned and ignorant, and yet you listened, with the meek candour of a learner, to one whom you could not but consider as your inferior by far. If you had opened to me all mysteries and all knowledge, you could not have brought to my conscience the strong conviction of the necessity and the reality of Christianity with half the force that this deportment of yours impressed upon me.'

Quoting verses 21-30 in his essay on *The Incarnation and Principles of Evidence*, Mr. R. H. Hutton observes that these, 'to me the most touching and satisfying words that have ever been uttered by human lips, no mere man could ever have uttered without jarring every chord in the human conscience'.

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THE YOKE OF CHRIST

'Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light.'—Matthew xi. 29, 30.

How beautiful are these words of Christ! It is one thing, however, to know and to admire, and another thing to feel the power, to acknowledge the authority of them, and to feel their blessedness as a matter of personal experience.

I. The Yoke of Christ is the Discipline of Christ.—You have seen a young horse being broken in for his work. The youth and spirit of the animal resists the process; but if they are ever to be any good they have got sooner or later to submit. If the animal proves obstinate and obdurate, and firmly refuses the yoke, why it is useless, and there is nothing left but the owner must get rid of it as best he may. That is a parable. Jesus Christ is our Master; He gives each one of us a yoke to bear and a burden to carry. But He is no cruel despot, He is a wise and kind and considerate Master; He knows full well what we, each one of us, can bear; His aim is to discipline not to tyrannize over us, to use not to crush. He has a yoke and a burden for each, but not the same for each; 'every man must bear his own burden,' that is, the burden which is apportioned to him of all the separate spirits of the universe; never an ounce too heavy is the yoke He puts on each one of us. If we look at it in the right way it will prove to be just exactly what we can rightly deal with; for His word is true, 'My yoke is easy, My burden light'.

II. The Yoke of Christ is the Cross of Christ.—What is a cross? Two pieces of wood put one athwart the other. But what is the spiritual cross? Your pride and selfish will checked, disciplined, crossed by God's good and perfect will. That is what the cross is which Christ says His followers, each one of them, must bear. That is the yoke He puts upon our neck, the will of God to be done, to be suffered, whether it falls in with our inclination or not. Yes, there is the yoke, and its edges are sometimes sharp and rough as we bear it upon our shoulders. And yet for all that His yoke is easy, and His burden is light. How and why, the reason?

Because of love. The service may be hard, but the Master is good; the trial may be bitter, but the hand which sends it is kind; the task may be difficult, but He Who imposes it is faithful and wise. Love makes all the difference when you feel sure, as feel we may, that the Lord Who orders all truly cares for you and considers you and seeks alone your good, and that He makes no mistakes, and He spares every atom of pain which He can spare consistently with His good purpose for you; then you feel that you have got courage to bear and patience to endure. Faith and love make all the difference; where love shines on you the yoke that might have been grievous becomes easy; the burden which might have been crushing becomes light.

III. The Yoke of Christ Lifts up to God.—Listen to this parable: There was a time, so says the tale, when the birds had no wings, and they were the most miserable creatures on the face of the earth, they were so piteously helpless. One day, so says the tale, when they got up in the morning they observed that the ground around them was strewn with coarse brown objects such as they had never seen before. They looked at them with curiosity and apprehension, and as they were looking, lo! a shining one, an angel, came down from heaven and bade each one of them take up two of those brown objects and carry them on their backs. Then they broke out in loud lamentations. What! were they not wretched enough already! Already had they not trials more than any others, and must they now bear this new burden! The shining one insisted, however, and so there was nothing for it but they had to submit. So each bird took up two of those brown objects and began to carry them. And now a strange thing happened; after a day their new burdens seemed to grow into their backs and to become part of themselves, and they found that they could move and wave them about; and then some of them began to flutter in quite a new way, and even to rise a little from the ground; and as they fluttered and rose they began to sing. Up they rose, more and more, higher and higher, and as they rose, louder and louder did they sing; for their burdens, instead of being carried by them, were carrying them. Burdens, yes; but also wings; wings to lift them up to freedom and joy. Up they rose, higher and higher, and as they rose they sang. A yoke is a yoke, and a burden is a burden; but if it is the yoke of Christ and the burden of Christ, it can prove so easy and so light that it can, if borne and looked at aright, lift you to Him, lift you too up to your God.

References.—XI. 29, 30.—J. W. Shepard, *Light and Life*, p. 279. A. G. Mortimer, *One Hundred Miniature Sermons*, vol. ii. p. 186. 'Plain Sermons' by contributors to the *Tracts for the Times*, vol. v. p. 67.

THE YOKE OF CHRIST

'My yoke is easy, and My burden is light.'—Matthew xi. 30.

Christ has a yoke and a burden. The yoke is laid on the shoulder to harness the draught animal, the ox. It is the common and natural image of submission, and it is employed here. Christ demands absolute submission. He controls all life. Then the yoke is put on for the sake of fitting for work. It exists for the burden, the practical duties which prove and exercise obedience.

I. Christ's Yoke and Burden are Hard and Heavy.—The yoke and the burden of Christianity are very real, and very severe. Christ's precepts are ideal perfection. 'Be ye perfect.' And that is why men accept them. No system ever lasts long which condones imperfection, and pitches the standard low. Bad as men are, they still desire that their law should be good.

II. Still they are Light and Easy.—A yoke is something easy, soft, padded, fitting comfortably, so that it may even suggest the idea of being pleasant and good to wear—a joy and a delight to obey, and of being a mark of His love. Then while the yoke expresses the thought of the blessedness of submission, the burden *light* speaks of the ease of service. The yoke and burden are light (1) by reason of the motive that impels them: Love which makes submission a joy, and all distasteful deeds sweet. (2) By reason of the strength that is given: There are two ways to lighten a load, one diminishes the burden, one invigorates the back. (3) By reason of their harmony with all nature. People fancy they like to do as they like, but they really like and need an authority to which to submit. (4) By reason of the joy and peace that flow from obedience.

III. Christ bears our burdens before He bids us bear His. There are burdens heavier than any He lays which each man has to carry—Sin, Self, the World, are harder masters than He, and none but He can take away the burden of sin, of self-will, of isolated effort after goodness. His commandments are not grievous. It is not a Gospel of an easy life. It does not seek to draw by looking at the statuesque purity of the ideal, but by giving us grace to do. He bears us and our troubles. All things are possible to him that believeth. Love fulfilling the law.—A. Maclaren.

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STARTLING ABSENCES

'He shall not strive, nor cry; neither shall any man hear His voice in the streets. A bruised reed shall He not break, and smoking flax shall He not quench.'—MATTHEW XII. 19, 20.

'Nor strive,' not 'cry,' not lift up His voice 'in the streets,' not break 'the bruised reed,' not quench 'the smoking flax'! These are some of the rarest and finest features of a character that is altogether lovely. They are negative characteristics. The character of the Christ is no less unique in its striking absences than in its majestic presences. Its valleys are as conspicuous as its mountains. The Holy Ghost works in the way of a certain exclusion. His handiwork is differentiated from all others by its incomparable restraints.

I. Mark the first of the suppressions in the life that is filled with the Holy Ghost. 'He shall not strive.' The spirit of wrangling shall be absent. For what is wrangling? Wrangling is the spirit which subordinates the triumph of truth to the triumph of self. When a man begins to wrangle, his sight has become self-centred; he has lost the vision of truth. You never find the wrangling spirit in the main highways of the truth. Wrangling always nourishes itself on side issues. But Christ would not strive. He would not be diverted from the main issues of life and destiny. He had not come to engage in strife, He had come that we might have life. That is how the Spirit of the Lord will work in us. It will make us feel most at home in the heavenly places. It will make us feel out of place in small disputes.

II. 'He shall not strive, nor cry.' The Messiah shall not cry. He had not come to startle, but to win; to conciliate, not to coerce. 'Come now and let us reason together' was the pervading tone of His ministry. And so He put restraint upon His power, but gave no limit to His grace. He was almost niggardly with miracles; He was prodigal with love. Such is the fruit of the Spirit! The man who is filled with the Spirit of God has no desire to make a sensation.

III. 'Neither shall any man hear His voice in the streets.' Christ abhorred a mere street-religion. He loved the religion that prayed and glowed in the closet, and that radiated its influence out into the street. He could not do with a piety that advertised itself to gain public applause. Christ revealed the Father! Not to honour Himself, for then He said, His honour would be nothing, but to honour His Father—that was the end and purpose of speech and of work. When the Holy Spirit possesses a man, religion is not an affair of the street corner; it is not a medium of self-advertisement; it is not a means for gaining public applause. Life, filled with the Spirit, 'vaunteth not itself,' it hides under 'the shadow of the Almighty,' and it makes its boast in God.

IV. 'A bruised reed shall He not break, and smoking flax shall He not quench.' Then there is to be an absence of harshness, an absence of severe pitilessness, an absence of that spirit of savage recoil from those who have deceived us. The Lord was ever pitiful with the faint-hearted, with those whose light was burning only dimly, and He ever sought, by a tender and reinforcing sympathy, to nurse them back again into a bright and passionate spiritual life.—J. H. JOWETT, *Apostolic Optimism*, p. 99.

'He shall not strive, nor cry.'—MATTHEW XII. 19.

WILL not men look up at a rainbow, unless they are called to it by a clap of thunder?—LANDOR.

'Neither shall any man hear His voice in the streets.'—MATTHEW XII. 19.

MORE than half a century of existence has taught me that most of the wrong and folly which darken earth is due to those who cannot possess their souls in quiet; that most of the good which saves mankind from destruction comes of life that is led in thoughtful stillness.—GEORGE GISSING.

REFERENCE.—XII. 19-21.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xix. No. 1147.

THE LOVING-KINDNESS OF JESUS

'A bruised reed shall He not break, and smoking flax shall He not quench, till He send forth judgment unto victory.'—MATTHEW XII. 20.

IT is a frequent expedient of artists to paint pictures in pairs. A landscape will be depicted as it appears in the pearly light of early morn; and, corresponding to it, the same or a similar scene will be painted as it appears in the glowing colours of the evening. In the Gospels we frequently have pictures in pairs. The Pharisee and the Publican; the Rich Man and Lazarus; the Man seeking goodly Pearls and the Treasure hid in a field, these will serve to illustrate the statement. And we have an instructive pair of pictures brought before us in the following words quoted by Matthew from Isaiah's prophecy: 'The bruised reed shall He not break, and smoking flax shall He not quench'. The first picture is an exterior. The region represented is a flat and marshy one; the locality is lonely and desolate. Growing amid shallow but cold and swirling waters, we see tall reeds and rushes. The sky is grey and heavy, with clouds fleeting before the blast: the reeds bend under the storm: you can almost feel the nipping wind as you look at the picture. And the reeds are swayed hither and thither, being bruised and battered as they jostle one against the other. Look closely at those reeds, and you will scarcely find one that is not scarred and mangled. They are *bruised* reeds.

The other picture is an interior. 'The smoking flax shall He not quench.' The picture is that of an Eastern room. We dimly see the low divans or lounges around the walls, and if the light were brighter we might discern the features of the persons reclining there. There is a low table in the centre of the room, and upon it stands a lamp. In shape this lamp is something like a modern teapot; the receptacle being for the oil, and the wick protruding from what would be the spout. That wick should be burning brightly; instead of that, however, there is only a dull red glow, and there is more smoke than light. It is a 'smoking lamp'. From these two

pictures we may learn something as to Christ and Christian character.

I. Let us look at the latter picture first—the smoking lamp. Now a lamp that does not give a good light is not fulfilling the function of its design and manufacture. What is the use of a knife that will scarcely cut? or of a pen that splutters when an attempt is made to write with it? Yet how many professing Christians there are who are not burning and shining lights, but smoking lamps! and what a trouble they are both in the Church and out of it! In a village church lighted with lamps, if one among them smokes, it attracts a great deal of attention and criticism; the others are scarcely noticed. Just so is it with Christians who are symbolized by a smoking lamp. Everybody observes them, and everybody criticises them. They bring dishonour upon themselves and upon their Church. Will any such who may happen to read these lines suffer a word of exhortation? Often when a lamp smokes, what is needed is simply more oil; and oil is the emblem of grace. The lamps of the foolish virgins were 'going out' because they had no oil—that is, no grace. They had neglected the means of grace, and so were found wanting.

We must not quench the smoking lamp. 'Comfort the feeble-minded,' cries Paul in another place: stretch out a helping hand to him; speak a word of encouragement. Forgive such an one even unto seventy times seven. As long as the ship floats, it must never be abandoned; as long as there is a vestige of life in the plant, it must not be uprooted. We dare not extinguish the smoking lamp.

II. But we turn now to the first picture, that of the 'bruised reed'. It is humbling enough that mankind should be compared to reeds. The fragrant cedar, the spreading oak, the towering poplar, these would seem to be more appropriate emblems of humanity—that is, in the estimation of some. But the Word says, 'bruised reeds'. And, indeed, symbols of humanity in the Scriptures are none of them flattering. 'I am a worm,' cries Job. 'Like the chaff,' is the word of the Psalmist. 'Like sheep,' declares the Prophet. 'That fox,' ironically says the Saviour, of one man at least. Yes, and the man who has learnt to accept this view of himself is far on the way to salvation, for 'he that humbleth himself shall be exalted'.

Yet, though God permits men to be bruised, He does not allow them to be broken. Much we may be called upon to endure, but never too much. There shall never be ground for complaint and murmuring; there shall always be room for thankfulness.

III. Lastly. Not only care and trouble, but sin also bruises men. Perhaps the idea here is of a man plucking up, or cutting down, the reeds, for commercial purposes. As such a toiler proceeds he comes to a reed which is so twisted and broken that he regards it as useless, and he flings it aside. Not so does the Saviour deal with mankind 'bruised and mangled by the fall'. He never flings sinners away; He receives them and saves them.—HERBERT WINDROSS, *The Life Victorious*, p. 197.

'A bruised reed shall He not break, and smoking flax shall He not quench.'—MATTHEW XII. 20.

IT has often been remarked that Vinet praised weak things. If so, it was not from any failure in his own critical sense; it was from charity. 'Quench not the smoking flax'—to which I add, 'Never give unnecessary pain'. The cricket is not the nightingale; why tell him so. Throw yourself into the mind of the cricket—the process is newer and more ingenious; and it is what charity commands.—AMIEL.

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THE SIN AGAINST THE HOLY GHOST

'Whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of Man, it shall be forgiven him: but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, nor in the world to come.'—MATTHEW XII. 32.

THE sensitiveness of this critical age is very wonderful. Considering the immense number of insignificant persons who are favoured with paragraphs and biographies in papers, one might imagine that the great majority would regard with composure what was written about them. This patience might at least be looked for from those whose main occupation it is to abuse their fellow-creatures. As a matter of fact, this equanimity is very rare, even among the greatest. Mr. Gladstone, in his curious chapter of autobiography, tells us that a silly electioneering placard once almost unmanned him. 'It freezes the blood in moments of retirement and reflection for a man to think that he can have presented a picture so hideous to the view of a fellow-creature.' More authors than would easily be believed have the criticisms of their books 'broken' to them. George Eliot and

Dickens could not read theirs at all. There is something very ignoble about this. At all events, the person who cannot endure criticism should refrain from criticising.

I. In singular contrast with this is the majestic and calm temper of Christ, summed up in that marvellous saying, *Whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of Man, it shall be forgiven him.* Mark the tremendous assumption—that the critic is always wrong. Never a word is said against the Son of Man that can be justified. More, no one ever speaks against the Son of Man without sinning. But the sin does not place him beyond the reach of mercy. He will be—forgiven. The sentence might have ended differently. It might have been, Whosoever shall speak against the Son of Man shall be—answered? silenced? punished? No—forgiven. Did Christ ever assert His Divinity more absolutely and yet more benignantly?

II. *Whosoever shall speak against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, nor in the world to come.* There is one sin so heinous that it closes for all ages and in all worlds every door of mercy. The soul that sins it will never be revived by any Divine spring. It is no mysterious transgression to be struck upon at an unknown stage in the prodigal's path. It is no sudden, angry blasphemy. Whoever fears that he has committed it and prays for pardon is worlds away from it. It is the sin of those who know Christ in His essence, who realize His Spirit for what He is, and who deliberately call Him unclean. The historical Christ may be misjudged. Our teachers may misrepresent Him. We may speak a word against Him without the purpose deliberately to sever our life from His. But when His Spirit—the Spirit of compassion and purity—is known and hated, then the endless alienation has begun.

III. Compassion is the first word which describes the Spirit of Christ. It is a deep word—deeper almost than love, as the mother knows who has seen her child in the delirium of fever. Christ came to bring in the reign of righteousness, but before and after justice is pity. The march of justice is slow: to be tracked by altars of sacrifice. Slowly we come to purer laws, but meanwhile deepest in man's lot is suffering that cannot wait. To this Christ stretched forth His hand. Marking as He did with pity those who knew their evil case, and with a deeper pity those who did not, He went about healing all manner of sickness and disease among the people. He set in motion the while those mighty forces that are gradually transforming the world. But compassion had to do its work first, and when justice is done in the ideal commonwealth, compassion will take up the work again. But He saw the universal misery as the result of sin. The fangs of the Serpent had done this. He set Himself, therefore, not to reform, but to save. He believed that men could be saved. His inseparable following from the very dregs of society proclaimed that the kingdom of heaven was for publicans and harlots. He lowered not a jot the standard of purity while He declared that those who came to Him would in no wise be cast out. When at last He lifted His eyes to God from His long brooding over earthly woe, His thought was of peace and joy. This is the Spirit of Christ—the Spirit of compassion, of purity, and hope. To see this and to speak against it is the blasphemy that eternally severs the creature from the Creator.—W. Robertson Nicoll, *Ten Minute Sermons*, p. 95.

THE UNPARDONABLE SIN

'Whosoever shall speak against the Holy Spirit, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this age, nor in that which is to come.'—Matthew xii. 32 (R.V.).

I. To take these words as an authoritative declaration of the unending duration of evil, and the ceaseless retributive punishment of the evildoer, is to interpose an immeasurable barrier between God and the humanity for the existence of which He is solely responsible; and hopelessly to confuse the standard of moral rectitude, by implying the inability of God to act upon the command He has enforced on men to forgive one another, even until seventy times seven.

It is instructive in this context to note the quotations in Bingham's *Antiquities* from the early Fathers of the Christian Church in connexion with what is called the 'unpardonable sin'. 'The notion,' he says, 'that the ancients had of the sin against the Holy Ghost was not that it was absolutely unpardonable, but that men were to be punished for it both in this world and the next, unless they repented of it.'

II. Consider, then, what is the cogency and extent of this dread declaration which remains in the page of Holy Scripture as a warning to the hardened and impenitent. The eternal truth is that wilful, continuous opposition to an elemental principle is unforgiveable, in the sense of the removal of the inevitable consequences of the opposition, either in this world or in the spiritual world. If man, in the exercise of what he calls his freedom, blasphemes an elemental law of the natural world, he commits the unpardonable sin against nature.

Now, in the passage of Scripture before us, this declaration is made with regard to the ultimate factors of being both in the natural world and in the spiritual world. But, it may be asked, can rebellion against elemental law in the natural world be designated rebellion against the Holy Spirit? The answer to the question is found in a reverent consideration of the nature, place, power, and revealed functions of that particular operation of the Eternal which is named in the Nicene Creed, 'the Holy Ghost, the Lord, the Life-giver'. For the Holy Spirit is the universal life, the 'I am' in whatever is, the essential vitality creating all, pervading all, sustaining all.

III. When we, with the awakened God-germ striving within us, with the guarantee of our baptism that we are in very deed the Lord's, persistently,

consciously resist, ignore, blaspheme that 'gentle voice, soft as the breath of even'—when we deliberately become empty of the Spirit that we may be full of self, the question of 'forgiveness' does not enter into it, for forgiveness does not remake character.

Man's safety, man's happiness, man's illumination, the formation of man's character—all depend on his being filled with the Spirit, for 'the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, self-control'.—Basil Wilberforce, *Sermons Preached in Westminster Abbey*, p. 84.

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CHARACTER THE SPRING OF LIFE

'A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things.'—Matthew xii. 35.

This is the compact statement of a truth upon which Jesus laid the last emphasis—that everything depends on character. The word has two meanings. And according to its original sense character is the mark made upon a stone by engraving. It is therefore the stamp of the soul and the expression of a man's being. Character has also come to acquire a secondary meaning. It is not now what the man is, and will continue to be, but what he says he is or appears to be. It is the outer show of the man: it is his reputation.

I. One profound difference between our Master and the Pharisees turned upon the reading of this word. With the Pharisees, character was reputation, and their whole strength was given to performing a religious play. With Jesus character was nature, and He was ever insisting that a man must be judged not by appearance but by the heart; not by what he says, or even by what he does, but by what he is.

II. Common speech betrays our implicit conviction, and every day we ourselves acknowledge the supremacy of character. One man may use the most persuasive words, but no one gives heed because they are not the outcome of a true soul; another may speak with rough simplicity, and his neighbours respond because every word bears the stamp of a brave heart.

III. If character be the spring of life then two things follow.

1. That every man's work is the expression of himself. Just as the Almighty is ever creating under a Divine necessity, because He must express Himself, and just as His character can be discovered by those who have eyes to see in the parable of creation, so every man works under the same compulsion, and reveals himself by the fruit of his hands. According as a man is true, so is his work; in proportion as he is false, so is his work. One of the secrets of great art is sincerity, but if the soul be crooked the work will be a makeshift.

2. Conduct as much as work springs from the heart, and by the heart must be judged. Both God and man try conduct by subtler tests than the outward appearance, and two actions of the same kind may have a different moral complexion. Is calculating prudence on the same level as devout consecration, and do they prove an equal quality in the soul? We ourselves pass behind acts to motives; we also trace the life up to its birthplace. Men are loved who have been able to give but little because they gave it brotherly, fragrant with love; men are hated who have given largely because they gave ostentatiously and inhumanly with cold and careless hand.—J. Watson (Ian Maclaren), *The Inspiration of Our Faith*, p. 157.

References.—XII. 36.—F. E. Paget, *Sermons on Duties of Daily Life*, p. 123; see also F. E. Paget, *Studies in the Christian Character*, p. 79. XII. 36, 37.—G. Buchanan Gray, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lvi. 1899, p. 140. Stopford A. Brooke, *Short Sermons*, p. 278.

THE GIFT OF SPEECH

'By thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned.'—Matthew xii. 37.

We should do well, perhaps, to see what is our responsibility as possessors of the gift of speech, to examine that common endowment which is the distinction and glory of the human race, the gift of language, and what is the responsibility which belongs to us for the right use of our words. We all of us know that we must answer to God for this great gift wherein, as the outward expression of His reason, man stands forth as the acknowledged head of creation.

I. Words of Beauty.—It is to God that we have to answer for our speech, and every misuse of this gift is an offence against Him. A man ought to see to it that he does nothing with his tongue which will break the harmony of this world's prayers or insult the God of beauty, to Whom the homage of creation is unceasingly offered.

II. Words of Truth.—Our words are uttered not only in the presence of the God of beauty, they are uttered in the hearing of the God of truth. We ought to think most earnestly about this division of the subject, because there must be a deep-seated tendency in human nature to abuse this gift of language, to use it in the service of untruthfulness. We are startled from time to time by revelations of gigantic frauds, and wholesale impostures built up by lies. Coming nearer home, are we not obliged to make a wide distinction between things which we hear and things which we see? In our hatred of hypocrisy we have gone to the other extreme. Why are good people so shy in their religious professions? God ought to come first and not the consciousness of men. The man who makes no secret of his principles is the man who in the end suffers the least persecution, and is not tempted really so much to deny his Lord. It is a bad thing to be a hypocrite, but it is also a very bad thing to be a self-conscious coward.

III. Words of Comfort.—Our words are uttered in

the face of Him Who is called the God of all comfort, Whose mission it is to strengthen and cheer, as well as in the face of Him Who is the God of beauty and the God of truth. How much can be done by words to help and cheer and advise. How much can be done to pull down, damage, and destroy. When we think of what language has done to enrich the race we may well shrink from the unutterable degradation and base ideas, couched in unworthy and squalid language, while in all our conversation there must always be set before us the importance of truth and honour and respect and love for others. If these be absent, then too soon there sets in that moral warp of character which causes it to lose its hold on the true, the beautiful, and the good. For men despise one who is not true; they mistrust the smart controversialist, and the envenomed critic; they drive him at last from their company, and dethrone him from the pinnacle of their respect. What is this but a reflection of that righteous wrath which, in the end, will cast away for ever from the golden city and the home of truth whatsoever defileth and whatsoever loveth and maketh a lie.

JUSTIFICATION BY WORDS

'By thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned.'—MATTHEW XII. 37.

MANY a battle royal has been fought over the doctrines of justification by faith and justification by works, but perhaps we have heard less than we ought about justification by words. It is not an Apostle, but the Master Himself, who urges the too much neglected truth that men are justified by their words.

This great utterance of Jesus was called forth by the malevolent criticism of the Pharisees. He had just performed a great healing miracle which had astonished the assembled crowds, and convinced them that He was the Messiah. The spiteful Pharisees have another explanation. He casts out demons, they said, by the prince of the demons. They do not and dare not deny the fact, but they explain it by asserting that He is in league with the powers of evil. And nothing could have troubled Jesus more than this, that men should look upon His beautiful and gracious deed, and deliberately pronounce it the work of the Devil. Men who could do that were not only lost to all sense of honour, but were devoid of moral sensibilities. Their world was turned upside down. They were the sworn foes of beneficence. They called good evil and evil good. No words, therefore, were too severe to characterize their moral brutality, and our consciences instinctively acknowledge the justice of this great utterance of Jesus, 'By thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned'.

I. It is a great thing, this human speech of ours—a terrible thing! Some, who know the awful powers and dangers that lie hidden in the heart of a word, have thought it the highest wisdom to keep the lips sealed. 'Speech is silvern, silence is golden.' There are few nations without a proverb which expresses the superiority of silence to speech. Like most words which tersely embody the wisdom of humanity upon its average levels, this proverb is only partly true; it partly needs to be supplemented by a more courageous word. There are indeed times when silence is the highest wisdom; there are other times when silence is a crime! It is a crime to say, in a moment of passion, the thing that wounds; but it is no less a crime to leave unsaid the thing that might have helped or soothed or cheered. The wise man is not always the silent man; he is the man who uses words for God.

II. There is much that is pathetic in the history of human speech. Case-endings, which were originally full of significance, lose their freshness and force, and often vanish altogether, their place being taken, perhaps, by some prepositional phrase, whose clumsiness would have astonished the ancient men. And what has happened to the inflections has too often happened to the words themselves. They have steadily but surely been emptied of their great original content. An 'awful place' used to mean a place which could touch the spirit to awe—such a place as the rugged hill-side where the lonely Jacob saw the angels of God ascending and descending. It would mean something very different to-day. Great words have so often passed through careless and insincere lips that they no longer mean what they once meant. 'Awfully, has, in much colloquial speech, usurped the place of 'very'. We use superlatives where sincerer men would use positives; for this is, in part, a question of individual and social sincerity. As strong and noble words gradually lost their meaning, they had to be reinforced by other words, and these again by other words, till the old simplicity and strength became little more than a philological tradition. To say that a thing is good, or that we like it well, ought to be one of the highest expressions of appreciation; but that is hardly the market value of those great words to-day. The careless application of these and many similar words has deprived them of their primal strength and flavour; and part of the Christian problem to-day is just to learn to use the strong common words of our English speech with that noble sincerity which can dispense with superlatives and exaggerations.

III. In the last resort, this is a question of character. A man necessarily speaks as he is. It is himself that he utters. His words are his spirit rendered audible. They show what manner of man he is; they justify or condemn him. A good man will therefore be careful of all his words, but he must especially beware how he uses the great words of the Christian faith. He must be jealously on his guard lest his use of them deplete them of their Divine content. There are some words whose original nobility is gone, perhaps beyond all hope of recovery; but there are others which every man should count it a privilege to keep bright and clean. We shall not lightly, for example, call every one a Christian whose name is written upon the books of the visible Church.

We shall reserve that word for those who love Christ, not in word only, but in deed and truth. The right and conscientious use of words will strengthen the sincerity of our own soul, and will constitute our tiny contribution to the maintenance of at least one lofty ideal among the men and women about us. We shall, even in the common converse of our life, strive to realize both the dignity and the responsibility of human speech; and we shall use it cheerfully indeed, but humbly and carefully, as men who will one day have to give an account.

References.—XII. 37.—H. Harris, *Short Sermons*, p. 174. M. G. Glazebrook, *Prospice*, p. 141.

ON POWER

'Master, we would see a sign from Thee.'—Matthew xii. 38.

I. People are always asking why miracles no longer happen and inferring from their cessation that they never did happen. It seems to me that the answer to this question is writ large in the history of mankind, and the answer is this—man can very rarely be safely entrusted with any exceptional power. The experience of the world proves this. It is really the moral of the Old Testament Scriptures. Such phrases as 'God's spirit striving with man,' simply means, God, seeing how far man can be entrusted with what, for want of a better word, I must still call supernatural truth, or supernatural powers.

Man at his best has been tested and failed. Moses and the Prophets had been tried with the trust of exceptional power, and had used it badly, as pride and passion prompted. To all in turn had been committed extraordinary gifts, and all in turn had employed them badly. What was left? St. Paul shall answer us: 'When the fullness of time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law'.

II. Christ was sent, and, at the outset of His career, was tempted as Moses and Elias had been tempted. In the wilderness, on the mountain, and on the pinnacle, He was given three deliberate choices. He was solicited, first, to make bread out of stones—that is, to employ His supernatural power to satisfy His own hunger—a personal want. Secondly, to fling Himself from a pinnacle of the Temple—to show at the outset of His mission, in the face of all the people, a sign that should compel their recognition of His Divine power; thirdly, to worship—to acknowledge—the power of evil, for gain.

On each of these occasions of making a deliberate choice Christ made the right choice, and the choice I am afraid man would not have made.

Christ had supernatural power, but He never used it to gratify curiosity. He never used it without a practical purpose. He did miracles, but they were in nearly every case miracles of mercy and kindness.

III. Thus we may say Christ knew how to use power, and from His time to the present day we have no excuse for not using power for good. In a word, one of the chief lessons of Christ's life was to teach men how to use their powers; and that the powers we have are sufficient for our need. He taught men that the power shown in *not using power* is often the most sublime exercise of power. If whole centuries elapse in which 'miracles do not happen,' and people begin to deny that they ever did happen, this is due only to the fact that men are not found who can fulfil the necessary conditions; and also, I think, if one may say so reverently, that God prefers a more excellent way—that men should learn, not by signs and wonders, but by humble faithful use of the natural reasoning powers He has given them.—C. H. Butcher, *The Sound of a Voice that is Still*, p. 122.

References.—XII. 38.—Hugh Black, *Christ's Service of Love*, p. 181. C. J. Vaughan, *Last Words in the Parish Church of Doncaster*, p. 181. J. Fraser, *University Sermons*, p. 67. P. Ansley Ellis, *Old Beliefs and Modern Believers*, p. 154. XII. 38-45.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xlviii. No. 2779. XII. 39, 40.—A. G. Mortimer, *One Hundred Miniature Sermons*, p. 273. XII. 41.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—St. Matthew IX.-XVII.* p. 192. W. M. Punshon, *Privilege and Responsibility*, A Sermon, p. 731. XII. 42.—H. J. Wilmot-Buxton, *God's Heroes*, p. 128. A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—St. Matthew IX.-XVII.* p. 196. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. ix. No. 533; vol. xlviii. No. 2777. XII. 43-45.—F. E. Paget, *The Spirit of Discipline*, p. 131. J. H. Jellett, *The Elder Son*, p. 268. J. W. Mills, *After-Glow*, p. 157. C. A. Scott, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxx. 1906, p. 13. C. A. Berry, *Vision and Duty*, p. 171.

PARTIAL REFORMATION

'He findeth it empty, swept, and garnished.'—Matthew xii. 44.

I. The Partial Reformation.—The three predicates are all significant. *Empty*, the old tenant has gone out, but no new one come in. *Swept*, some of the dirt is cleared away. *Garnished*, some attempts at decoration made. So it is a perfect picture of superficial reformation of morals without religion. *Swept*, representing suppression of vice. *Garnished*, representing some alteration for the good. But the failure of the whole thing because it is *empty*. There is no lofty enthusiasm, no high principle, no seed of a Divine life. Most accurately of all, there is no indwelling Christ.

II. The End of it in Complete Submission.—All reformation which leaves the heart empty is precarious. There is danger from strength of habit, power of circumstances, weakness of our will. It is like an empty bottle, let down into the sea, the sides smashed in. Christ must fill it if we would have it whole, otherwise there is no reason why the demon should not enter again. Whitewash and beautifying will not keep him out.

Partial reformation which fails makes a man very much worse. 'Then goeth he, and taketh with himself seven other spirits more wicked than himself.' Sometimes worse vices come instead of the original, i.e. a man gives up one vice and takes to others, as a gardener changes the things he grows.

III. The Only Thorough and Secure Way is to Cast Out the Evil Spirit.—A stronger than he cometh, i.e. goes out because Christ comes in, fills the heart and is garrison and guard to keep it. There is the

presence within of a new nature, the expulsive power of a new affection. As regards our lower nature, there is no better way of curing a lower desire than to kindle, if it were possible, a higher, which will expel the lower taste. So we are not to go fighting in our own strength, but to open our hearts for Christ's entrance. He will come and fill our souls.—A. Maclaren.

References.—XII. 45.—J. B. Mozley, *Sermons Parochial and Occasional*, p. 118. XII. 46-50.—C. Holland, *Gleanings from a Ministry of Fifty Years*, p. 123. H. Ward Beecher, *Sermons* (1st Series), p. 284. XII. 48.—H. W. Morrow, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxxiii. 1908, p. 59. XII. 48-50.—R. E. Hutton, *The Crown of Christ*, vol. i. p. 109. XII. 49, 50.—W. H. Murray, *The Fruits of the Spirit*, p. 474. J. P. Chown, *The Penny Pulpit*, vol. xiv. No. 846, p. 445. XII. 50.—R. C. Fillingham, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. liv. 1898, p. 339. XIII. 1-9.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—St. Matthew IX.-XVII.* p. 201. XIII. 1-23.—J. Laidlaw, *Studies in the Parables*, p. 49.

THE PARABLE OF THE SOWER

'Behold, a sower went forth to sow.'—Matthew xiii. 3.

In regard to the figure here. None—not leaven with its assimilating power, nor light with its illuminating rays, nor bread with its nutritious elements, nor water as it springs sparkling from a mossy fountain to parched and thirsty lips—none sets forth the Word of God better than this of seed. For example:—

I. There is Life in Seed.—Dry and dead as it seems, let a seed be planted with a stone—flashing diamond, or burning ruby; and while that in the richest soil remains a stone, this awakes and, bursting its husky shell, rises from the ground to adorn the earth with beauty, perfume the air with fragrance, or enrich men with its fruit. Such life there is in all, but especially in Gospel truth.

II. There is Force in Seed.—Buried in the ground a seed does not remain inert—lie there in a living tomb. It forces its way upward, and with a power quite remarkable in a soft, green, feeble blade, pushes aside the dull clods that cover it. Wafted by winds or dropped by passing bird into the fissure of a crag, from weak beginnings, the acorn grows into an oak—growing till by the forth-putting of a silent but continuous force, it heaves the stony table from its bed, rending the rock in pieces. But what so worthy to be called the power as well as the wisdom of God as that Word which, lodged in the mind, and accompanied by the Divine blessing, fed by showers from heaven, rends hearts, harder than the rocks, in pieces?

III. There is a Power of Propagation in Seed.—Thus a single grain of corn would, were the produce of each season sown again, so spread from field to field, from country to country, from continent to continent, as in the course of a few years to cover the whole surface of the earth with one wide harvest—employing all the sickles, filling all the barns, and feeding all the mouths in the world. Such an event, indeed, could not happen in nature, because each latitude has its own productions, and there is no plant formed to grow alike under the sun of Africa and amid the snows of Greenland. It is the glory of the Gospel, and one of the evidences of its Divine origin that it can: and, unless prophecy fail, that it shall. There is not a shore which shall not be sown with this seed; not a land but shall yield harvests of glory to God and of souls for heaven.—Thomas Guthrie, *Parables of Our Lord*, p. 222.

IS CHRISTIANITY A FAILURE?

'Behold, a sower went forth to sow.'—Matthew xiii. 3.

I. One day there came to Christ those who asked the question: 'Are there many that be saved?' What a field here for an interesting discussion! But He sent them back with the warning: 'Strive ye to enter in at the strait gate'. And so sometimes, when in a broad and interesting fashion we would treat great questions in a somewhat detached and impartial manner, He often sends men back to the more commonplace task of examining their own hearts and their own lives. We can quite imagine that when such a question as 'Is Christianity a failure?' is put up for discussion, He would rather that each one of us put the question to himself in a somewhat more personal fashion, namely, 'Am I a failure?'

II. It is that question which the parable of the sower partly answers. Our Lord, indeed, in this parable admits that Christianity is a failure again and again; failure on the hard ground, failure on the shallow ground, failure on the unclean ground, failure, as it would seem, everywhere. But He bids men remember that the cause of the failure lies not in the seed, but in the soil; not in the Word, but in the hearts of men.

III. We see as we read this parable that it is assumed from the very beginning that there is in man, at least in certain limits, a power of free will; that there is in every heart some capacity for reception, and the great central lesson and meaning of the parable is simply this, that it is in the co-operation of the seed and the soil, of the grace of God and the will of man, that there lie all the possibilities of that harvest which in the individual is character and in society the kingdom of God.

The whole programme of life may really be summed up in a single sentence:—

> Our wills are ours, we know not how,
> Our wills are ours to make them Thine.

H. R. Gamble, *Church Family Newspaper*, vol. xv. p. 218.

References.—XIII. 3.—R. H. McKim, *The Gospel in the Christian Year*, p. 147. H. Scott Holland, *God's City*, p. 121; see also *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xlii. 1892, p. 141. Henry Alford, *Sermons on Christian Doctrine*, p. 120. E. W. Attwood, *Sermons for Clergy and Laity*, p. 76. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xlix. No. 2842. XIII. 3-5.—R. Winterbotham, *Sermons and Expositions*, pp. 108-51. XIII. 3-9.—*The Dundee Pulpit*, 1872, p. 17. G. Salmon, *Non-Miraculous Christianity*, p. 195. XIII. 3-8, 18-23.—Cosmo Gordon Lang, *Thoughts on Some of The Parables of Jesus*, p. 13. XIII. 3-9, 18-23.—B. W. Maturin, *Practical Studies on the Parables of Our Lord*, p. 1.

SOCIAL REFORM

'Some fell by the wayside.'—Matthew xiii. 4.

There is a kind of soil which is content to remain hard and barren. The verse gives a picture of many men and women who have no spiritual receptiveness. They do not understand the language of the Psalmist: 'Like as the hart desireth the water brooks, so longeth my soul after Thee, O God'. This kind of nature is to be found in many different places, and among many kinds of men.

I. Hard circumstances often make men unresponsive to any spiritual ideal to the higher nature. We know very well with some circumstances need not be, and sometimes are not, in themselves a fatal drawback. Some men can resist all the evil influences of environment. There were saints in Cæsar's household, and we have seen that in the dullest and dreariest slums some wear the white flower of a blameless life. But of men in the mass it is true that the outward conditions of life must tell upon the spiritual state. Here social reform has its part to play. The only hope for the hard soil is that it should be broken up, and this is what wise social reform can do. It cannot make men Christians or give them spiritual life, but it can prepare the soil for the seed. 'Take away the stone,' said our Lord to His disciples, ere He summoned Lazarus to come forth. The one act can be done by the disciples, the other only by the Lord Himself.

II. There are those who are influenced strangely by heredity to an indifference to spiritual things. These are not the victims of untoward circumstances. Often they lead the pleasantest lives, and live in the pleasantest places, but religion comes to them without appeal. They do not understand it, and they do not want it. What are we to do for them? We can only wait for the discipline of life and the training of love to break up the hardened soil. Love and sorrow are the chief openers of the heart which enable the Divine Grace to enter in.

III. We must not forget that men often harden themselves. They neglect opportunities and refuse light. And so we find the obdurate conscience which once was soft; the hard heart which once was tender. All this is the story of neglected grace and of rejected light. The old judgment is uttered: 'Take the talent from him'. As we think of this possibility coming so near us all, the hardening that arises from neglected opportunities, there are two passages which occur to our minds: 'Take heed how ye hear,' and 'To-day, if ye will hear His Voice, harden not your hearts'.—H. R. Gamble, *Church Family Newspaper*, vol. xv. p. 218, 13 March, 1908.

References.—XIII. 4, 5, 6, 18.—J. Sidmouth Cooper, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxiv. 1903, p. 152. XIII. 5, 6.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xlix. No. 2844. XIII. 6.—F. E. Paget, *The Spirit of Discipline*, p. 142. XIII. 7.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxxiv. No. 2040.

GOOD SOIL

'Other fell into good ground, and brought forth fruit, some an hundredfold, some sixtyfold, some thirtyfold. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear.'—Matthew xiii. 8, 9.

Our Lord describes for us here the characteristics of good soil. He tells us what sort of man he is who profits by the Sunday sermon, and he tells us first of all that the right hearer has an honest and good heart.

I. An honest and good heart means that kind of heart in which there is some affinity to the message received, a correspondence which we sometimes take for granted. It may well be that the soil of our heart has ceased to become honest and good because we have not kept it informed or receptive or interested in the highest things which form the object matter of our intelligence. It is a matter of supreme indifference to many men whether the Creed be maintained in its integrity or not. The Atonement is a doctrine in which they have no practical interest, and never even attempt to understand. The Incarnation is a truth which they cannot imagine to be worth all the disputations which surge round it. Heaven and the joys of Paradise may be all very well for those who like them, but for themselves they would much rather stay where they are. It is no satisfaction to them to be told about Christian holiness; the ways of society and the ordinary code are quite sufficient. The ways and doings of Scriptural characters awake in them no responsive interest whatsoever. If religion is a department of human learning which we can take up as an extra subject or let alone, well and good; but if religion is a question which concerns our well-being here and our eternal salvation hereafter, it is nothing short of a disaster to have reached a state where religion and religious things fail to awake even a languid interest. It is not a good sign if sermon subjects fail to interest us. Ask God to give you an interest in these topics, which are the most serious that can occupy a man's heart.

II. But the man with an honest and good heart is more than receptive; he is retentive. Having heard the Word he keeps it. This is the trouble: how to keep what is heard in face of the birds, and the pressure of the rock, under the adverse growth of thorns which spoil the results. It is impossible for the message to stick if we have no place for it in our hearts, if we are not in a condition to be either instructed or advised. If we only set ourselves to practise what we have heard, if only we would act on the advice we receive, or carry out some of the things we know, what different men and women we should be!

III. 'Fruit with patience.' It is the unchanging Gospel which needs patience. So also does the hearer, too, need patience in the presence of forgotten truth, now perhaps for the first time revealed to him. It is a good thing for us to hear from time to time all the counsel of God set before us, and to learn patiently to investigate the claims made upon our faith and understanding.

Take heed how ye hear. The responsibility of the preacher is, as it must always be, immense, but there is a responsibility which rests with the hearer to offer that honest and good heart, to retain and develop with patience the seed which is to bear fruit unto everlasting life.

References.—XIII. 8, 9.—Canon Newbolt, *Church Times*, vol. l. 1903, p. 285. XIII. 9.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—St. Matthew IX.-XVII.* p. 211. XIII. 10.—J. A. Bain, *Questions Answered by Christ*, p. 22. XIII. 10, 11.—S. D. McConnell, *A Year's Sermons*, p. 217. XIII. 10-13.—H. Scott Holland, *Christian World Pupit*, vol. xl. 1891, p. 161. XIII. 10-17.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxxix. No. 2304. XIII. 11, 12.—T. Chalmers, *Sermons Preached in the Tron Church, Glasgow*, p. 84. XIII. 12.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxv. No. 1488. J. Service, *Sermons*, p. 159. P. Young, *Plain Preaching to Poor People* (7th Series), p. 107. A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—St. Matthew IX.-XVII.* p. 220. XIII. 13.—*Ibid.* p. 230. XIII. 14.—J. H. Thom, *A Spiritual Faith*, p. 35.

'Seeing they see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand.'—Matthew xiii. 13.

In our own generation, and our own land, are many pariahs, sitting amongst us all, nay, oftentimes sitting (yet not recognized for what they are) at good men's tables. How general is that sensuous dullness, that deafness of the heart, which the Scriptures attribute to human beings! 'Having ears, they hear not; and seeing they do not understand.' In the very act of facing or touching a dreadful object, they will deny its existence. Men say to me daily, when I ask them, in passing, 'Anything in this morning's paper?' 'Oh no, nothing at all.' And, as I never had any other answer, I am bound to suppose that . . . every day was a blank day, yielding absolutely nothing—what children call a deaf nut, offering no kernel; and yet the total product has caused angels to weep and tremble.—De Quincey.

The service of philosophy and of religion and culture as well, to the human spirit, is to startle it into a sharp and eager observation.—Pater.

References.—XIII. 14, 15.—R. W. Church, *Village Sermons* (2nd Series), p. 62. XIII. 15-23.—B. D. Johns, *Pulpit Notes*, p. 157. XIII. 18-23.—J. Laidlaw, *Studies in the Parables*, p. 65.

'The care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word.'—Matthew xiii. 22.

'After this,' George Fox writes in his Journal for 1650, 'I was moved to go into Derbyshire, where the mighty power of God was among Friends. And I went to Chesterfield, where one Britland was priest. He saw beyond the common sort of priest, for he had been partly convinced, and had spoken much on behalf of Truth, before he was priest there; but when the priest of that town died, he got the parsonage, and choked himself with it.'

References.—XIII. 22.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxxiv. No. 2040. XIII. 24, 25.—W. Lee, *University Sermons*, p. 34. A. G. Mortimer, *One Hundred Miniature Sermons*, vol. i. p. 120. XIII. 24-30.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—St. Matthew IX.-XVII.* p. 234. G. Monks, *Pastor in Ecclesia*, p. 252. W. Arnot, *The Parables of Our Lord*, p. 75. R. C. Trench, *Notes on the Parables*, p. 86. R. Winterbotham, *Sermons and Expositions*, p. 122. H. Calderwood, *The Parables of Our Lord*, p. 199. *Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. i. p. 470. A. F. Barfield, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. v. p. 135. M. Lucas, *ibid.* vol. xv. p. 355. *Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. ii. p. 80. J. Sherman, *Thursday Penny Pulpit*, vol. iii. p. 163. A. B. Bruce, *Parabolic Teaching of Christ*, p. 38. Parker, *Inner Life of Christ*, vol. ii. p. 235. S. A. Tipple, *Sunday Mornings at Norwood*, p. 339. W. H. Brookfield, *Sermons*, p. 239. *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. vi. p. 189. R. D. B. Rawnsley, *Village Sermons* (3rd Series), p. 43. XIII. 24-30, 36-43.—B. W. Maturin, *Practical Studies on the Parables of Our Lord*, p. 23. R. Winterbotham, *The Kingdom of Heaven*, p. 33.

'While men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat.'—Matthew xiii. 25.

'The reformers speedily found,' observes Ruskin, 'that the enemy was never far behind the sower of good seed: that an evil spirit might enter the ranks of reformation as well as those of resistance; and that though the deadly blight might be checked amidst the wheat, there was no hope of ever ridding the wheat itself from the tares.'

Describing the French countrywoman, Reine Chrétien, in her novel of *The Village on the Cliff*, Miss Thackeray observes that 'she was a woman with love in her heart, but she was not tender, as some are, or long-suffering; she was not unselfish, as others who abnegate and submit until nothing remains but a soulless body, a cataleptic subject mesmerized by a stronger will. She was not humble, easily entreated, unsuspicious of evil. The devil and his angels had sown tares enough in her heart to spring up in the good soil thick and rank and abundant; only it was good soil in which they were growing, and in which the grain of mustard-seed would spring up too, and become a great tree in time, with wide-spreading branches, although the thick weeds and poisonous grasses were tangling in a wilderness at its root.

References.—XIII. 25.—S. Baring-Gould, *Village Preaching for a Year* (2nd Series), vol. i. p. 96. XIII. 25, 26.—S. A. Tipple, *Sunday Mornings at Norwood*, p. 339. XIII. 27-30.—H. Scott Holland, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xlii. 1892, p. 196.

THE ENEMY IN THE FIELD

'An enemy hath done this.'—Matthew xiii. 28.

I. The Field is the Church.—For it is the kingdom of heaven which is itself the field, and if our Lord adds also that the field is the world it is only because His Divine confidence was looking forward to that day when His Church should be universal. It is then inside and not outside the Church that this confusion is to be looked for. It is within the society of the baptized that the tares and the wheat are to be found side by side. And often the tares look so like the wheat that it is only in the fruit, not in the early growth, that the difference can be found out at all. The danger of a too early separation of the two lies not only in that disturbance of the soil which will chill and kill the roots of the healthy plant, but still more in the risk of making a real mistake and pluck-

ing up the true instead of the counterfeit growth. In very early days in the Church's history Christians began to see in this parable a counsel of warning and one of encouragement.

II. A Counsel of Warning.—It forewarned them against that kind of disappointment which arises from a confusion of ideas—the confusion of failure with imperfection. The results of the Gospel are real even when they are not complete. It is not the less true that Christ is the Saviour because all men will not come to Him. It is no argument against grace that men who seek it not do not receive it. It is no defect of the Gospel that that should come to pass which its Founder foretold—that amongst the children of the kingdom there should be a plentiful growth of spurious plants, whether they take the form of unbelief or ungodliness or hypocrisy.

III. A Counsel of Encouragement.—Not that this maxim is meant to forbid the proper exercise of discipline. It was not so that our Lord's Apostles understood it. It is not so that our own Church interprets it. But it does mean to tell us that discipline has for its object the restoration not the condemnation of the offender. It means to encourage in us a spirit of watchfulness and fear, but not to encourage any deceptive hope that any kind of purging can guarantee the purity of what remains. Has not every man a right to be taken on his own profession—a right to pass through life unchallenged as to his claim to be a follower of Christ?

IV. The Enemy in the Field.—There is an enemy in God's field. Nowhere does the good sower carry his basket but a watchful foe follows in the night. That staggering question often suggests itself—how can this be? God made the powerful mind. He made the beautiful form. Did He unmake the one, did he debase the other? The parable gives us the answer, still leaving it all in deep mystery. An enemy hath done this. But it is chiefly in one broad direction that the parable sets before us the danger of this hostile sowing. It is the danger to the good of the presence with them—at their very side—of the evil. The tares look like the wheat; it is often impossible to discriminate between them. But in these words our Lord teaches us decisively to disconnect all evil from the hand of God. Evil, He teaches us, is God's absence, and we need never be away from God. It is not His will that we should be. If anything now is drawing you to evil it is not from God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Strong as he is, he is weaker than God, Who will help us. If you live in this faith of the omnipotence of the All Good, then shall your heart be steadfast and fear no evil.

'An enemy hath done this.'—MATTHEW XIII. 28.

NAMES matter little; sin desolates us widely, pain racks us keenly, whether we account for their existence upon a positive or a negative theory. Yet it is remarkable that our Saviour, while He does not explain this awful problem, *does not explain it away*. To the old, ever-recurring question, 'Whence these tares?' He answers simply, 'An enemy hath done this'. Man has striven to bridge over this chasm between his soul and God with theories contradictory to the reason they profess to satisfy, and false to the moral sense they desire to soothe, but He who spake as never man spake does not reason upon this subject. He sees this great gulf set; He knows what its mouth has devoured of earth's best and noblest; one thing most precious of all remains—He flings Himself within it.—DORA GREENWELL.

'ENVY,' observes Bacon at the close of his essay on this vice, 'is also the vilest affection, and the most depraved; For which cause it is the proper attribute of the Devill, who is called; *The Envious Man, that soweth tares amongst the wheat by night*. As it alwayes commeth to passe, that *envy* worketh subtilly, and in the darke; And to the prejudice of good things, such as is the *wheat*'.

REFERENCES.—XIII. 28.—J. G. Adderley, *Sermons for the People*, vol. ii. p. 103. H. Scott Holland, *God's City*, p. 181. Adam Scott, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xlvii. 1895, p. 22. XIII. 29.—W. H. Brookfield, *Sermons*, p. 239.

THE TWOFOLD DEVELOPMENT

'Let both grow together until the harvest.'—MATTHEW XIII. 30.

THIS affirmative of the parable involves two facts. Howsoever, on the one hand, wickedness may increase, it shall never so increase that there shall not be still in the world some of God's wheat, some of the children of the kingdom. And howsoever, on the other hand, the number of true Christians may at any time increase, they will never so increase as that before the harvest, which our Lord tells us is the end of the present age, all men shall be truly converted.

I. The first affirmation of the parable has given us very momentous information as to the future course of human history. (1) Observe that it is impossible to understand this increase in numbers. Growth in character is the reference intended, not growth in number. (2) Observe that in this prophecy no account is taken of time. The Lord surveys human history in its totality from His own day to the end, from His first to His second coming. The total number of the children of the kingdom from the first to the second advent He calls wheat; the total number of the children of the wicked one from the first to the second Advent He calls tares.

II. The true nature of those tares which so cumber God's wheat-field is not by many fully recognized. Whatever changes in the form of wickedness there may be, they will be such as to bring out ever more and more distinctly its essentially diabolic, God-denying character. Even although the proportion of the converted to the unconverted should greatly increase, which may easily be, yet wickedness in those who remain unconverted will ever become more and more intense in its God-defying and law-rejecting spirit. This is what Jesus clearly means when He says that the tares shall 'grow until the harvest'.

III. The lessons of this subject are self-evident.

(1) The words of Christ rebuke and should silence all baseless fears because of increasing wickedness. (2) The parable no less truly rebukes all false hopes, so common with many in our day, as if we might for an instant hope to see in the present dispensation the church triumphant over the power of the devil, or to see evil at least suppressed if not destroyed. The parable tells us in so many words that this shall not be. (3) And has not the truth of the text a very solemn and searching *personal* application? Growth is a law of life. It is a law of the life in God. It is equally a law of the life in sin. And it is as with the wheat and the tares in the field: the very same influences which make the wheat grow make also the tares to grow. The truth which, if from the heart you receive it and obey it, saves you and makes you more like Christ; that very truth, if you do not believe it and obey it, makes you more the child of the wicked one and the slave of him in sin than you were before. In the spiritual life, as in the natural life, there is no standing still.—S. H. Kellogg, *The Past a Prophecy of the Future*, p. 275.

References.—XIII. 30.—R. D. B. Rawnsley, *Village Sermons* (3rd Series), p. 43. R. W. Church, *Cathedral and University Sermons*, p. 29. B. Wilberforce, *Sanctification by the Truth*, p. 65. S. H. Kellogg, *The Past a Prophecy of the Future*, p. 275. *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxxiii. 1908, p. 163.

THE PRINCIPLE OF THE PARABLES

'The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard seed.'—Matthew xiii. 31.

Why may the grain of mustard seed be compared to the kingdom of heaven? It is not that they are like one another, for in the ordinary sense of the word they are not alike at all. But they are connected as it were by a cord, along which, if you feel your way, you will be guided from one to the other. And why is that? Because the same God who made the grain made also the soul of man and the Church. Every work of the same hand depicts the whole mind of him that made it.

I. The Parables are built upon the belief that everything that exists was made by a wise and good God, and that anything in the world can lead you up to the great Father of All. Now let us notice that we have there the one motive of all learning. Why do we want to know anything at all? Why do men study the rocks, or the flowers, or the stars? Because they believe that they enfold a secret, the secret of their birth. Because they believe that they are symbols, and that they can be made to reveal the mystery that lies behind them. Because, again, they believe, that that mystery, when revealed, must needs be beautiful and good.

II. Again, we find in the Parables not only the motive, but the process of all learning. Always we begin with the grain of mustard seed, with the plain, unattractive, obvious little fact. Most people pass it by. They want something grand and showy, and do not see what these common things can have to teach. But at last an eye that can see falls upon the despised little grain, and finds it worthy of patient study. And immediately it opens out, expands, etherealizes itself, revealing its wonderful mechanism, and behind the mechanism the laws of all life.

III. It is in this way that knowledge grows. We begin with the love of God's works. We put ourselves into the hands of Nature, and ask to be taught what she can teach us. We approach her in the disciple's spirit, the spirit of humility and patience, putting away all our own ideas and submitting to be led, trying to see things just as they are, counting nothing too small, nothing common or unclean. We stand in the path of light and the light comes, sometimes from teachers or fellow-workers, sometimes straight from above. This is the way of the intellectual life; and our Lord tells us in His Parables that the way of the spiritual life is the same. So He led His chosen disciples on from the grain of mustard seed to the confession of Peter, and from this again to the lessons of the Cross and of the Resurrection, always step by step and line upon line. But first of all we need the blessing 'Blessed are your eyes, for they see'. For we may see without seeing; what we want is the second sight.

What is it that we see first of all? A family gathered by the fireside, a group of young men at a lecture or a game, two friends walking together, the crowded street of a town, the trivial scenes that make up social life.

There, in the universal craving of man for companionship and communion and affection, you have the grain of mustard seed, the simple road-side fact. It is as necessary, as common, as the air that we breathe, and that is why we fail to see its meaning.

We must take this little fact of friendship into our hands, as the botanist takes the little grain of mustard seed, and ask what it means. If you approach it in the right spirit, in the teachable spirit, the spirit of discipleship, it will open for you, and show you how the whole Gospel, the kingdom of heaven, is wrapped up in the love of a friend for a friend. Wherever two or three are gathered together, there is Christ—for those who have eyes to see.—C. Bigg, *The Spirit of Christ in Common Life*, p. 241.

DIVINE ENERGY

'The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard seed.'—Matthew xiii. 31.

I. The future can only belong to a Church which believes and preaches the forth-reaching, energizing, and active love of God.

To be out of the warmth of the Love of God is to be in the darkness, and how great is that darkness no one painted more clearly than Jesus Christ Himself. But it is the warmth of the sun which makes the soul cast off the cloak of its reserve, and not the terror of the darkness.

After all, why did God make anything except in love? Why did He redeem the world, except to his fatherly heart it was impossible to leave one in the

darkness? And no Church will save the world, and especially those thousand millions who have not yet had a chance of making up their minds as to the truth of Christianity, except a Church that believes and proclaims and lives out the love of God to every child that He has made.

II. And with the gospel of the Love of God must go the message of a free salvation. That the Eternal Son of God came into this very world in which we live, and gave Himself for His brothers, that the Christian religion does not consist in a belief in a good man named Jesus Christ dying on the Cross, but consists in a belief in the Sacrifice of God Himself.

III. The greatest danger of the Church is worldliness. In one sense it is impossible for the Church to mix too freely with the world. But on the other hand, to catch the spirit of 'push,' to run a Church as a man runs a successful business, to depend upon cleverness and management, rather than the grace of God, to neglect prayer and intercession in favour of influence with the Press, to lower the teaching of the Church or its moral standard in order to suit an easy and self-indulgent age, is to spell ruin and failure and shame for the most orthodox Church in the world. In a voice which still rings down the centuries, Jesus Christ Himself proclaimed: 'My kingdom is not of this world'.

Only a Church whose weapons still are faith and hope and love and prayer can hope to win the world.—Bishop Winnington Ingram, *The Church Times*, vol. lviii. p. 508, 18 October, 1907.

References.—XIII. 31.—Bishop D. L. Lloyd, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xlvii. 1895, p. 158. G. Tyrrell, *Oil and Wine*, p. 169. XIII. 31, 32.—R. Winterbotham, *The Kingdom of Heaven*, p. 52. S. Baring-Gould, *Village Preaching for a Year*, p. 105. F. D. Maurice, *Christmas Day and Other Sermons*, p. 347. J. Laidlaw, *Studies in the Parables*, p. 81. B. D. Johns, *Pulpit Notes*, p. 166. H. Hensley Henson, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xliv. 1903, p. 68. W. W. Battershall, *Interpretations of Life and Religion*, p. 213. XIII. 31-33.—F. Temple, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. liii. 1898, p. 183. C. G. Lang, *Thoughts in Some of the Parables of Jesus*, p. 41. B. W. Maturin, *Practical Studies in the Parables of Our Lord*, p. 40. XIII. 32.—J. Parker, *Studies in Texts*, vol. i. p. 185. S. Horton, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxxiv. 1908, p. 103. XIII. 33.—H. Scott Holland, *ibid.* vol. xl. 1891, p. 216. R. S. Stores, *ibid.* vol. xlvii. 1895, p. 121. F. Pickett, *ibid.* vol. xlv. 1894, p. 19. J. Scott Lidgett, *ibid.* vol. xlix. 1906, p. 104. Henry Scott Holland, *God's City*, p. 143. J. Laidlaw, *Studies in the Parables*, p. 81. T. G. Selby, *The Strenuous Gospel*, p. 336. M. J. McLeod, *A Comfortable Faith*, p. 179. R. Winterbotham, *The Kingdom of Heaven*, p. 70. A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—St. Matthew IX.-XVII.* p. 244.

THE PARABLE OF THE LEAVEN

'The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal until it was wholly leavened.'—Matthew xiii. 33.

I. The woman takes the leaven to lay it not on, but in the meal, where, working from within outwards, it changes the whole substance from the centre to the surface. It is through a corresponding change that the man goes to whom the Spirit of God communicates His grace. It is hidden in the heart. The change begins there; the outward reformation not preparing the way for regeneration, but springing from it; growing out of it as a tree grows out of its seed, or a stream flows out of its spring. In consequence of its being lodged in their hearts, true Christians, so far from being hypocrites, have more of the reality of religion than of its appearance.

II. So soon as leaven is embedded in its substance, a change immediately ensues; a process of fermentation is set agoing, and, extending from within outwards, goes on till by a law of nature the whole lump is leavened. Neither art nor nature could supply a better simile of the grace of God than this.

The peculiarity of grace is this, that like leaven it changes whatever it is applied to into its own nature. For as leaven turns meal into leaven, so Divine grace imparts a gracious character to the heart; and this is what I call its assimilating element. Yet let there be no mistake. While the grace of God changes all who are brought in conversion under its influence, it does not impart any new power of passion, but works by giving to those we already have a holy bent; by impressing on them a heavenly character.

III. It is said of the meal in which the woman hid the leaven, that 'the whole,' not a portion of it, large or small, 'was leavened'. The Apostle brings out the same diffusive character of this element when he says, 'A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump'. Even so, teaching us not to despise the day of small things, a little grace lodged in the heart spreads till it sanctify the whole man. Some things diffuse themselves rapidly. There are deadly poisons so rapid and indeed sudden in their action that the cup falls from the suicide's hand; he is a dead man before he has time to set it down. To these grace stands out in striking contrast, not only because it is saving, but because it is ordinarily slow in bringing its work to a holy and blessed close; and in that respect grace and sin correspond well to their figures of life and death.

Still, let God's people thank Him, and take courage. Though grace, unlike sin, and like leaven, is slow in its progress, it shall change the whole man betimes.—Thomas Guthrie, *Parables of Our Lord*, p. 9.

References.—XIII. 33.—M. Dods, *Christ and Men*, p. 151. XIII. 33-35.—W. J. Knox-Little, *The Light of Life*, p. 312. XIII. 34, 35.—J. Martineau, *Hours of Thought on Sacred Things*, vol. i. p. 270. XIII. 37, 38.—J. G. Greenhough, *The Cross in Modern Life*, p. 72. *Ibid.*, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xlix. 1896, p. 339. XIII. 37-39.—R. E. Hutton, *The Crown of Christ*, vol. i. p. 217. XIII. 38.—C. J. Vaughan, *Words from the Cross*, p. 152. B. W. Maturin, *Practical Studies on the Parables of Our Lord*, p. 53. XIII. 39.—*Plain Sermons by Contributors to the 'Tracts for The Times,'* vol. vi. p. 219. Malan, *Plain Preaching for a Year*, vol. i. p. 175. XIII. 43.—W. Howell Evans, *Sermons for the Church's Year*, p. 227. E. L. Hull, *Sermons*, p. 237.

'The kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field; the which when a man hath found . . . .'—MATTHEW XIII. 44.

'I WANT you,' writes James Smetham to a friend, 'to . . . try to realize while you seek that as soon as your foot is turned to the fields of gold, all heaven is astir to help you. Strange helps will come to you—hints, intuitions, breathings, curious allurements.'

THE kingdom of God is as treasure hid in a field; and of those who profess to help us to seek for it, we are not to put confidence in those who say—Here is the treasure, we have found it, and have it, and will give you some of it; but in those who say—We think that is a good place to dig, and you will dig most easily in such and such a way.'—RUSKIN, *On the Old Road*, II.

REFERENCES.—XIII. 44.—A. J. Mortimer, *One Hundred Miniature Sermons*, vol. ii. p. 328. T. Guthrie, *Parables of Our Lord*, p. 150. H. Scott Holland, *God's City*, p. 161; see also *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xl. 1891, p. 177. W. H. Brannan, *ibid.* vol. lxxiv. 1908, p. 292. Trench, *Parables*, p. 121. Winterbotham's *Sermons*, p. 139. Prof. Calderwood, 'The Exceeding Value of Spiritual Good Found in God's Kingdom,' *Parables*, p. 234; *Biblical Things not Generally Known*, vol. i. par. 146. XIII. 44-46.—B. W. Maturin, *Practical Studies on the Parables of Our Lord*, p. 65. Woolcot Catkin, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxxviii. 1890, p. 104. A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—St. Matthew IX.-XVII.* p. 251. C. G. Lang, *Thoughts on Some of the Parables of Jesus*, p. 63. Kitto's, 'The Treasure and the Pearl,' *Daily Bible Illustrations*, vol. vii. p. 314. Parker's *Inner Life of Christ*, vol. ii. p. 256. A. B. Bruce, in *Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. ii. p. 360 (and same in his *Parabolic Teaching of Christ*). Allon, 'How Men Find Christ,' *Pulpit Analyst*, vol. iii. p. 601. Barfield, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. v. p. 167. Wray, 'Kingdom of Heaven,' *ibid.* vol. xvi. p. 360. W. M. Metcalfe, 'The Twin Parables,' *Expositor* (2nd Series), vol. viii. p. 54. J. Henry Burn, *ibid.* vol. viii. 468.

THE PARABLE OF THE PEARL OF GREAT PRICE

'The kingdom of heaven is like to a merchant seeking fine pearls. And finding one pearl of great price he goes away and sells all that he has and buys it.'—MATTHEW XIII. 45-6.

SOME lessons taught by this figure of a merchant:—

I. It Teaches Us to Make Religion our Chief Pursuit.—Such is to the merchant his business. To it he does not allot merely some hours stolen from the pursuits of pleasure. In its pursuit he is all energy and activity.

II. It Teaches Us to Guard Against Deception.—The money which has a suspicious look the wary trader rings on his counter; knowing what frauds are practised in business, the wise merchant often puts such goods as he receives to the test; and the utmost care is taken in such a trade, especially as that of this parable, to guard against mistakes or imposition. The dupes of fraud, men have paid immense sums for pearls which were found to be only paste.

But, through the deceitfulness of the heart and wiles of the devil, men have been greater dupes and suffered unspeakably greater losses. As it is not all gold that glitters, it is not all grace that seems so. There is a righteousness which is ours, as well as one which is Christ's. Such being the case, no merchant needs to be more on his guard against fraud and deception than those who may flatter themselves that they are regenerated when they are only reformed.

III. It Teaches Us to Examine our Accounts with God.—The wise merchant takes stock, balances his books, and, in some businesses at least, strikes a balance on every day's transactions. In this, as in the energy and toil and self-denial and resolution of worldly, how much is then worthy of the imitation of Christian men? Why should not we, at the close of each day, recall and review its transactions to see how our accounts stand with conscience and with God. And as I have seen the workman, ere he retired to rest, throw himself into stream or sea to wash away the sweat and dust of his daily toil, from such a review the Christian would repair each evening to the fountain of Jesus' blood to be cleansed of the guilt of daily sins; and rise each morning to seek the aids of the Holy Spirit to do his work, to keep his watch, to bear his burden, to fight his battle better.—THOMAS GUTHRIE, *Parables of Our Lord*, p. 188.

REFERENCES.—XIII. 45.—J. H. Jowett, *Meditations for Quiet Moments*, p. 63. H. Scott Holland, *God's City*, p. 226. *Ibid.*, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xl. 1891, p. 205. XIII. 45, 46.—Morgan Dix, *Sermons Doctrinal and Practical*, p. 208. J. M. Neale, *Sermons Preached in Sackville College Chapel*, vol. iv. p. 60. Bishop Creighton, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. liii. 1898, p. 91. R. Winterbotham, *The Kingdom of Heaven*, p. 90. B. D. Johns, *Pulpit Notes*, p. 147. Benjamin Keach, 'The Pearl of Great Price,' *Gospel Mysteries*, book i. p. 157. Charles Simeon, *Works*, vol. xi. p. 414. Trench, *Parables*, p. 131. Winterbotham's *Sermons*, p. 142. Prof. Calderwood, 'Wisdom in Seeking and Distributing Spiritual Good,' *Parables*, p. 246. McDougall's *Sermons*, p. 283. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxiv. No. 1424.

'He went and sold all that he had, and bought it.'—MATTHEW XIII. 46.

THE pearl is a free gift! What then is meant by saying that the merchant-man who had found it went and *sold all that he had*, and *bought* it? The meaning is, that there is no room for it in a heart which is filled with other things; he who would possess it must make room for it. It is not and cannot be enjoyed unless it occupies the whole heart.—ERSKINE OF LINLATHEN.

REFERENCES.—XIII. 46.—H. J. Wilmot-Buxton, *Sunday Sermonettes for a Year*, p. 123. Spurgeon in *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xiv. p. 160. C. J. Vaughan in *Three Hundred Outlines on the New Testament*, p. 21. XIII. 47.—H. Scott Holland, *God's City*, p. 204; see also *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xlii. 1892, p. 157. J. L. Fraser, *ibid.* vol. xli. 1892, p. 348. C. W. Stubbs, *For Christ and City*, p. 106. XIII. 47-50.—R. Winterbotham, *The Kingdom of Heaven*, p. 103. *The Dundee Pulpit*, 1872, p. 209. B. W. Maturin, *Practical Studies on the Parables of Our Lord*, p. 80. XIII. 51, 52.—J. O. Bevan, *The Spheres of Action of Science and Religion*, p. 1. E. B. Speirs, *A Present Advent*, p. 66.

CHRIST IS GOD

'Then said He unto them, Therefore every scribe which is instructed unto the kingdom of heaven, is like unto a man that is an householder, which bringeth forth out of his treasure things new and old.'—MATTHEW XIII. 52.

In a large church in Havana, where the black worshippers sit in a different part of the church from the white worshippers, and enter by a different door, outside the door by which the white men enter a white marble statue of the Christ stands, while outside that by which the black men enter a facsimile of the same statue stands in black marble.

The arrangement embodies in a crude form a very fundamental expression of the Christian spirit. It is a parable of very deep truth. Each race of man, before it can accept Christ, must interpret Him for itself in the terms of its own characteristic qualities. It is because it finds its own highest possibilities realized in Him, and its own deepest needs and aspirations satisfied in Him, that it acknowledges Him as its Lord, and what is true of a race of men is true of each generation of that race, and of each individual man belonging to that generation.

I. How did Christ's First Followers arrive at the Assurance that He was the Incarnate Son of God?—Christ did not make His claim to men indiscriminately. He distinctly said again and again that He came not to call the righteous, that is to say, the morally and spiritually satisfied, but sinners, those who were morally and spiritually dissatisfied, and He again and again reiterated the statement that the majority of those who heard Him, though they had ears to hear, could hear not, and though they had eyes, could see not, that only to those whose soul-ears and soul-eyes were open could He make His appeal, that they only were capable of recognizing His nature and His claim. To the former class He spoke in parables and hard sayings, to the latter He unfolded the mysteries of the kingdom without reserve. He came to them with the declaration 'I am the Way. No man cometh to the Father but by Me'—the Father, the fountain source of that life which they craved, the supreme Lawgiver behind the Law, Whose voice they could hear speaking with more or less distinctness, through the depths of their own consciences. 'The way to the Father'—this was what Christ declared Himself to be. Those who joined themselves to Him joined themselves to His Father, for He and His Father He declared to be One.

II. The Conviction of the Divinity of Christ rests on the Testimony of Conscience, on the instinctive recognition by the power with which God has endowed every human soul to be its medium of communication with Him. As the eye responds to light, so conscience responds to Christ. 'This is light,' is not the outcome of any argument; it is the statement of an instinctive and immediate judgment that no argument can change. And so it is with conscience, the eye of the soul. Its recognition of Christ in God is not the outcome of any argument, any external evidence. It depends only on its own activity and on Christ's presence.

III. Outward Stimulus is Necessary to stir the conscience into activity. Doubtless, too, the intellect can help in clearing away the prejudices, misunderstandings which often hinder the eye of faith from seeing its true object, but the act of faith transcends all external evidence, all intellectual processes. It is quite complete in itself, bringing its own assurance with it, an assurance that no external evidence can produce and no external objection can shake. It is a supernatural act, a conscious recognition of the Divine by the Divine, a conscious union of God with His own. Surely the teaching of the New Testament is quite clear with regard to this. No man cometh to Him unless the Father draws him, unless the God within him draws him to the God outside him.

IV. What then is the Ultimate Basis of Christian Faith?—It is found in man's ultimate moral and spiritual needs, the needs of his complete manhood, and in the fact that Christ has satisfied these needs. Thus it was that the first followers of Christ attained to a sure conviction that He was indeed God incarnate in the flesh. That conviction was common to them all, but their interpretations of its content and its claim depended on the kind of satisfaction that they had individually attained, and that in turn depended on the individual needs to which this satisfaction was related. On the Day of Pentecost the Divine Spirit was poured out on the whole body of believers assembled together. Notice the enormous significance of that fact. The Christ life in which these believers shared, the life in which they lived and moved and had their being, was no mere private endowment of each individual Christian. It was the common possession of the whole body.

It is only in the light of this conception of the essential character of the Christian life, the essentially supernatural on the one side and the essentially corporate on the other, that the eye of faith can see its way clearly through the clouds of intellectual and practical embarrassment which obscure its vision at the present day.

'Every scribe which is instructed unto the kingdom of heaven, is like unto a man, an householder, which bringeth forth out of his treasure things new and old.'—MATTHEW XIII. 52.

In 1870 Jowett noted down the following list of 'subjects which ought to be, but never are, treated in sermons: Love. The passions—not generally but particularly. Good manners. Differences of rank. The right use of money. The influence of art. Self-dedication. The limits of self-denial. Failure in life'.

It is the mission of the genius to show that portion of the wealth of Nature, which he has been permitted to remove, to those incapable of finding it for themselves, or even of suspecting its presence.—MILLET, *Notes on Art.*

REFERENCES.—XIII. 52.—J. Parker, *Studies in Text*, vol. i. p. 162. H. Scott Holland, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. liii. 1898, p. 4. Bishop E. C. S. Gibson, *The Old Testament in the New*, p. 177.

THE UNACCOUNTABLE MAN

'Whence hath this man this wisdom, and these mighty works? Is not this the carpenter's son?'—MATTHEW XIII. 54, 55.

I. THE astonishment of the Nazarenes, among whom Jesus had been brought up, was the greater because they knew all about the Preacher's home and upbringing. When we see a man endowed with special and unique qualities, we always try to account for them. And we look for the secret of these extraordinary qualities chiefly to two things: (1) to a man's *parentage*, and (2) to a man's *education*. Again and again you may read in the biographies of great men sentences like these? 'He inherited his strength of will from his father. He derived his gentleness of disposition from his mother.' Mental as well as physical characteristics descend from parents to children, and heredity supplies the key to many a man's character. In fact, since the idea of evolution has become one of our dominant intellectual ideas, we are almost inclined to think that every man's career can be fully explained by an investigation of his family history.

Next only to parentage in importance in the formation of a man's character is *education*. And I use *education* in a broad sense, including not only the means at his disposal for the training of his mind, but also the influences, the political, social, religious, intellectual influences that have played upon a man in the formative years of his life. The age a man lives in; the ideals and aspirations of his time; the teachers he comes in contact with—all these things go a long way towards the make-up of his character. And the Nazarenes thought of these things as they listened to the Preacher that day. He was an *unaccountable Man*.

II. Amongst all classes and sections of the people Christ created a feeling of *wonder*. The doctors were 'amazed'; the multitudes were 'astonished'; the disciples 'wondered'; the governor 'marvelled'. Jesus everywhere created the impression that He was unique. Men could not, on ordinary lines, explain Him. He suggested questions which none could answer. 'Whence hath this Man this wisdom, and these mighty works?' How knoweth this Man letters, having never learned?' 'By what authority doest Thou these things, and who gave Thee this authority? Whence art thou?' He was a mystery, a puzzle, an enigma to them. From the human standpoint, He was to everybody in Palestine, from the humblest peasant in Galilee at the bottom, to Pontius Pilate the governor at the top, an 'unaccountable Man'.

Now, I want to go a step farther still, and say, that the wonderful phenomenon Jesus appeared to the Nazarenes, and what He was to the people of Palestine generally, *that* He is to the men and women of to-day. Starting from the purely human standpoint, Christ is to this day the world's *unaccountable Man*.

1. Consider the *wisdom* of Christ. 'Whence hath this Man this wisdom?' The Jews had their great rabbis, like Shammai and Hillel, but the wisdom of Shammai and Hillel was as dust and dross compared to the wisdom that fell from the lips of Jesus. How was it that a village Carpenter was able to surpass the wisest of the ancients? How came it that their most learned doctors were mere children in their knowledge of Divine things compared to this peasant Preacher? Whence hath this Man this wisdom?

2. The *authority* of Christ. 'They were astonished at His teaching,' we read, 'for He taught them as one having *authority*'. Yes, that is a mark of the teaching of Christ—He speaks with authority.

And this 'authority' which Jesus takes to Himself, conscience freely and gladly admits. As Dr. Dale says, we do not argue the matter out, but we perceive, instinctively and intuitively, that Jesus is our Moral Ruler, that He is the Lord of our moral and religious life. We feel towards Him as we feel to no other teacher in the world. We discuss the conclusions of other teachers; we *submit* to His.

3. The 'mighty works' of Christ. 'Whence,' said the Nazarenes in their bewilderment, 'hath this Man this wisdom and *these mighty works?*' The 'powers' of Christ astonished them as much or even more than His words. For Christ not only spoke wonderful words, but He also wrought the most wonderful deeds. His 'powers' (for that is the literal meaning of the words translated 'mighty works') created astonishment and wonder wherever He went.

And Christ still confronts the world and challenges it to account for Him. He healed the sick, He cleansed the leper, He cast out devils; He gave speech to the dumb; He gave sight to the blind; He gave life to the dead; and that question faces us and demands an answer—How came Christ by this wondrous power? Whence hath this Man these mighty works?—J. D. JONES, *Elims of Life*, p. 25.

REFERENCE.—XIII. 55.—W. C. Magee, *The Gospel and the Age*, p. 311.

'A prophet is not without honour, save in his own country, and in his own house.'—MATTHEW XIII. 57.

CRABB ROBINSON notes in his diary how once, when he was in the Lake Country, 'Mr. Hutton, a very gentlemanly and seemingly intelligent man, asked me, "Is it true—as I have heard reported—that Mr. Wordsworth ever wrote verses?"'

MEN, and almost all sorts of creatures, have their reputation by distance. Rivers, the further they run, and more from their spring, the broader they are and greater.—BEN JONSON.

REFERENCES.—XIII. 5-7.—P. W. Dainton, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xliv. 1893, p. 13. XIII. 5-8.—H. J. Wilmot-Buxton, *Common Life Religion*, p. 188. J. M. Hodgson, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. liii. 1898, p. 214. H. A. Stimson, *The New Things of God*, p. 132. T. Teignmouth Shore, *The Life of the World to Come*, p. 69. XIV. 1-12.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—St. Matthew IX.-XVII.* p. 262.

'John said unto him, It is not lawful for thee to have her.'
—Matthew xiv. 4.

It is an hard condition that the necessity of our calling casts upon us, in some cases, to run upon the pikes of displeasure. Prophecies were no burdens, if they did not expose us to these dangers. We must connive at no evil; every sin unreproved becomes ours.—Bishop Hall.

Reference.—XIV. 4-8.—W. Lefroy, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxv. 1904, p. 118.

'The daughter of Herodias, being put forward by her mother, saith, Give me the head of John the Baptist.'—Matthew xiv. 6, 8.

No sign of a nation perishing is so sure as the corruption of woman—Messalina was more ominous than Nero, Herodias than Herod.—Dr. John Ker.

To be nameless in worthy deeds, exceeds an infamous history. The Canaanitish woman lives more happily without a name than Herodias with one. And who had not rather have been the good thief than Pilate?'
—Sir Thomas Browne.

References.—XIV. 10.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons Preached in Sackville College Chapel*, vol. iv. p. 109. XIV. 10-12.—F. E. Paget, *Sermons for the Saints' Days*, p. 221.

TELLING JESUS

'His disciples . . . went and told Jesus.'—Matthew xiv. 12.

They told Jesus. They did something before that. They took up the body of their master, the Baptist, and buried it, and went and told Jesus. They were two men. They had conveyed and expressed the doubt of their imprisoned master; they said to Jesus, 'Art Thou He that should come, or look we for another? This is our master's question, and we wish to take back a reply.' At the moment of the text their stern, austere, commanding master was dead, killed, beheaded by a cruel sword. When they took up the body and buried it they went and told Jesus; they who had once been the bearers of a doubt were now the bearers of a fact that did little to dissipate that doubt. They went from one master to another, and they went along the road of misery—a well-frequented path. They transferred their allegiance from the Baptist to the Saviour of the world, and they joined hands with Him, so to say, over the dead body of their master.

Is this the only text in the New Testament which represents the truth that men come to Jesus Christ in trouble? It is not, but I think it is the jewel; I believe there is no brighter diamond in all the cabinet of grace. They came to Jesus in trouble; they had a tale to tell, they had a story full of blood to relate to this unique Listener. There are certain people to whom we do go in trouble; we go to them by a kind of natural right of instinct; we are sure they will understand, we are specially sure that they will listen to us: and there is a listening that is sympathy, and there is a sympathy that is a resurrection. They went and told Jesus.

I. There must be something about the dear Jesus that drew everybody to Him who had a tale of sorrow to tell. Once a message was sent to Him to the effect that 'he whom Thou lovest is sick'. Why did they not go to some other man? Why did not the suffering sisters call in some neighbourly helper? No matter what his name or what his vocation, he is a man, he is human and by so much he will sympathize: go, tell him. Why go a mile or two when your neighbour is next door? Your neighbour may be a thousand miles away. Always discriminate between proximity and identity in all its deepest significance as a sympathetic ministry. What a tribute to Jesus that He could listen to men's trouble! Let such listening be one of His credentials.

II. Go to tell Jesus about your successes. The disciples returned to Him and said, 'Master, even the devils were subject unto us through Thy name'. See the radiance of their faces, see how they misconstrue the kingdom of heaven, see in what an elementary atmosphere they live and move and have their being. 'Lord, even the devils.' They thought He would applaud them, they thought He would stand up His full stature and say, 'I told you it would be so, you must believe Me ever after this; this is exactly what I prophesied, and I call upon you to bear witness accordingly'. That was not the Son of God. What did He do? He said, 'Rejoice not that the devils are subject unto you, but rejoice rather that your names are written in the book of life'; and their brows fell, their chief toy was taken from them, they were disappointed. We always report the wrong thing. We tell of numbers, statistics, and balance-sheets, and great successes, and wonderful funds a quarter of a million strong, and half a million, and a whole million; and Jesus says, 'Rejoice not in your million-fold funds, but rejoice rather that you have brought a blind soul into the light and a bound soul into liberty'.

III. They went and told Jesus about their zeal for His cause, they almost outran one another in the race; it was who was to be there first to tell Jesus all about it. About what? 'Master, we saw one casting out devils in Thy name, and we forbade him.' Jesus would be delighted, Jesus would say, 'My dear allies and brethren, how faithful you are, how strongly I am lieutenanted by such men as you! You forbad the man who was casting out devils in My name; I congratulate you, I will telegraph this over all the spaces of the universe.' Nothing of the kind; that was not the Son of God. He said, 'Forbid him not'; He went dead against the whole policy of the crude, zealous, undisciplined disciples. They were always doing foolish things, they were often doing the wrong thing, they were prone to set the pyramid on its apex. The same spirit prevails to-day. Do not laugh at these centuries-old people, they are living now, all the men are living now.

'Casting all your care upon Him'—why? 'For,' or because, 'He careth for you'. Not because He is great, majestic, infinite, incomprehensible; these are more or less empty words in such circumstances as my soul's need. But the Apostle says, 'Go to Him be-

cause He wants you to go, because He is waiting for you to go, take all your tears and leave them with Him, all your sorrow, for, because, He careth for you.' The shepherd that cares for the flock will abide with it all the night, though the wind be troubled by the howling of the wolf.—Joseph Parker, *City Temple Pulpit*, vol. vi p. 40.

References.—XIV. 12.—Mark Guy Pearse, *Jesus Christ and the People*, p. 212. XIV. 12; XXVIII. 8.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—St. Matthew IX.-XVII.* p. 269. XIV. 13-21.—W. M. Taylor, *The Miracles of Our Saviour*, p. 268. J. Laidlaw, *The Miracles of Our Lord*, p. 74. XIV. 13-36.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. liii. No. 3046.

CHRIST'S COMPASSION

'And Jesus went forth, and saw a great multitude, and was moved with compassion toward them, and He healed their sick.'—Matthew xiv. 14.

Christ had sought retirement by crossing the lake for two reasons, the murder of John, and the return of the Apostles from their mission. The need for rest is emphasized in St. Mark's Gospel.

There were crowds because of the approach of the Passover, and these crowds outran them round the head of the lake, so that when the boat neared the landing-place, they were all there, and the hope of retirement and privacy had gone. So our text is very emphatic as showing us a glimpse into our Lord's heart, in circumstances that would have annoyed most of us.

I. The Unwearied Toil and Endless Patience of the Master.—How valuable these and the like hints are of Christ's true humanity. His weariness in body, His longing for quiet and repose of mind, and how gladly He puts it aside without a word of reproach for intruding on His leisure, or a word of regret that it is so broken in upon.

II. The Penetrating Look.—He saw the multitude. Why was compassion the emotion? Possibly this refers primarily to their weary travel-stained appearance. The visible taken as a symbol. So, a crowd is ever a pathetic sight.

III. The Compassion of Christ.—If we could see a man as he is we should pity. Christ's eye beholds all our hidden evils and sorrows, and the result is pity, not aversion, not anger, not indifference.

The true human sympathy of Jesus. This sympathy was a spring of His action. Some of His miracles are drawn out by entreaty, and some are wrought by His unsought love—spontaneous. This pity is the revelation of God. This pity is eternal. This pity is extended to each of us.

IV. The Work to which Compassion Leads.—(1) The healing—His care for the body. (2) The teaching—His revelation of the greatness of His compassion. It comes before we ask, is brought near to each of us, but cannot be forced upon us. Take it, and we become of His flock, the Lamb which was slain and is alive for evermore.—A. Maclaren.

References.—XIV. 14.—H. M. Butler, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xlviii. 1895, p. 94. XIV. 14-16.—J. Flanagan, *ibid.* vol. lxi. 1902, p. 291. XIV. 14-33.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. li. No. 2925. XIV. 15-21.—Archbishop Trench, *Notes on the Miracles of Our Lord*, p. 217.

THE ALL-SUFFICIENCY OF CHRIST

'They need not depart; give ye them to eat.'—Matthew xiv. 16.

The miracle was meant for a token of Christ's Messiahship, no doubt. But, also, it was the natural expression of His real loving care for men's bodily wants, and, in that aspect, is along with the others quite invaluable. Also it was meant as a symbol. He is the Bread for men's souls. And so regarded, the words of the text may carry lessons not unimportant in their bearing upon the great task of the Church to hold forth the Bread of life to the whole world. The Church has enough to feed the world.

I. The All-Sufficiency of Christ.—He is the Bread of life, and is enough to satisfy the desires of every single soul. It addresses itself to the great primal wants universal, and deep as manhood, the sense of sin, the longing for deliverance, the gropings after God, the need of guidance, enlightenment, authority. This all-sufficiency of Christ is (1) shown in the very nature of the message; (2) attested by the experience of all Christians, for if one heart can so be satisfied, then the world must be; (3) confirmed by the history of His Church. There are many failures, but successes enough to show the divinity of the message. (4) The Gospel in its development is the natural root of all progress for society. 'They need not depart.' The relations between Christianity and moral, social progress are clear enough. The Gospel develops into all moral, social, political reforms and perfections and enters every sphere of human life. But the relations between the Church and these have been wrong on both sides. Christian men have tended to neglect them, and others have shoved Christianity on one side.

II. Adequacy of our Resources.—They are sufficient if Christ's command be observed: (1) if all are occupied; (2) if each acts in the spirit of Scripture, (3) if we are conscious of our own inadequacy; (4) if we bring them to Christ.—A. Maclaren.

References.—XIV. 16.—H. C. Shuttleworth, *The Church of the People*, p. 40. C. Perren, *Revival Sermons in Outline*, p. 311. Archdeacon Colley, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xliii. 1893, p. 253. P. McAdam Muir, *ibid.* vol. lxxiv. 1908, p. 369. J. Marshall Lang, *Sermon*, 1887, 'They Need not Depart,' p. 1. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. liii. No. 3046. XIV. 17, 18.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. viii. No. 453. XIV. 19.—*Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xliii. 1893, p. 273. XIV. 19, 20.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—St. Matthew—IX.-XVII.* p. 282; see also *Sermons Preached in Manchester*, p. 354. XIV. 19-21.—J. Martineau, *Hours of Thought on Sacred Things*, p. 164.

SUPERABUNDANT BLESSINGS

'And they did all eat, and were filled: and they took up of the fragments that remained twelve baskets full.'—Matthew xiv. 20.

But the fact that there were twelve baskets full of fragments, after five thousand had been fed, did display the resources of the Saviour, whose we are and whom we serve; and displayed them for our

comfort and encouragement. As we look at those well-filled baskets of fragments, we perceive them to be a reminder of the truth that giving does not impoverish God, nor withholding enrich Him. And that, surely, is a reflection worth meditating upon. God has given us much, in manifold ways: yet His resources are not exhausted. Indeed, they are scarcely touched; for there are twelve baskets full of fragments left—more to be bestowed than has been received. What a word of cheer for the life that lies before us!

I. The thought here expressed is true in regard to the *material things of life*. The resources of Nature have been amazingly displayed and developed in the past. 'As for the earth, out of it cometh bread; and under it is turned up as it were fire. The stones of it are the place of sapphires; and it hath dust of gold.' And men have delved in and cultivated the earth these many years, so that the world's myriad inhabitants have been fed and enriched. But we may be assured that what is to come out of the earth is immeasurably more than has hitherto been extracted.

Sometimes philosophers and savants would scare us by gloomy prophecies of the exhaustion of those supplies upon which we depend for our very existence day by day. The earth is to be so impoverished that it will not yield its increase, and men of science will have to extract solid means of subsistence out of thin air. Our coal and iron strong-rooms are being steadily depleted of their wealth. The limits of the gold and silver output are within sight. And then what shall we do? We may be satisfied that He who so arranged matters that there were twelve baskets full of fragments after the five thousand had been fed with a handful of barley loaves and fishes will not fail the men who trust in Him now.

There are twelve baskets of fragments remaining.

II. But this fact of superabundant blessing is true in regard to *spiritual things*. The Almighty has infinite resources, and we may confidently anticipate greater spiritual victories, wider religious conquests, more enduring Gospel triumphs, in the future than any the Church has known, even in the palmiest of the days which lie in the sunny and azure past. 'What hath God wrought!' exclaimed England's greatest evangelist, echoing Balaam's shout. And truly God had wrought much. It is said that at Bennecour, in France, there are steep, stony slopes which formerly only produced paving-stones; but now those slopes grow all varieties of fruits—apricots, cherries, black currants, green peas, asparagus. The soil has been scientifically treated, with almost incredibly successful results. So was it, spiritually, in the days of Wesley and his itinerants. They treated the hard, rocky human soil of Britain religiously and evangelically; and the glorious result has become historic. But how much has happened since! After all that God had wrought, there were twelve baskets full of fragments remaining. In Him all fullness dwells, and He has proved that He possesses inexhaustible treasures of power and truth.

III. And, lastly, this consoling thought of the abounding sufficiency of Divine resources is true in regard to *personal needs*.

We can all say, 'Hitherto hath the Lord helped us'; and not only helped us, but helped us bountifully. For God 'giveth liberally'; our 'cup runneth over'; it is not half-filled, or even brimming full; it is more than full. We could, most of us, live on less than we have. Our necessities have all been met, and undeserved luxuries have been bestowed upon us. Notwithstanding which, there are twelve baskets full of fragments remaining. Let fear and all its trembling kith and kin be evicted from heart and mind. Looking back, some of us may well wonder how our manifold necessities have been supplied through many and many a year. God's protection has been vouchsafed. Life is full of risks; we are in peril with every breath we draw. The prick of a pin, the scratch of a thorn, a breath of air, a speck of dust—all these may be more potent than sword-thrust or cannon-shot for our destruction. Verily we live with the sword of Damocles suspended ever over our heads. And it is only by the good providence of God that the fragile hair by which it has been suspended all these years has not been severed. What then? Are God's resources for our preservation and protection exhausted? Surely not. We may step out bravely, 'leaning upon the top of our staff,' which is the tested promise, 'He careth for you'. He who provided in the years gone by has twelve baskets of fragments still available.—Herbert Windross, *The Life Victorious*, p. 3.

References.—XIV. 22, 23.—Archbishop Trench, *Notes on the Miracles of Our Lord*, p. 228. XIV. 22-33.—J. Laidlaw, *The Miracles of Our Lord*, p. 87. A. B. Davidson, *Waiting Upon God*, p. 231. W. M. Taylor, *The Miracles of Our Saviour*, p. 282. XIV. 22-36.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—St. Matthew IX.-XVII.* p. 298. XIV. 23.—Stopford A. Brooke, *Short Sermons*, p. 195. XIV. 24.—T. L. Cuyler, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. l. 1896, p. 286. XIV. 24, 25.—R. W. Hiley, *A Year's Sermons*, vol. ii. p. 272. XIV. 24-27.—J. H. Newman, *Christ Upon the Waters*, p. 3. XIV. 25.—J. H. Hitchens, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxxvii. 1890, p. 393. XIV. 26.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xvi. No. 957.

HE SAID, COME

'And Peter answered Him and said, Lord, if it be Thou, bid me come unto Thee on the water. And He said, Come. And when Peter was come down out of the ship he walked on the water, to go to Jesus.'—Matthew xiv. 28, 29.

First we must lay down this as a certain truth: Peter made a brave attempt and partly failed in it, but the having made it, though with partial failure, is to his eternal honour.

I. Notice that all the Twelve were in darkness and storm, and this by no act or deed of their own, but by their Lord's command, and by His overruling Providence.

But of these Twelve one, by his own act and deed, desired to be nearer to His Lord, and to be more like Him. All in a certain sense were then like Him, all in the storm; but yet with a difference too. He,

alone and undefended; they, protected by the ships. He, standing by His own power on the waves; they, borne up by the vessel. Peter desires, alone of them all, to be more like Him still. He will leave the rest, so he may be nearer to his Lord. He will have none of the shelter of the ships, so he may have the upholding of His Master.

'Peter said unto Him, Lord, if it be Thou, bid me come unto Thee upon the water.' Will that Lord, Who knoweth all things, call the offer rash, presumptuous, boastful? Will He command the Apostle to remain where he was placed, and not to court unnecessary dangers, and leave the safeguard that he had? Not so; 'He saith unto him, Come'.

II. But with Peter's leaving the ship his difficulties commenced. Then first he began to understand how boisterous was the wind, and how unruly the sea; then first he comprehended his own weakness. And because he there stopped, therefore he began to fail. He should have gone on, and leant more and more upon the strength of that arm on which he had begun to lean. And yet, even then, he was the true and loving servant. He cried out, it is true: but to Whom? Not to his companions, but to the Giver of all help. He did not seek to get back to the boat, he pressed forward all the more to his Lord.

Remember Peter's prayer. There cannot well be a shorter, for it contains only three words, 'Lord, save me'. There cannot be a more effective one, for on the instant it brought Omnipotence to his aid.

'And immediately.' One naturally pauses there, for it was not *immediately* that the Lord heard the prayers even of His truest followers. The nobleman of Galilee, and the Syrophenician woman lead the band of those who have to ask again and again before they have been heard. And yet how the comfort they had besought was delayed, while a prayer of three words finds it *immediately!* yes, and that although it were confessedly a prayer of weak faith. But there was a reason for this, a reason set forth fourteen hundred years before in the Jewish law. All the sacrifices offered to the Lord were to be without spot or blemish. But there was one exception. A free-will offering needed not to be so; why was this? Doubtless to show the infinite value in God's eyes of a sacrifice which is not made of necessity, but only because of the willing heart of the giver. And so of St. Peter's free-will offering now. Because it *was* a free-will offering, because not for the sake of any worldly benefit, as the centurion and the Syrophenician woman, but only for the sake of being with the Lord, he made it; therefore, was there an immediate answer to his prayer.

III. And it was with no stern rebuke that Jesus rebuked the weakness of His disciple. 'He caught him by the hand, and said, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?' We know what wonders one glance of that loving eye has wrought; we see what strength one touch of that loving hand can give. So to be upheld by it, so to lean on it, that is the privilege of those who go out into the storm; who leave the ship's company to go to the Lord of the ship; who would walk upon the water to go to Jesus.—J. M. Neale, *Occasional Sermons*, p. 144.

References. — XIV. 28. — A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—St. Matthew IX.-XVII.* p. 305. XIV. 28-31. —N. Adams, *Christ a Friend*, p. 143. XIV. 28-33.—J. McNeill, *Regent Square Pulpit*, vol. ii. p. 113. XIV. 29.—C. S. Robinson, *Simon Peter*, p. 226.

'And beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me.'—Matthew xiv. 30.

The sincere Protestant accepts the new revelation; he piously abandons what God has taught him to recognize as error, and he gathers strength by his fidelity. The insincere Protestant, forgetting the meaning of the names under which he was enlisted in the war against falsehood, closes his eyes and clings to his formulas. Therefore, like St. Peter failing through want of faith, he finds the ground turn to water under his feet. His mortal eye grows dull. His tongue learns to equivocate.—Froude.

Reference.—XIV. 30.—J. Vaughan, *Fifty Sermons* (9th Series), p. 154.

'O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?'—Matthew xiv. 31.

'I have been reading the New Testament,' says Eckermann in his Journal for 1831, 'and thinking of a picture which Goethe showed me lately, where Christ is walking on the water, and Peter coming towards him, on the waves, begins to sink, in a moment of faintheartedness.' "This," said Goethe, "is one of the most beautiful legends, and one which I love better than any. It expresses the noble doctrine that man, through faith and hearty courage, will come off victor in the most difficult enterprises, while he may be ruined by the least paroxysm of doubt."'

References.—XIV. 31.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. v. No. 246; vol. xxxi. No. 1856; vol. xxxvi. No. 2173; vol. li. No. 2925.

MIRACLES

'When the men of that place had knowledge of Him, they brought unto Him all that were diseased; and besought Him that they might only touch the hem of His garment; and as many as touched were made perfectly whole.'—Matthew xiv. 35, 36.

I. Here is the adequate cause for the miracles narrated in the Gospels. Christ, the Son of God, must manifest His Divine character, and He manifested it chiefly in three ways:—

1. By His holy doctrine, in which He taught all men to love God, Who is Truth, Righteousness, Purity, and Charity, and to love one another as brothers.

2. By His absolutely holy and stainless life.

3. By His power over the material universe around Him, ending in His resurrection from the dead. Had He not shown this power, there would have been something lacking.

II. Consider the fact that miracles are not attributed in the Bible to all great teachers.

John the Baptist, who was the greatest represen-

tative of the Prophets, wrought no miracles. But in Christ we see one Whose shoe latchet John was not worthy to bear. Had Christ wrought no miracles His opponents would have made that a reason for disbelieving Him when He said, 'I and the Father are One'. They would have asked how it was that He Who bade all men honour the Son as they honour the Father, showed no sign that He was possessed of power over nature greater than that of other men.

III. Note that the miracles attributed to Christ are all worthy of Christ, they are works of mercy and beneficence. They are works which show that hunger and thirst, disease and death are things temporal, which are in God's good time to pass away.

The miracles were an essential feature in the great work of our Incarnate Lord, in bringing about the chief event in the world's history. They are established by historical testimony of the most trustworthy kind. They accord with reason. Without them we should have been less able to accept the testimony of Christ about Himself. The record of them fills our hearts and minds with faith, hope, and love, for how can we do less than believe in, trust and love that Lord of Whom it is said, 'They brought unto Him all that were diseased, and besought Him that they might only touch the hem of His garment, and as many as touched were made perfectly whole'.—Canon Charles Bodington, *The Twelve Gates of the Holy City*, p. 155.

Illustration.—We say that all portents are contrary to nature, *but they are not so.* For how is that contrary to nature which happens by the will of God, since the will of so mighty a Creator is certainly the nature of each created thing? A portent, therefore, happens not contrary to nature, but contrary to what we know as nature.—St. Augustine, *City of God*, book xxi. chap. viii.—Canon Charles Bodington, *The Twelve Gates of the Holy City*, p. 157.

References.—XIV. 36.—W. J. Knox-Little, *The Journey of Life*, p. 177. XV. 1-13.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xlii. No. 2487. XV. 1-20.—J. Morgan Gibbon, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lvi. 1899, p. 184. XV. 2.—J. A. Bain, *Questions Answered by Christ*, p. 28. XV. 8.—T. G. Selby, *The Strenuous Gospel*, p. 296. XV. 9.—W. H. Murray, *The Fruits of the Spirit*, pp. 212, 224, 235. XV. 10-31.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xliv. No. 2597. XV. 11.—T. G. Selby, *The Cross and the Dice-Box*, p. 241.

'Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up.'—Matthew xv. 13.

If I had not had a hope fixed in me that this Cause and Business was of God, I would many years ago have run from it. If it be of God, He will bear it up. If it be of man, it will tumble; as everything that hath been of man since the world began hath done. And what are all our Histories, and other Tradition of Actions in former times, but God manifesting Himself, that He hath shaken, and tumbled down, and trampled upon, everything that He had not planted?—Cromwell *to the Parliament of* 1655.

References.—XV. 13.—F. D. Maurice, *Lincoln's Inn Sermons*, p. 1. G. Tyrrell, *Oil and Wine*, p. 170. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. vii. No. 423. XV. 14.—H. Scott Holland, *Church Times*, vol. lvi. 1906, p. 285. XV. 18-31.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xlii. No. 2481. XV. 19.—*Ibid.* vol. xiii. No. 732. W. M. Sinclair, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xlvi. 1894, p. 328. XV. 21-28.—J. Laidlaw, *The Miracles of Our Lord*, p. 247. J. McNeill, *British Weekly Pulpit*, vol. ii. p. 369. Archbishop Trench, *Notes on the Miracles of Our Lord*, p. 280. W. M. Taylor, *The Miracles of Our Saviour*, p. 295. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xlii. No. 2481; vol. xlii. No. 2446. Archer Butler, *Sermons* (1st Series), p. 201. Parker, *Inner Life of Christ*, vol. ii. p. 331. Kingsley, *All Saints' Day*, p. 76. Stopford Brooke, *Spirit of Christian Life*, p. 164. Stanford, *Homilies on Christian Work*, p. 133. Bruce, *Galilean Gospel*, p. 146. Guthrie, *Way to Life*, pp. 210 and 228. *Laymen's Legacy*, p. 208. Lynch, *Sermons for my Curates*, p. 317. Phillips Brooks, *Sermons in English Churches*, p. 157. C. Wordsworth, *Sermons*, vol. i. p. 109. Bishop Wilberforce, *Four Sermons*, p. 53. Pusey, *Sermons*, vol. ii. p. 167. W. F. Hook, *On the Miracles*, vol. ii. p. 33. XV. 21-31.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—St. Matthew IX.-XVII.* p. 314. XV. 21-39. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxxviii. No. 2253. XV. 22.—C. Silvester Horne, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxvi. 1904, p. 225. C. Leach, *Mothers of the Bible*, p. 95. XV. 22, 23.—Eugene Bersier, *Twelve Sermons*, p. 128. R. W. Hiley, *A Year's Sermons*, vol. i. p. 129. XV. 22-28.—Andrew Murray, *The Children for Christ*, p. 226.

'My daughter is grievously vexed with a devil.'—Matthew xv. 22.

I doubt whether she had inquired after Christ, if she had not been vexed with her daughter's spirit. Our afflictions are . . . the files and whetstones that set an edge on our devotions.—Bishop Hall.

DIVINE SILENCE

'But He answered her not a word.'—Matthew xv. 23.

Have you prayed? In what way have you prayed? Have any of your prayers been unmistakably answered? It is a curious fact that some persons never look for answers to their prayers, and they, of all persons, would be most astonished if God took them at their word and granted their request. Some people make mistakes in the requests they make to God. It is absolutely necessary for us to keep before us one or two thoughts in connexion with prayer. Prayer in this way is a science just as much as any other sciences, and having just as many special laws. You may rest assured that any legitimate prayer is never left unanswered, but the answer may not perhaps be as our special desires dictate; in fact, we sometimes look for the answer to come in at the front door when it is already in the house by the back door.

We have a wonderful illustration in connexion with the subject in the text—'He answered her not a word'. Has that been your experience?

I. It is Just Possible that You Yourselves were not Ready for the Answer.—God may have seen that there was some rectification of character necessary. It may have been some inconsistency, some unworthiness, some selfishness, or even some secret sin that prevented God from answering. Here is a very good illustration. A man may be seen in a boat rowing, rowing, rowing, but the boat never

moves. Why? Because the boat is anchored. The boat is floating on the surface of the water, yet the anchor holds it fast. That is the picture of a man's spiritual life. He may feel in his heart that he wants to know God, but finds his progress arrested because his real affections are fastened or anchored on to something of this world. He does not make progress, and God does not answer his prayers.

II. It is Just Possible that Your Exterior Circumstances are not Ready for the Answer.—Take the case of Joseph when he was in prison. Joseph prayed that he might be delivered from the prison, but it pleased God to keep him there for a time that he might be a comfort to his fellow-prisoners. And so it may be with you. God may have His own reasons for not granting you some timely blessing at once. The circumstances may not be favourable; God may be dealing with some other member of your household at the same time; He has not completed His purpose, and the delay should not distress you or disturb you if you reflect that God may choose to confer His blessing in some special way.

III. It is Just Possible that Circumstances have to be Rearranged and Readjusted to Bring Greater Benefits.—Take the case of Moses and his remarkable prayer when he besought the Lord to let him go over and see the good land which was beyond Jordan. Why did not God grant his request? Because he had something better in store for him. Was it not much better for Moses to see his Lord transfigured on the Mount than to cross over Jordan with the Israelites? There is the illustration of St. Paul when he prayed that a thorn in his flesh might be taken away from him. God did not answer his prayer. He had something better in store for him. He was going to give him more grace, and when St. Paul knew that, he said he would rather keep the thorn and have the grace. Then with regard to the woman in the text, the Lord gave her at first no encouragement whatever; but the delays and hindrances that He put in her path only increased her faith and made her more earnest and more determined to get that which she required, and she stands out as one of the great figures of all spiritual history. What a biography! only a verse or two, but the biography of a woman whose faith in the Redeemer could not be shaken. Her pleading became more earnest, and at last—may I say it?—the Lord is conquered by her, and then He praises her for her faith.

References.—XV. 23.—W. H. Hutchings, *Sermon-Sketches*, p. 60. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xlix. No. 2841. XV. 24, 25.—*Ibid.* vol. xxx. No. 1797.

'Then came she and worshipped Him, saying, Lord help me.'
—Matthew xv. 25.

Consider: it is not failing in this or that attempt of coming to Christ, but a giving over of your endeavours, that will be your ruin.—John Owen.

References.—XV. 25.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xliv. No. 2597. M. Guy Pearse, *Jesus Christ and the People*, p. 142. XV. 26, 27.—H. H. Carlisle, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxix. 1906, p. 268. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxii. No. 1309.

'And she said, Truth, Lord: yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters' table.'—Matthew xv. 27.

A retort quite Greek in its readiness, its symmetry, and its point! But it was not the intellectual merit of the answer that pleased the Master. Cleverness is cheap. It is the faith He praises, which was as precious as rare. . . . The quickness of her answer was the scintillation of her intellect under the glow of her affection. Love is the quickening nurse of the whole nature.—George Macdonald.

References.—XV. 27.—W. P. Balfern, *Lessons from Jesus*, p. 59. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xii. No. 715; vol. xxxvi. No. 2129. XV. 28.—E. B. Pusey, *Parochial Sermons*, vol. ii. p. 167. B. F. Westcott, *The Historic Faith*, p. 3. R. H. McKim, *The Gospel in the Christian Year*, p. 184. Henry Wace, *Some Central Points of Our Lord's Ministry*, p. 251. S. C. Malan, *Plain Preaching for a Year*, vol. i. p. 262. R. E. Hutton, *The Crown of Christ*, vol. ii. p. 509. A. G. Mortimer, *One Hundred Miniature Sermons*, vol. i. p. 182. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxxvi. No. 2173; vol. xxxviii. No. 2253; vol. xlii. No. 2446. XV. 29-38.—J. Laidlaw, *The Miracles of Our Lord*, p. 105. XV. 30, 31.—Walter Brooke, *Sermons*, pp. 125, 135. XV. 32.—B. Wilberforce, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. li. 1897, p. 113. Hugh Black, *ibid.* vol. lxix. 1906, p. 189. XV. 32-39.—Archbishop Trench, *Notes on the Miracles of Our Lord*, p. 293. W. M. Taylor, *The Miracles of Our Saviour*, p. 307. XV. 33.—G. F. Browne, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. liv. 1898, p. 161. J. A. Bain, *Questions Answered by Christ*, p. 34. James Denney, *Gospel Questions and Answers*, p. 61. XVI. 1-4.—H. Bremner, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. liii. 1898, p. 87. C. Holland, *Gleanings from a Ministry of Fifty Years*, p. 245.

SPIRITUAL DISCERNMENT

'Ye can discern the face of the sky; but can ye not discern the signs of the times?'—Matthew xvi. 3.

Jesus Christ found that He was in the midst of a number of weather-wise people; they were quite experts in the reading of the cloudy signs, they knew what the weather would be to-day and perhaps to-morrow, and they published their forecasts of the weather; but when it came to higher reading, reading on another level, they were as moles and bats from whom the genius of daylight penetration had been withheld. Do we make one another up? do we hold varied trusteeships? and are they brought under one grand obligation, so that we may, thus supplementing one another, constitute a great social unit? Are there not really readers of the clouds and readers of the unseen? could they not meet now and then in common counsel to see how things stand and what the general outlook is? They must not despise one another; for one man can do this, and another man can do that, and neither man can do both. So that we are mutual trustees, we supplement each other; if we could enter into the spirit of this arrangement, we should have brotherhood, free, frank interchange of opinion, and work together in a great and beneficent association.

I. But whilst we recognize these great common gifts, we recognize also a partition of ability, so that one man is an expert along line A, and another man is an expert along line B, and each must work out his own vocation. As there are great commonwealth

blessings of nature, so there are great republican blessings in moral and spiritual regions. God did not intend any man to be born a slave. Liberty belongs to every responsible creature; his responsibility will limit and define his liberty, and thus give him the very best of it. Liberty that wantons itself into licence really conducts itself into the worst bondage. Regulated liberty is freedom. God means every soul in this sense to be free. There are common instincts, common privileges. And yet singular to say, and yet necessary to say, there are limitations which are round about the individual, so that he has his talent, his two talents, his five talents, himself not to be numbered with other men in certain great generalities. The individuality of the soul is never lost; it is never drowned in the river of mean compromises; it should stand forth individual and yet associated; a great personality, yet part of a greater humanity. To combine the whole and the part, the great universal gift and the special endowment: this is the problem, and Christianity alone sufficiently and finally solves it.

II. By the text we are entitled to enlarge what we can see into what we cannot see except by the vision of the soul. Here is a great lesson in inductive reasoning. Because such and such is the direction of the wind and such and such are the indications of the clouds, therefore we shall have such and such weather. Quite right; I do not oppose your forecasts; but why not carry up the idea, and endeavour to reason concerning the things you see with the eyes of the heart in the spiritual realm, and draw your inductions according to the great basis of fact, phenomena, and experience available to every student who faithfully and humbly and lovingly endeavours to discover the will of God? There is a spiritual barometer, there is a spiritual thermometer; there are many ways appointed and therefore approved of God by which we can put this and that together and draw wide inferences from great spiritual premises. If we had eyes to see we should know that from the beginning God has a certain purpose and will surely accomplish it. That purpose is a purpose of beneficence.

III. We must recognize the fact that there is a difference in sight. We recognize this in the sight of the bodily eyes; why not recognize it in the inner and truer sight of the soul? Can you read a placard fifty yards off? Your answer is, I certainly cannot do so. Are you entitled from that consciousness to declare that there is not a man in the world that can read it? You have to admit that there is sight longer than yours. Can you read the Bible without lenses, glasses, or mechanical aids of any kind? You may possibly reply, Certainly I cannot do so. Does it therefore follow that no other man can read it without such aids? In a moment you say that to make any such contention would be simply absurd. That is right: why not apply that fact to a higher level, and find for it a broader and deeper interpretation? We must listen to the higher voices. We are at liberty to test the spirits whether they are of God; that may often be a bounden duty which we cannot shirk under any plea or pretext. Yet there remains the great fact that we have a book which is filled with holy messages from the holy God, and these have been so often confirmed that their very confirmation becomes not only an argument but a starting-point of the most profound and elaborate reasoning. If any man has read the book of Genesis aright he knows that there is a book coming that shall be full of anthem, song, and triumph; for the kingdoms of this world have become the kingdom of our God and of His Christ. He read that in the very first verse of the Bible if he was a prophet when he read that opening verse. There is a great philosophy of implication; one thing means another, points to another, and gives assurance of another.—Joseph Parker, *City Temple Pulpit*, vol. III. p. 175.

'Ye cannot discern the signs of the times.'—Matthew xvi. 3.

Carlyle opens his *Latter-day Pamphlets* with this paragraph: 'The Present Time, youngest-born of Eternity, child and heir of all the Past Times with their good and evil, and parent of all the Future, is ever a "New Era" to the thinking man; and comes with new questions and significance, however commonplace it look: to know *it*, and what it bids us do, is ever the sum of knowledge for all of us. This new Day, sent us out of Heaven, this also has its heavenly omens;—amid the bustling trivialities and loud, empty noises, its silent monitions, which, if we cannot read and obey, it will not be well with us! No;—nor is there any sin more fearfully avenged on men and Nations than that same, which indeed includes and presupposes all manner of sins: the sin which our old pious fathers called "judicial blindness";—which we with our light habits, may still call misinterpretation of the Time that now is; disloyalty to its real meanings and monitions, stupid disregard of these, stupid adherence, active or passive, to the counterfeits and mere current semblances of these. This is true of all times and days.'

'French revolutions teach nobody! . . . So with the Jews of old,' wrote F. W. Robertson in one of his letters. 'They were very weather-wise, but could not read the signs of the times. Jewish ladies were a good deal surprised when they found themselves sold as slaves to Romish voluptuaries; and Parisian ladies were equally astonished when, after having spent such enormous sums on their *coiffures* and ribbons, they one fine day found their head-dress arranged for them at the national expense, *à la guillotine*.'

In his *Life of Gibbon* (pp. 48, 78), Mr. Cotter Morison notes how in the latter half of the eighteenth century, 'scholars, men of the world, men of business passed through this wonderland [of Parisian society] with eyes blindfolded. They are free to enter, they go, they come, without a sign that they have realized the marvellous scene that they were permitted to traverse. One does not wonder that they did not perceive that in those graceful drawing-rooms, filled with stately company of elaborate manners, ideas and sentiments were discussed and evolved which would

soon be more explosive than gunpowder. One does not wonder that they did not see ahead of them—men never do. One does rather wonder that they did not see what was before their eyes.' Even as a member of Parliament, he adds, Gibbon failed to read the signs of his age. 'He lived at one of the most exciting periods of our history; he assisted at debates in which constitutional and imperial questions of the highest moment were discussed by masters of eloquence and state policy, and he hardly appears to have been aware of the fact.'

In the second volume of his *Cromwell*, Carlyle also writes: 'Human crimes are many; but the crime of being deaf to the God's voice, of being blind to all but parchments and antiquarian rubrics when the Divine Handwriting is abroad on the sky—certainly there is no crime which the Supreme Powers do more terribly avenge!'

References.—XVI. 3.—H. Hensley Henson, *Christ and the Nation*, p. 193. H. S. Lunn, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxxix. p. 69. A. T. Pierson, *ibid.* vol. xli. 1892, p. 273. J. Guinness Rogers, *ibid.* vol. lv. 1899, p. 6. C. M. Sheldon, *ibid.* vol. lviii. 1900, p. 1.

'There shall no sign be given, but the sign of Jonas.'—Matthew xvi. 4.

The sign was that quality in the preaching of Jonah itself which is represented as producing repentance in his hearers. The appeal of Jesus to His race must, he said, be judged by itself. It accepted no testimonial from any external result, even when such external result was present.—Miss Wedgwood.

References.—XVI. 4.—R. T. Talbot, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxx. 1906, p. 107. E. Aldom French, *God's Message Through Modern Doubt*, p. 43. XVI. 4-12.—J. Laidlaw, *The Miracles of Our Lord*, p. 105. XVI. 6.—J. Stalker, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. liii. 1898, p. 259. XVI. 6, 12.—D. Fraser, *Metaphors in the Gospels*, p. 135. XVI. 12.—R. Scott, *Oxford University Sermons*, p. 151.

FAITH

'When Jesus came into the coasts of Cæsarea Philippi, He asked His disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I the Son of man am? And they said, Some say that Thou art John the Baptist: some Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets. He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but My Father which is in heaven.'—Matthew xvi. 13-17.

I. Two truths lie upon the surface of this narrative. The first is the importance attached by our Lord to the faith in Himself, and the other the supernatural character of such faith as the gift of God.

1. The importance attached by our Lord to faith in Himself—for here there comes to the surface the end for which He had separated and was training the twelve. It was that they might gain a firm and unqualified faith in Himself—that they might know how to confess and profess His name.

2. 'Whom do *ye* say that I am?' St. Peter it is who obeys the promptings of the Spirit which all were secretly acknowledging. 'Thou art the Christ,' he cries, 'the Son of the living God.' This is what our Lord had wanted. This is what He was waiting for. 'Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona; blessed art thou, for faith in Jesus Christ is the one necessity of man's redemption. Blessed art thou, because this fundamental act of faith is not of thyself, or of anything visible or tangible, or merely human. Flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee; but My Father which is in heaven.' He means that humanity of itself can never discover God or find Him out. The recognition of God must always be God's own disclosure of Himself in the heart of man.

3. We pass a stage downwards in Church history. St. Paul, like his Master, asserts the necessity of faith and also its supernatural character. 'No man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost.'

II. These old lessons are what we again and again must learn and relearn, and lay to heart. *Faith is necessary*—that first—if we would share the Christian hope and life.

And, again, faith is supernatural. That means it is the gift of God, not the result of the mere action of our own faculties. It is only by an act of faith of our own that we can set to our seal that God's offer in Christ is true, and this act of faith, this giving out of ourselves in loving venture of surrender, is always a motion which we know, even in the making of it, to have its origin far beyond ourselves. It comes upon us as a movement from above, a movement in us of the Divine Spirit.

III. There are two sorts of faith. There is the faith by which we come to believe, and there is the faith in which we Christians are meant to live. Both are supernatural—both, that is to say, are the work of God in us, though they correspond to different states of the Holy Spirit's activity, for He works upon men to make them Christians, and He dwells, as in a temple, in the hearts of them who are already Christians. Always we need to remember that, as the creation, so also the sustaining, of the life of faith is a Divine gift, and demands on our part a reverent waiting for the gift of the Divine Spirit.—Bishop Gore, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxxviii. 1890, p. 1.

References.—XVI. 13.—J. Parker, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xlvii. 1395, p. 282. J. D. Jones, *The Elims of Life*, p. 43. XVI. 13-15.—J. Clifford, *The Secret of Jesus*, p. 3. C. J. Ridgeway, *Is Not This the Christ?* p. 1. XVI. 13-16.—H. C. Beeching, *The Grace of Episcopacy*, p. 34. J. Marshall Lang, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxxvii. 1890, p. 168. A. W. Potts, *School Sermons*, p. 47. G. Critchley, *The Penny Pulpit*, vol. xii. No. 694, p. 221. XVI. 13-17.—B. D. Jones, *Pulpit Notes*, p. 173. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxxiv. No. 2041. XVI. 13-18.—A. G. Mortimer, *One Hundred Miniature Sermons*, vol. ii. p. 229. J. H. Rigg, *Scenes and Studies in the Ministry of Our Lord*, p. 116. XVI. 13-19.—J. Laidlaw, *Studies in the Parables*, p. 283. XVI. 13-28.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—St. Matthew IX.-XVII.* p. 322.

ELIJAH OR JEREMIAH

'Some say that Thou art . . . Elias; and others Jeremias.'—MATTHEW XVI. 14.

It is of the deepest interest to discover what was the common impression about Jesus, and in this report conveyed by the disciples we get a hint of the utmost value. Did you ever think of the vast difference there was between the characters of Elijah and Jeremiah? Yet some said about Christ, 'This is Elijah,' and others said, 'No, it is Jeremiah'. The one is ardent, enthusiastic, fierce sometimes. The other is the prophet of the tender heart and tears. And the remarkable thing is that the common people should have taken these types, which are so wide apart, and should have found in them both the character of Christ. In other words, the impression which Jesus made was that of a complex, inclusive personality. And I want to try to bring before you some of these qualities of different natures, which harmonize so perfectly and wonderfully in the human nature of our Lord.

I. I am arrested in Christ's character by the perfect union of mastery and charm. It is one of the rarest things in the world to find the masterful man possessed of the indefinable quality of charm. Some men are born to be obeyed, some to be loved; but Jesus pre-eminently was born for both. That is why people said, 'Lo, here is Elijah,' and others, 'No, it is Jeremiah'. All that had marked the noblest of the prophets was harmonized and reconciled in Him.

II. I am arrested in Christ's character by the union of remoteness and accessibility. There is something in Christ that always suggests distance. There is much in Christ that tells us He is near. Now there are many people who convey the impression of remoteness, though none in the same way as Jesus did. What you feel is, when men are so remote, that you must not trouble them with your small matters. You must not look to them for the sweet word of sympathy. You must not expect them to bother about *you*. The strange thing is that though Christ stood thus remote, men should have come to Him with every worry.

III. I am arrested in Christ's character by the union of enthusiasm and tranquillity. His feelings were often powerfully stirred, yet the whole impression is one of profound peace. It is very easy to be cold, yet calm; to be uninterested, unimpassioned, and so tranquil. It is very easy to deaden down the feelings, till a man has made a solitude and called it peace. But the abiding wonder about Christ is this, that He had an ardent, eager, enthusiastic heart; yet breathed such a deep, such a superb, tranquillity, that men instinctively felt He was at rest.

IV. There is the union of abnegation and appreciation. What is the last word in the ideal of Jesus—is it asceticism, or is it joy?

The wonder of Jesus is not this *or* that; the wonder of Jesus is this *and* that together. In the deepest of all senses Christ renounced the world and trampled all its glory underfoot. The first condition of following in His train was that one should lead the life of self-denial. Yet he who so followed Him was never deadened to the call of lovely or delightful things; he was led into a world where birds were singing, and which was beautiful with the lilies of the field.—G. H. MORRISON, *The Wings of the Morning*, p. 76.

REFERENCES.—XVI. 14.—A. Ramsay, *Studies in Jeremiah*, p. 281. XVI. 15.—Marcus Dods, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxii. 1902, p. 116; see also vol. lxix. 1906, p. 149. G. Jackson, *ibid.* vol. lxiv. 1903, p. 171. XVI. 15, 16.—J. D. Jones, *ibid.* vol. lxv. 1904, p. 276. E. W. Moore, *Life Transfigured*, p. 177. XVI. 15-17.—E. B. Pusey, *Parochial Sermons*, vol. ii. p. 283. XVI. 15-18.—R. M. Benson, *The Life Beyond the Grave*, p. 606. XVI. 15-17, 21.—C. W. Furse, *Sermons Preached at Richmond*, p. 22. XVI. 16.—Hastings Rashdale, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxiv. 1903, p. 5. S. Baring-Gould, *Village Preaching for Saints' Days*, p. 141.

I WILL BUILD MY CHURCH

'And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said, . . . thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.'—MATTHEW XVI. 16, 18.

THE words were drawn from Christ by the confession of Peter. The disciple said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God,' and the Saviour answered, 'Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build My Church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it'.

I. In many lives, by no means in all, the purpose for which life was given, for the fulfilment of which life is to be spent, disengages itself in one lustrous moment. The clouds are scattered, and the meaning of life is written as with a pencil of lightning. This does not mean that all is new. A man may, in the depths of his feeling and thought be aware of his place and work, and yet things change when the significance of his destiny crystallizes itself in a sentence. As Browning makes Childe Roland say—

> Burningly it came on me all at once,
> This was the place!

So men have said to themselves in one of these moments that count as years in a lifetime, these moments when mists lift off—I will make this discovery—I will write this book—I will love this woman—I will serve this cause—I will extend this Empire. It is as if they had suddenly turned and seen the revealing angel. So our Lord, Who from the beginning knew His work, put everything into the words—'I will build My Church'.

II. Let us ask how Christ builds his Church. I shall borrow from Ruskin's famous book, *The Seven Lamps of Architecture*. As Ruskin himself says: 'We know not how soon all architecture will be vain, except that which is not made with hands'. I take three of his seven lamps to help us in expounding how Christ builds His Church, how we must build it, if we are to be labourers together with Him.

1. In the first place, there is the Lamp of Sacrifice. The Church is built on sacrifice, and by sacrifice. It

is built on the one Sacrifice offered for sins for ever, and built by the continual sacrifice of the members, on the sacrifice which will make up at last that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ.

2. In the second place, there is the Lamp of Power. We see it shining in these calm words, 'I will build My Church'. Says the French aphorist: 'Attempt difficult things as though they were easy, and easy things as though they were difficult'. Christ addressed Himself to His long and terrible task with a certain repose of mind and temper. He was filled with the Spirit. He had the Sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God.

3. Once more, there must be the Lamp of Beauty. He will present it to Himself a glorious Church, for if the Church is to be fair with the beauty of the Lord, love and joy must go into the building. 'We are not sent into the world to do anything into which we cannot put our hearts.' Unless we put our hearts into our building we cannot put our intellects. And it may be true, as the great critic has said, that 'objects are noble and ignoble in proportion to the amount of the energy of the mind which has visibly been employed upon them'. We know what heart Christ put into the building of His Church. The zeal of God's House consumed Him. It was His meat to do the will of the Father, and to finish His work. In the old days men and women put their souls into church building. A French writer describes the rebuilding of Chartres Cathedral after its destruction by fire. All the country over, every one grieved and wept. Whole populations stopped their regular work, left their homes to help, the rich bringing money and jewels, and the poor putting in their barrows everything that could serve to feed labour and men, or help in the work. It was a constant stream of emigration, the spontaneous exodus of a people. Every road was crowded with pilgrims, all, men and women alike, dragging whole trees, pushing loads of sawn beams. What seems more incredible and is nevertheless attested by every chronicle of the time, is that this horde of old folks and children, of men and women, was at once amenable to discipline. And yet they belonged to every class of society, for there were among them knights and ladies of high degree. But Divine love was so powerful that it annihilated distinctions and abolished caste. The nobles harnessed themselves with the labourers to drag the trucks. Patrician dames helped the peasant woman to stir the mortar and to cook the food. The old Durham Cathedral was completed in a similar way. The entire population of the district, from the Coquet to the Tees, headed by the Earl of the Northumbrians, readily rendered all the help they could. Christ has built His Church with joy unspeakable, and we can build it worthily with Him. He does not need us for the building. He said Himself, 'I will build My Church'. He will carry His banner on to victory, though the hands of all of us relax their hold. Perhaps our work may be nothing more than a discipline for our souls, and in itself useless. But, as Ruskin nobly says, 'Since our life must at the best be but a vapour that appears for a little time and then vanishes away, let it at least appear as a cloud in the height of heaven, not as the thick darkness that broods over the blast of the furnace, and rolling of the wheel'. It needs all—sacrifice, power, joy.—W. Robertson Nicoll, *The Lamp of Sacrifice*, p. 113.

'Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but My Father which is in heaven.'—Matthew xvi. 17.

Any acknowledgment of Him that rests on merely outward evidence must necessarily fall far short of that good confession for the utterance of which St. Peter's Master pronounced him blessed. This, on that Master's own testimony, was the expression of a deep, inward conviction wrought by God Himself upon the soul; and it was not because Christ had been manifested to St. Peter in the flesh, but because He had been revealed to him in the spirit, that he was able to answer our Lord's question, 'Whom sayest thou that I am?' in the words which drew forth this comment.—Dora Greenwell.

References.—XVI. 17.—C. Gore, *Church Times*, vol. xxviii. 1890, p. 665. H. J. Martyn, *For Christ and the Truth*, p. 147. XVI. 17, 18.—H. C. Beeching, *Inns of Court Sermons*, p. 155.

'Blessed art thou. . . . Thou art an offence unto Me.'—Matthew xvi. 17 and 23.

Think what change has passed on Peter's mood before the second of these words could be addressed to him to whom the first had just been spoken. The Lord had praised him. Peter grew self-sufficient, even to the rebuking of him whose praise had so uplifted him. But it is ever so. A man will gain a great moral victory: glad first, then uplifted, he will fall before a paltry temptation.—G. Macdonald in *The Seaboard Parish*, chap. xviii.

THE UNSHAKEABLE CHURCH

'And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.'—Matthew xvi. 18.

I. What was the Rock?—First, then, what was this rock on which the Saviour said He would build His Church? Was it Peter, as the word seems to imply, and even directly to state? Sometimes Protestants have vehemently denied it, because they were afraid that by admitting so much they would be conceding all the claims of Rome. I have no such fear. I think in a sense it was Peter, and the company of Apostles of whom he was the acknowledged leader; for it was indeed upon their rocklike witness, against which all the powers of the world could not prevail, that the Church of all the ages grew. It was built, as we read in another place, upon 'the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner-stone'. But if the rock was Peter, it was Peter made a new man by the mighty truth which he had just confessed—this truth, 'Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living

God'. The Apostles, after all, were only the upper stratum of the rock, if we might so speak, the part which jutted above the surface, while underneath was the solid bed-layer, deeper than the earth, deep as the universe, this solid bed-layer of truth that Christ their Master was Divine, that the words which He spoke were true as heaven, and that His life and power were eternal and indestructible. And we are all rocks if we believe that, from Peter down to the humblest person of the present day. The veriest human feebleness becomes as solid and immovable as the ground under your feet as soon as there enters into it the conviction that Christ is God, that His word cannot be broken, and that you are held fast by Him and His promises in changeless power and everlasting love.

There is room in the Church for the weakest faith. We read that hay, and wood, and stubble even, get in, to be purified by fire; but the strength of the building is in its rocklike souls. Upon rock does Christ build His Church, and He wants rock for the building up of any Church — rocklike members, rocklike deacons, rocklike teachers in the Bible classes and Sunday schools, rocklike preachers, men that know in whom they have believed and what they have believed, and speak out with clear, unfaltering certainty the things which they have seen and felt and heard of God.

II. Shifting Sands.—I think there never was a time when that was more needed than it is to-day, there never was a more urgent demand made for it. We live in an age of almost general unsettlement. You can hardly think of a department in which there are not doubtful minds, and divided opinions; all questions seem to be in a state of solution, nothing fixed and determined.

We want rock; and the real deep hearts of men everywhere, whether they know it or not, are always saying, Away from us, ye who preach negations and doubts and darkness, who come and sit upon the threshold of our hearts like some poet's raving croaking out a dismal 'Nevermore'; away with you; and come ye, John and Paul, and all such clear-voiced witnesses, with the glow of hope on your faces and the music of conviction in your tones. That is the message we need; that is the message which this age needs, and which Christ would have His representatives give. He builds His Church upon rock.

III. What is Christ's Church?—The Church is the company, now indeed quite innumerable, of disciple-like souls who are for ever and ever learning of Him, some of them, the greater number, beholding His face, and serving Him day and night in His temple; and the rest not seeing Him yet, but rejoicing in Him with joy unspeakable and full of glory. In a word, the Church is the faithful souls of every place and name known and unknown to whom His name is unutterably dear, His words more precious than fine gold, who love Him with a love that is more than human, who trust Him with a trust that is stronger than life or death, whose eager desire is to obey Him and serve Him, and whose fervent prayer for ever and ever is to get His truth made known, His salvation proved, and His name lifted above every name, until at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow. Upon all these, wherever they are, the Saviour looks down as with the joy of one who looks upon a noble possession, and He says, 'They are My Church, My Church; and there is no other, no other'.

IV. The Church's Indestructibility.—Lastly, this Church of living and loving souls was to be and will for ever be indestructible. From the first He gave this solemn pledge about it, staking His truthfulness upon the word, and His very existence, indeed, upon the word, 'Upon this rock I will build My Church; and the gates of hell'—and He meant by that all possible forces that could come out of hell—'shall not prevail against it'. The Church is indestructible. That which He called My Church, which was to Him as the apple of His eye, His dear and peculiar possession—the Church of living souls cemented together, and bound to Him by an infinite and immortal love—that will never know change or decay. There will always be upon this earth a never-diminishing and ever-increasing number of souls, men and women to whom He is more than all things else in the world, who serve Him with the perfect liberty of a joyful self-surrender, who would rather die than deny Him because He died for them, and to whom the hope of seeing His face and enjoying Him for ever is the main strength, consolation, and ecstasy of living.—J. G. Greenhough, *The Cross in Modern Life*, p. 105.

ST. PETER'S CONFESSION

'And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.'—Matthew xvi. 18.

The story of St. Peter's confession is a story of the utmost significance in the life of our Lord. As He scanned the faces of the disciples He seems to have hesitated to put the question upon which everything turned, because He does not ask them point-blank, 'Who do you think I am?' but asks first, 'Whom do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?' And in reply they tell Him of the rumours they have heard. And then we can imagine the pause, and at last the question of questions, 'But whom say ye that I am?' And Simon Peter answered and said, 'Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God'.

I. Well, then, this is the root faith of Christendom according to its Founder—the faith that He is Divine. And I would suggest to you in passing that with us, as with St. Peter, this faith must express itself in a confession. People nowadays are a little shy of creeds. They have got a habit of calling their creeds 'dogmas' and 'formularies,' which they consider bad names. But I would ask you whether this very modern and common dislike of formularies and dogmas ought to be pressed so far as to exclude an answer to our Lord's own question, 'Whom say ye that I am?' A Christian must be now, as always, a

man who, as he reads the record of Christ's life in the Gospels, is drawn to love and reverence and worship Him as the Messiah of the invisible God, and to accept His commandments as the guide of life; and if this is our faith, why should we hesitate to put it into words and say, 'I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God'? It is on this rock of confessed faith that the Church is built.

II. We are all what we are, and we all achieve in life what we achieve, by virtue of the religious faith that is personally ours, by what we believe; and secondly, I would say that we are what we are, and we achieve what we achieve, by the intensity of what we do believe, and not by our denials. Of these denials very likely we think more and talk more, and perhaps even teach and preach more, but the important things for us are our active positive beliefs. Let me apply a familiar instance. In an essay upon George Eliot, written by one of our most accomplished critics, the author describes a conversation between himself and that gifted novelist on the subject of religion. 'I remember,' he says, 'how, at Cambridge, I walked with her once in the Fellows' Garden of Trinity on an afternoon of rainy May, and she, stirred somewhat beyond her wont, and taking as her text the three words which have been used so often as inspiring trumpet-calls to men—the words "God," "Immortality," "Duty,"—pronounced with terrible earnestness how inconceivable was the first, "God"; how unbelievable was the second, "Immortality"; and yet how peremptory and how absolute the third, "Duty".'

Every Christian must regret that George Eliot's faith in God and immortality should have given way, but her power in the world was given her by what she did believe, and not by her denials of what other people believed. What gave her her great force over men's consciences was her strong faith in duty. Let us take account of our faith; let us ask ourselves what article of our creed is so solid, is such a rock as this; what religious conviction have we so firm and sure, because based upon evidence so convincing to us that we would hold it if need be against the world?

You can see how different it would have been with George Eliot if she had held the Christian faith with the same intensity as she held her own. It does matter what we believe, but it also matters how we believe—whether we believe with our heart and mind and soul and strength; because right belief is not, in itself, faith. And this is, perhaps what people sometimes have in mind when they protest against dogmas or call themselves Christians without dogma, as though dogmas were antagonistic to faith. They cannot be antagonistic to faith, because the faith of a rational being must be capable of expression in rational speech, and that is dogma. But it is true that assent to a dogma about Christ is not necessarily unclouded faith in Him. Assent to a doctrine implies the action of only a part of a man's being; and it does not follow that, because the mind assents to the Divinity of Christ, the heart must, as a consequence, admire and trust and worship Him, and the will compel the action into conformity with His commandments. Right opinions are most valuable, but we may hold right opinions without the personal relation of love and trust between the soul and God, which is faith and the essence of religion.

'Lord, to Whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life,' and we believe that 'Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God'. To be able to say that to Christ is to have faith in Him; and that is the faith that saves the soul.

'The gates of hell shall not prevail against it.'—MATTHEW XVI. 18.

WE understand ourselves to be risking no new assertion, but simply reporting what is already the conviction of the greatest of our age, when we say—that cheerfully recognizing, gratefully appropriating whatever Voltaire has proved, or any other man has proved, or shall prove, the Christian religion, once here, cannot again pass away; that in one or the other form, it will endure through all time; that as in Scripture, so also in the heart of man, is written, 'The gates of Hell shall not prevail against it'.—CARLYLE on *Voltaire*.

'Tis said with ease, but never can be proved,
The Church her old foundations has removed,
And built new doctrines on unstable sands:
Judge that, ye winds and rains! you proved her, yet she stands.—DRYDEN.

MAN against Hell, without the help of God, is as a rabbit against the Russian Empire.—COVENTRY PATMORE.

REFERENCES.—XVI. 18.—T. Hanley Ball, *Persuasions*, p. 314. G. Tyrrell, *Oil and Wine*, p. 139. D. Fraser, *Metaphors in The Gospels*, p. 144. C. J. Ridgeway, *Is Not This the Christ*, p. 76. J. G. Greenhough, *The Cross in Modern Life*, p. 105; see also *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xlix. 1896, p. 237. R. F. Horton, *ibid.* vol. l. 1896, p. 33. J. A. Brinkwater, *ibid.* vol. lviii. 1900, p. 243. G. Gladstone, *ibid.* vol. lxiv. 1903, p. 53. 'Plain Sermons' by contributors to the *Tracts for the Times*, vol. v. p. 148. R. E. Hutton, *The Crown of Christ*, vol. ii. p. 195. XVI. 18, 19.—S. Chadwick, *Humanity and God*, p. 269. J. Fraser, *Parochial and Other Sermons*, p. 302. XVI. 19.—C. S. Robinson, *Simon Peter*, p. 253. D. Fraser, *Metaphors in the Gospels*, p. 152.

THE LOVE OF THE TRINITY IN THE RESURRECTION

'He must be raised again the third day.'—MATTHEW XVI. 21.

THE words used by our Lord in the text clearly seem the solemn rehearsal of a previous plan made long before by the Holy Trinity; 'The Son of man must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day'.

The Atonement, again, was clearly another wonderful conception of the Holy Three in One. But what we have to face is what would have been the position of the human race if the Love of the Trinity had stopped at the Atonement, for to do so will enable us to appreciate more fully the joy of Easter Day.

I. We should have had no certainty that death was not the end. We might have guessed that it was not; we should, no doubt, have made the best of the instinct of immortality which we all possess; we should have got what comfort we could from the teachings of science about the persistence of force, but how should we have looked the dying or the mourner in the face unless Jesus had said, 'I am the Resurrection and the Life; though he were dead yet shall he live, and he that believeth in Me shall never die,' and unless He had proved the truth of that promise by being raised Himself on the third day. With misty aspirations, and vague hopes, and stumbling guesses we should have followed our dear ones to the grave; and it was because the Trinity in Their love knew this that They planned to Themselves, 'Not only must the Son of Man be knit to the human race, "closer than breathing and nearer than hands and feet," not only must He suffer many things of the elders, the chief priests and scribes, but He must be raised up the third day'.

II. The sinner would have been left 'unhouseled, disappointed, unaneled'. The Atonement must not only be made, but it must be ministered; the Blood must not only be shed, but it must be sprinkled on the sinner; the Sacrifice must not only be offered, it must be pleaded; and for this the death must not only be endured, but be transfigured.

III. We can scarcely realize the blow to every effort for the uplifting of the human race if the Love of the Trinity had stopped short of the Resurrection.

It makes no difference whether we say, 'God raised Him from the dead,' or 'the Spirit raised Him from the dead,' or 'He rose Himself from the dead'—all expressions are used—the fact was that the Holy Trinity were at work, and when the Holy Trinity are at work nothing can stop that work.—Bishop A. F. Winnington Ingram, *The Guardian*, 22 April, 1908, p. 649.

SYMPATHY AND SACRIFICE

'From that time forth began Jesus to shew unto His disciples, how that He must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day. Then Peter took Him, and began to rebuke Him, saying, Be it far from Thee, Lord: this shall not be unto Thee. But He turned, and said unto Peter, Get thee behind Me, Satan: thou art an offence unto Me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men. Then said Jesus unto His disciples, If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.'—Matthew xvi. 21-24.

Simon Peter had discerned and declared the great secret that his Master was the Messiah, the Christ of God. No sooner had the confession been made than the Master set Himself to prepare His disciples for the consequences, the hardships which loyalty to that discovered truth would involve. For such a sudden reversal of their expectations the disciples were not prepared. Peter's impulsive kind-heartedness broke out in protest. 'This be far from Thee.' The rebuke that fell from the Master's lips sounds even now as we read it in the pages of the New Testament startling and unexpected, 'Get thee behind Me, Satan: for thou art an offence unto Me'. The refusal to accept stress, struggle, and hardship as the conditions of loyalty to truth the Master saw to be the very mind of the world, the very spirit of its prince. The disciples from the first must be taught to steel their hearts and minds against it. Then saith Jesus unto His disciples, 'If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me'.

I. The Cross of Jesus Christ.—To the Christian the Cross of Jesus Christ is the centre of his deepest hopes, memories, associations. It speaks to him of the revelation of the deepest truth, the love of God manifested in fullness of self-sacrifice. It speaks to him of the satisfaction of his deepest need, the forgiveness of his sins. It speaks to him of strength and stay in the midst of his sufferings and trials. But more simply, and, alas! less acceptably, it is meant to speak to him of the inevitable fate of all high ideals in the world. They are crucified; they are realized only through struggle and suffering. It is sometimes worth while to remember that there was nothing, so to say, supernatural in the circumstances of the Passion of the Saviour. They were the mere consequences of the antagonism of the spirit of the world to truth; and our Lord accepted them with loyal obedience. The disciple is not above his Master, and the Cross remains the symbol of combat quite as truly as the symbol of consolation.

II. The Gospel of Comfort.—Is there not need at this present time of reasserting these first principles of the Christian life? It is of all things the most futile to rail at the times in which we are called to live. For us, because they are ours, they are the best; they are the times in which the Providence of God has seen that we individually have the best chance of fulfilling the purpose for which we exist, and of rendering Him the service which is His due. Yet the true spirit of service in our own day and generation is to see in its characteristic dangers the appointed opportunities of Christian witness. I think we should all agree that one of the characteristics of the present day is its shrinking from the Cross, from the truth that high ideals mean exacting demands, that loyalty to them does not bring ease but struggle, and that their consequence is hardship rather than comfort. This danger comes indeed from one of the very merits of the time. It is the result of the excess of one of its special virtues. There never was a time when kindness of heart was more real, eager, and widespread. There is scarcely any class or any individual who is not filled with the desire to remove hardships, who is not sensitive to hard cases of human suffering, perplexity, and difficulty. Everywhere the one point upon which all sorts and conditions of men are united is in the ambition to spread around us the comforts of life. This diffusion of kindness of heart is indeed a thing for which to thank God and take courage. It is full of hope; it is a most cheering indication of the

soundness of the heart of the people. Yet it brings its dangers with it. It is apt to spread around us a certain softness and weakness, to loosen the moral fibre, to sap the foundations of resolute endurance and strenuous effort. Instead of speaking of the right to be comfortable, the Christian has rather to dwell upon the duty to be noble, to be self-respecting, strenuous, and ready to accept the law of stress and struggle in the moral life. The gospel of comfort which is being so sedulously preached at the present time becomes a danger unless it is checked, disciplined, and deepened by the Gospel of the Cross.

Men shrink, like St. Peter, from the approach of the Cross. It is just here that the Church of Jesus Christ must restore the balance. It must, in St. Paul's vigorous metaphor, openly placard the Cross before the eyes of men. Assuredly let it make wide its appeal, and attract men to itself and its cause by popular services and social recreation. Even more assuredly let it take its proper place in the van of all movements of charity, of all efforts to alleviate the lot of the poor, or increase and spread the opportunities of worthy human life. But when it has gained a hearing and won a place in the world let it never hesitate to set forth the Cross, to make it plain that Christianity means still a moral demand, stern and exciting. No greater service can be rendered at the present time to the nation by the Church than the service of strengthening its moral force by giving witness in its midst to the reality of moral discipline and by spreading through it the saving salt of sacrifice.—Archbishop Gordon Lang, *The Guardian*, 10 June, 1910.

References.—XVI. 21.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—St. Matthew IX.-XVII.* p. 333. Newman Smyth, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xlix. 1896, p. 221. XVI. 21-23.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xlvii. No. 2733. XVI. 21-24.—S. Chadwick, *Humanity and God*, p. 113. XVI. 21-26.—J. Parker, *Hidden Springs*, p. 61. XVI. 23.—F. E. Paget, *Sermons for the Saints*, p. 239. C. E. Jefferson, *The Character of Jesus*, p. 189. W. H. Murray, *The Fruits of the Spirit*, p. 345.

THE MARK OF THE DISCIPLE

'Then said Jesus unto His disciples, If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.'—Matthew xvi. 24.

The mark of the disciple, the characteristic which Jesus Himself looks for, is that we, like Him, deny ourselves, take up our cross and follow Him.

I. In the Scripture there are three words which express, with perfect insight, the darker and the more difficult experiences of a religious life. The three words are 'burden,' 'thorn,' and 'cross'.

1. By the word *burden* both the Old Testament and the New means all the inevitable care and strain of earthly life.

2. By the *thorn* we mean the experience of a keener anguish. It always points to some one singular trial. It describes some humbling infirmity, some mortifying disability, some weakness which makes us miserable, because it unfits us for our task.

3. The *cross*. Every man must bear his own burden. Every man has his thorn in the flesh. But the cross is not universal, and the cross can be escaped. Many men and women never bear a cross at all. Many can refuse if they will, and many do refuse. The whole spiritual tragedy of many who are not disciples of Christ will be found to lie here, that when the cross lay before them they refused it.

II. This truth is clear in the experience of Christ.

1. *Jesus had His burden.* The Gospels tell us a part of the story. His subjection to His parents, the toil of the carpenter's shop, the poverty of the home, His weariness and pain, the hunger and thirst, His enduring of the scorn and contempt of the rich and well-placed and successful—these were the burdens He shared with men.

2. *Jesus had His thorn.* I do not know, and no one knows, what Christ's thorn was. The thorn that Jesus could not escape, until released by death, may have been the hunger and the thirst of a heart famished for the sight of God's face.

3. But Jesus had *His cross.* He took it up. He might have laid it down. He faced His cross all through His ministry. At His baptism He laid it on His shoulders. In His temptation He bound it to Him with cords. As He passed on through life it was the invisible weight He carried. In the garden of Gethsemane He might have flung it down and gone out to make His peace with Caiaphas, to sit at Herod's table and talk enchantingly to him, and to find Himself an honoured guest in the house of Pilate. His cross was that life and death for sin which came to its consummation in His dying hour.

III. When we follow the suggestion of our text, we find—

1. That cross-bearing begins *with a definite act.* It begins in the hour when, in the depths of our will, we resolve to follow Christ.

2. *Cross-bearing continues in a daily experience.* There are two reasons for this. The first is that life does not stand still. We are continually passing into new circumstances, facing changed situations, meeting new problems and fresh temptations. And the second reason is that we ourselves change in character and in ideal. We grow into the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ.

3. *Our cross can be borne only as we follow Christ.* 'Let him deny himself,' said Jesus, declaring the first definite act. 'Take up his cross,' He adds, indicating the daily experience. 'Follow me,' He continues with a deeper note of appeal, giving us the secret of continuance.

What is the issue of this bearing of the cross? The issue of our cross is in our measure the same as the issue of Christ's cross. He bore His cross that He might save men, and we bear our cross that we may also be the saviours of our fellows. Whenever in the simplest and humblest way we bear our cross after Him, we save some life from sorrow and pain, some tempted one from his fall, some soul from death. And it is the men who have borne the burden and accepted the thorn who have also carried the cross.—

W. M. Clow, *The Cross in Christian Experience*, p. 231.

Illustrations.—1. Woe to him who seeks his own ease! Woe to him who shuns the Cross! because he will find others so weighty that they will overwhelm him.—S. Vincent de Paul.

2. Life is a burden; bear it.
Life is a duty; dare it.
Life is a thorn crown; wear it.
Though it break your heart in twain,
Though the burden crush you down;
Close your lips, and hide your pain:
First the cross, and then the crown.

3. Let us go on full of cheerfulness, and be sure that all our crosses will bear Christ with them, and that His help, which will never be wanting, will be more powerful than the combined efforts of all our enemies.—S. Ignatius de Loyola.

WHY A YOUNG MAN IS NOT A CHRISTIAN

(Because he does not understand what Christianity is)

'Then said Jesus unto His disciples, If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.'—Matthew xvi. 24.

It may be a bold thing to say, but it is perfectly true, that a great many men are not Christians because they do not know the conditions of Christianity. The Christian Church is such an elaborate institution, with her buildings and her services, her sacraments and her ministers; and the Christian theology is so profound and complicated, with its doctrines about God and man, sin and salvation; and the Christian life has become so conventional, with its rules and customs,—that not one man out of twenty has ever got through the forms to the spirit or has ever looked at Christ in the Gospels with his own eyes and heard Him speak with his own ears. It does not matter that Christ spoke with the utmost clearness upon all occasions and was never plainer than in laying down the conditions of discipleship. If a hundred were placed at a table with a pencil and a sheet of paper before them, one wonders how many could write down what Christ demanded of His followers. One hazards the guess that there would be twenty different answers, and half of them at least would be beside the mark. This is a misfortune. Many more men would be Christians if they distinctly grasped the necessary elements of Christianity, but they have heard so much about Christianity that they really do not know what it is. In fact they cannot see the wood for the trees.

For instance, there is the man—and that is my point now—who is unable to call himself by the name of our Master upon intellectual grounds, either because he thinks he understands the doctrines of Christianity and cannot accept them, or because he thinks he is not fit to understand them, and so of course gives them up in despair. One is too honest, and the other is too modest to be a Christian; and the barrier in both cases is, say the Doctrine of the Trinity, or the Deity of Christ, or Election, or Future Punishment. This religion they feel is too theoretical and too learned, too much taken up with things which cannot be proved and which have no bearing on our present life. If Christianity were only stripped of her doctrines, and there never had been such a thing as the Nicene Creed; if Christianity had been only simply a practical principle of life, they also might have been Christians. And they give pledges of sincerity in this desire by listening to any voice that will speak plainly to the heart and conscience, and by openly admiring any Christian who lives the Sermon on the Mount. Here they say is something intelligible, and here is something excellent.

I. The theory of Christianity has nothing whatever to do with its practice. People use the telephone every day without understanding in the slightest degree how sound is conveyed by the electric wire, and we walk beneath the light of the stars without even knowing their names. Jesus left it to others, to St. Paul and to the theologians, to argue out Christianity; but He Himself brought Christianity near and made Christianity plain. From the beginning of His ministry to the end He asked no one to accept any creed, except to believe in Him; and there must be something wrong in the man who does not believe in Jesus Christ. What ails him in regard to Christ? What is wanting in Christ? Where did he ever see one better? Can he imagine any master greater? Christ indulged in no speculations, however fascinating, and however fruitful, from the day He met His first disciples on to the night He bade them good-bye. He always called to action, and was much more concerned about what a man did and what a man was than what he thought and said. Jesus did not make His plea with arguments about the origin of things and the nature of things, but with invitations to abandon that which was evil and to cleave to that which was good. A New Testament has been published in which our Lord's words throughout the whole book are printed in red, and it were worth while that a man should purchase that red-letter Testament in order to see what Christ really said. He will find that the words of the Lord are flung into relief not merely by the coloured type, but by their simplicity and beauty, by their reality and attractiveness.

II. What then does Jesus lay upon His disciples as the condition of Christianity if He does not lay doctrine? Two things; and both of them are most reasonable. He must be prepared to deny himself. And that does not mean that he should torture his body, or refuse the joy of life, or fetter himself by conventional habits, or be an ascetic in any shape or fashion; but it does mean that he should watch and curb his lower self. There are the remains of the beast in every one of us; and Christ expects a man to keep his passions in order, to live cleanly, to regulate his temper, to beat down envy, to overcome avarice. And the other demand is that he cultivate his higher self, for there is the prophecy of a saint

in every one of us as well as the trace of a beast. Most of us indeed are half-way, and neither one nor the other. 'You must carry the Cross,' said Christ; and by this He meant that we must live for other people and not for ourselves, that we must make sacrifices to fulfil great ends, that we must accept heavy burdens to lighten weak shoulders, and that we must not be afraid of a little suffering. 'If any man would be My disciple,' Christ says, 'he must pledge himself to a great effort in his soul and life to kill the bad and feed the good.' Is not this intelligible, is not this reasonable, is not this admirable? Well, the man who is doing this with purpose of heart is a Christian.—JOHN WATSON, *Respectable Sins*, p. 83.

REFERENCES.—XVI. 24.—R. Winterbotham, *Sermons and Expositions*, p. 360. R. Higinbotham, *Sermons*, p. 162. H. P. Liddon, *Sermons on Some Words of Christ*, p. 78. C. Gore, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lvii. 1900, p. 219. J. H. Odell, *ibid.* vol. lviii. 1900, p. 324. S. D. McConnell, *A Year's Sermons*, p. 239.

SACRIFICE

'If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for My sake shall find it.'—MATTHEW XVI. 24, 25.

I. WOVEN into the very texture of life, giving to it its sternness and its pathos, making it ofttimes a marvel or a tragedy, fixed by a mysterious law as the condition of fuller life of fruitful work and of assured glory, is the principle of sacrifice.

II. Sacrifice is the highest and the noblest act of a loving soul. There is a royalty in it that wins our instinctive homage. In it a man's or woman's true self—the God-like regenerate self—that is so generally hidden and cramped by selfishness and conventionality is shown in its beauty and majesty: too loving to be selfish, too great to be conventional, splendid in its scorn of falsehood and wrong, it is a power of God which accomplishes an eternal work.

But we look away from this idealized manhood and womanhood, and we learn the secret of this transfiguring power of sacrifice.

Upon a Cross, uplifted between earth and heaven, pouring out His life in shame and agony, in darkness and dereliction, hangs the Son of Man, conquering the world and the devil, sin and death, by the uttermost sacrifice, and winning the victory and glory and crown of sacrifice for all humanity, consecrating pain and sorrow, and throwing upon the dread mystery of evil the light of the eternal purpose there fulfilled in love. 'It is finished.'

III. The disciples of the Crucified should be as their Master. Sharers of His life, they must follow Him in sacrifice.

Consider first some of the things that concern chiefly the outward life:—

1. *Time* is to be offered as a perpetual offering. First, by withdrawing, saving it from selfish uses. Secondly, by the watchful seizure and use of opportunities.

2. *Work* is an acceptible offering as we do it for God, and not as only for man.

3. *Speech* is a faculty to be used in God's service.

So, too, in the things that belong to the inward life, sacrifice should find scope and material, as the human will is merged in the Divine will.

1. *Thought* should be so directed in prayer and watchfulness, so taught by meditation on holy things, that it may be won from the folly and evil, the malice and the passion, the foolish imaginations and the sentimentality that so often hold it, and that it may be surrendered, held as a little kingdom in which God only shall reign, a place in which He shall ever speak and be always heard, the voice of eternal Truth.

2. The *affections*, too, must be sincerely offered, ruled in the spirit of sacrifice that they may be both centred and satisfied in God.

Our *inclinations*, too, often conflict with the call of God, with the duties and claims of life, with Christian principles as we have been made to understand them. These also must be yielded lovingly and patiently.

IV. And there is another form of sacrifice. What is the particular sorrow, suffering, loss, that is the trial of life? It is a matter in which the will may be offered to God. As Christ completed the offering of His life upon the cross, so our spiritual troubles are a cross on which we, too, may truly offer ourselves as a complete and consummated sacrifice, which will effect to the full all that love can ask or desire.—G. BRETT, *Fellowship With God*, p. 33.

REFERENCES.—XVI. 24, 25.—J. Vickery, *Ideals of Life*, p. 295. XVI. 24-26.—W. Hay M. H. Aitken, *Mission Sermons* (2nd Series), p. 125. XVI. 24-28.—F. D. Maurice, *Sermons*, p. 127; see also *Lincoln's Inn Sermons*, vol. iv. p. 110. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xlvii. No. 2729.

LOSING THE SOUL TO SAVE IT

'Whosoever will save his life, shall lose it.'—MATTHEW XVI. 25.

I. THE sense of the passage turns upon one prominent word—what is meant by the soul or the life of man? The soul is the living principle.

And obviously the health or the sickness, the saving or the losing, the life or the death of this soul must be a matter of infinite moment to a man, both in time and in eternity, for it guides his actions, it regulates his affections, it influences his feeling; it is to his whole being what the mainspring is to a watch. It is in health when it works in harmony with purity and truth, and righteousness and love, which are the expression of God's own will, and when in the language of Scripture it is guided by the mind of the Spirit. It is diseased, it is dying, and is lost when it abandons itself to the jarring, jangling, lacerating, corrupting forces of a lower world, whose order is disorder—when, in fact it is given over to the mind of the flesh.

II. But how save the soul? The text gives the response: 'Save your soul by losing it, for you will never lose it by saving it'. So far as concerns the

primary application of the words to the contrast between the earthly life and the heavenly, between God and the world, the meaning is obvious and easy. Whosoever prefers self, where truth, or honour, or love, or purity, or reverence, demands self-abegnation, self-abandonment, that man loses his soul, loses his life by saving it. But though the man who saves his soul is sure to lose it, yet it does not follow conversely that he who loses his soul will as certainly save it. In this latter case an important proviso is added, '*for My sake*'.

'For My sake.' We dare not limit the words as if they applied only to sacrifices made consciously and directly in the cause of Christianity. If Christ be the very eternal word of God, the very expression of the Father's truth, of the Father's righteousness, of the Father's purity, of the Father's love, then the sacrifice of self to any one of these things is a saving of the soul by losing it.

III. Within the sphere of religion itself the same contrast and the same alternative may exist. It is possible to be anxious about saving the soul, to be extremely religious in a certain sense, but yet to risk the losing of it in the very desire of saving it. There are two ways of pursuing salvation, the true and the false. The false view takes a valetudinarian view of the soul and the functions of the spiritual being; it confines the soul to the sick chamber, withholding it from all healthy and vigorous exercise, and the soul pines and sickens and dies under the treatment. It is ruined by inconsiderate care; it is lost by being saved. The true method treats the soul as an active, healthy, living vitality, exposes it, adventures it, abandons it. The soul must brace itself by vigorous exercise; and that it may drink in the free air and genial sunshine it must commit itself to the struggles and vicissitudes of life, must spend and be spent, must lose itself that it may be saved. The true method of salvation is a great venture of self, a forgetfulness of self, a going out of self.—J. B. Lightfoot, *Penny Pulpit* vol. xii. No. 672, p. 43.

Reference.—XVI. 25.—A. H. Moncur Sime, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. liv. 1898, p. 383.

THE SOUL: ITS MEANING AND VALUE

'What is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?'—Matthew xvi. 26.

The word 'soul' is a great word; it is a religious word; it is made sometimes too narrowly a religious word.

I. Put the word 'soul' out until we need it. Let us read, 'What is a man profited if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his sight?' That is a term you can comprehend. 'Soul' is metaphysical, spiritual, transcendental; but you know what you mean by your own eyes. What is a man profited, if he shall gain the world, and lose his eyes? What is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his hearing? Not a man amongst you would give his sight for the world, would give his hearing for the world, and yet the man will give his soul for nothing. Such fools are men. You would not expect it to be so, but this is the miracle that is performed every day, that a man who would not give his sight for a mountain of gold, will sell his soul for one hour's forbidden pleasure. Where is the wisdom? Here is impudent prudence, here the sagacity that quickly turns in upon itself and slays the soul that is proud of it.

II. Now we come back to the other point, and say that when you have given your soul you have given your sight. It is the soul that sees. For you have no pictures if you cannot see them; and you cannot see them if you have no soul. You can have acres of canvas, but no pictures. When you have paid your soul for your pleasures you have paid your hearing. It is the soul that hears. Oh, see the great master there, the one musician out of whom all other musicians seem to have been cut; you say, 'He is deaf,' but not in the soul, only in the flesh: it is his soul that hears; it is the soul that was Beethoven.

Take care of your soul—yourself. He that would save his life shall lose it. You will save your soul—yourself—best by giving yourself away in the spirit of Christ, under the inspiration and benediction of His Cross.

The soul is the secret and value of all things that are called practical.

The one thing that men forget, who boast of their being practical at the expense of their being religious, is the soul being required of them; they omit the element of responsibility, they omit the element of having to face God; their very calculation is absurd in its first line, and vicious in its mocking result. He is practical who works from the soul-centre.

III. Jesus came to save the soul. He did not come to save the body only. There was nothing so easy as healing sick bodies; Christ's difficulty was in saving the soul. He said, 'Nothing is worth doing but saving men'; and when He said men He meant souls, spirits, immortalities, the entity within that outlives the wreck of matter and the crash of worlds; that mysterious thing that will not die, that upper fruit that death's black hand cannot wrench from the living tree.—Joseph Parker, *The Gospel of Jesus Christ*, p. 172.

THE NOTHINGNESS OF THIS WORLD

'What shall a man give in exchange for his soul.'—Matthew xvi. 26.

We still crave for something, we do not well know what; but we are sure it is something which the world has not given us. And then its changes are so many, so sudden, so silent, so continual. It never leaves changing; it goes on to change, till we are quite sick at heart: then it is that our reliance on it is broken. It is plain we cannot continue to depend upon it, unless we keep pace with it, and go on changing too; but this we cannot do. We feel that, while it changes, we are one and the same; and thus, under God's blessing, we come to have some glimpse of the meaning of our independence of things temporal, and

our immortality. And should it so happen that misfortunes come upon us (as they often do), then still more are we led to understand the nothingness of this world; then still more are we led to distrust it, and are weaned from the love of it, till at length it floats before our eyes merely as some idle veil, which, notwithstanding its many tints, cannot hide the view of what is beyond it; and we begin, by degrees, to perceive that there are but two beings in the whole universe, our own soul, and the God who made it.—J. H. Newman.

References.—XVI. 26.—S. D. McConnell, *A Year's Sermons*, p. 24. R. W. Dale, *Fellowship with Christ*, p. 147. W. J. Knox-Little, *The Journey of Life*, p. 41. J. L. Muirhead, *Pulpit Discourses, Berwick Presbytery*, p. 50. J. W. King, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xli. 1892, p. 161. D. M. Ross, *ibid.* vol. li. 1897, p. 122. H. P. Liddon, *Sermons Preached on Special Occasions*, p. 75. M. R. Vincent, *God and Bread*, p. 21. J. Fraser, *Parochial and other Sermons*, p. 23. J. H. Newman, *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, p. 15.

FROM THENCE HE SHALL COME TO JUDGE THE QUICK AND THE DEAD

'The Son of man shall come in the glory of His Father with His angels; and then shall He render unto every man according to his deeds.'—Matthew xvi. 27.

I. Consider exactly what we mean and what we do not mean by judgment. Most of us admit that there is need of some readjustment of things if the Ruler of the world is to deserve the name of just. Apart from revelation there would seem a probability amounting to a certainty that a day of rectification must be in store for a world now such a confusion and chance medley. Our holy Faith meets the human craving, and the Church presents a picture none can see unmoved of a last great and terrible day, with the Judge standing between the saved and the lost, and bidding one company enter heaven and the other depart to hell.

Men rehearsed the solemn words in which Christ describes the last judgment all through the ages of faith. The grandest music described the bliss of the saved, and the terrors of the lost. Painters like Michael Angelo and Tintoretto painted both in colours glowing with splendour.

II. How is it now? The reality which these images represented has been clouded and sicklied over by doubt owing to two mistakes. (1) Men have vulgarized the judgment side of the picture; (2) men have made free with the attributes of pardon and grace.

So we require the final judgment—to confirm some verdicts and to reverse others. The question of the method of the Advent Assize of the universe is left in darkness. But that a process like that which the Bible represents must conclude the world drama we may confidently believe.

III. Do not think of the final judgment as a grand pageant invented by theologians and embodied in colour and music by painters and musicians. It will be as real as life itself. And if you ask, what shall I do now? this minute I say, 'Judge therefore yourselves that ye be not judged of the Lord'. There is a saying of Christ which shows very clearly how we are being judged now, and by what we are judged. 'He that rejecteth Me and receiveth not My words hath One that judgeth him; *the word that I have spoken the same shall judge him in the last day.*' We shall be judged by the standard Christ set up.

At that last judgment there will be not only a scrutiny but a readjustment. After the scrutiny there will be a reversal of man's judgments in many cases. Those who are now considered saints and heroes may prove to be pretenders; the humble and neglected will meet recognition and reward. In the great day the judge will be our Lord, who is all-knowing, so we may be as sure of His charity as of His wisdom, for *charity is the daughter of knowledge.*—C. H. Butcher, *The Sound of a Voice that is Still*, p. 87.

References.—XVI. 27.—W. Garrett Horder, *The Other World*, p. 71. B. F. Westcott, *The Historic Faith*, p. 87. George Salmon, *Gnosticism and Agnosticism*, p. 272. XVI. 28.—H. C. Mabie, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxviii. 1905, p. 374. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. x. No. 594. XVII. 1.—J. D. Jones, *The Gospel of Grace*, p. 189. XVII. 1, 2.—Reuen Thomas, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. liv. 1898, p. 182. H. Scott Holland, *ibid*, vol. lv. 1899, p. 33. 'Plain Sermons' by contributors to the *Tracts for the Times*, vol. iii. p. 223. XVII. 1-5.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xlvi. No. 2658. XVII. 1-7.—R. Bickerdike, *Penny Pulpit*, vol. xiv. No. 820, p. 241. XVII. 1-8.—A. B. Davidson, *Waiting upon God*, p. 139. W. A. Gray, *The Shadow of the Hand*, p. 217. XVII. 1-13.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xlvii. No. 2729. A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—St. Matthew IX.-XVII.* p. 343. XVII. 2.—G. Campbell Morgan, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lix. 1901, p. 364. W. G. Davies, *ibid.* vol. lxiv. 1903, p. 411. W. Alexander, *The Great Question*, p. 213. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xlvii. No. 2729. XVII. 3.—W. Howell Evans, *Sermons for the Church's Year*, p. 163.

THE USE OF RELIGIOUS EXCITEMENT

'Lord, it is good for us to be here: if Thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles; one for Thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias.'—Matthew xvii. 4.

Although there is no necessity to give much heed to the words of one, who, when he spoke them, was so startled and confused, that he knew not what he said, yet I suppose, in truth, St. Peter was right in the former part of his saying, and wrong in the latter.

I. Why did God bestow upon us the power of religious emotion? It is certain that no power, no faculty of the soul was given in vain. Each has its proper use and end; its proper exercise, its proper degree, and its proper relation to other powers and faculties. It must be so with religious emotion. God sends this religious emotion to many persons in many ways. A deep stirring of the heart and conscience comes to most people in the events of their own lives. What is to be said of these occasional times of excited feeling?—

1. That no man must take religious feeling for religion.

2. That God gives these periods of strong feeling

as mighty helps to our weak and wavering courage; that they are a spur to the halting obedience, and a goad to the reluctant will.

II. But I think these times of unusual religious fervour have another use. They open to the soul visions of a state of love, and joy, and heavenly mindedness, which, if afterwards they turn into nothing but regret and longing, nevertheless, leave behind them a blessing.

III. How far is religious emotion to form any part of our daily religious life, or, in other words, how far are the feelings to be regularly employed in the service of God? I have done with exceptional religious emotion. What shall we say as to *ordinary* religious emotion? Is it a good thing, or a bad thing? Assuredly, our feelings were not given us for the purpose of being crushed out. Our religion is not one of mere dry duty. The very fact that love holds so prominent a place in it is a proof that, at least, some amount of religious feeling is necessary for a true religious life. But supposing there is in the daily religious life of some more of the element of excitement. Supposing that there are not a few, in whom nothing better than a naturally restless disposition, or a craving after emotional stimulants in spiritual things, accounts for their enjoyment of many church services, much preaching and the like, no one will affirm that the motive which actuates such persons is a very high one. Their religious acts must rank far lower than such as are done from principle and a sense of duty; and though I do not wish to speak of those acts as very meritorious, I come back to the old question: why did God make us able to enjoy certain things more than others? why did God implant in us, though far more in some than in others, a craving after what may move, and stir, and perchance elevate the soul? Take any keen, eager, impulsive, excitable person, may I not believe that God gave such person the power of quick impulse and eager aspiration for some worthy end?—W. Walsham How, *Penny Pulpit*, vol. xii. No. 705, p. 309.

THE TRANSFIGURATION

'Lord, it is good for us to be here.'—Matthew xvii. 4.

The probable locality was Mount Hermon, not Tabor, as tradition says. The event occurred, according to Luke, while Christ was praying. It was good to be with Christ anywhere. It was good for the disciples now, for the following reasons:—

I. It Confirmed Their Belief in a Future State.—Centuries had passed since Moses died on Pisgah and since Elijah ascended to heaven in a chariot of fire, yet here they were alive, talking with Jesus.

II. It Taught Them that there was a Spiritual body.—Moses and Elias evidently appeared in a bodily form.

III. It Revealed to Them Christ's Divine Character and Mission.—Here were Moses, the lawgiver, and Elijah, the chief of the prophets, bearing witness to Him. They spake of His death, which had been foreshadowed in the ancient sacrifices and in the utterances of prophecy. Their sudden disappearance, connected with the words, 'This is my beloved Son,' indicated that type and prophecy were now fulfilled, and that Christ was Prophet, Priest, and King.

IV. It Prepared Them for Coming Trials.

Sorrow often follows closely upon joy.
The joy prepares us for the sorrow.

In conclusion: it was good to be there; it would not have been good to remain there. There was work to be done, sorrow to be lightened, sin to be grappled with and overcome.—F. J. Austin, *Seeds and Saplings*, p. 13.

References.—XVII. 4.—J. H. Thom, *Laws of Life*, p. 379. E. W. Moore, *Life Transfigured*, p. 1. C. H. Wright, *The Unrecognized Christ*, p. 29. H. J. Wilmot-Buxton, *Holy-Tide Teaching*, p. 150. H. D. M. Spence, *Voices and Silences*, p. 153. T. B. Hindsley, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxv. 1904, p. 236. E. G. Baines, *ibid.* vol. lxx. 1906, p. 157. XVII. 4, 5.—H. E. Ryle, *On the Church of England*, p. 112. XVII. 5.—C. S. Macfarland, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxx. 1906, p. 21. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xvii. No. 909. XVII. 5, 6, 7.—*Ibid.* vol. xxix. No. 1727.

JESUS ONLY

'And when they had lifted up their eyes they saw no man, save Jesus only.'—Matthew xvii. 8.

Christ gave to His timid followers a glimpse of His glory, but He would not allow them to rest upon it, but upon Himself in the human nature that He had assumed; and so, 'when they lifted up their eyes, they saw no man, save Jesus only'.

I. There is a danger, especially for the young, in letting their religion be based on mere love or regard for a minister or a religious friend. Such personal attachment is natural, but it is neither wise nor safe. Use their teaching as far as you may, but do not lean upon them, or upon any human stay. In the matter of the soul's salvation fix your heart and fix your hope on no man, but on Jesus only.

II. Others there are who allow their religion to be unduly influenced by particular places and circumstances. This is letting association get too great power over us.

III. And, in the days when we feel burdened with a sense of our sin, may we then look to no man, save to Jesus only. The memory of our sins must always make us sad: we must always, to the end of our days, look back upon our sins with shame, and sorrow, and pain; but if we look to no man save to Jesus only for pardon, we need not despair; nay, the true penitent is assured of immediate pardon of his sin. We may gratefully accept the comfort of absolution, the assurance of cancelled guilt, if we lift up our eyes in the time of trouble, determined to see no man, save Jesus only.

IV. But, besides sin, sorrow often makes the people of God go heavily. In the hour of heart-break and of bitter grief, in the time of privation and of sore distress, may we be able to take comfort from the thought that though men are miserable comforters yet the Son of Man, our unseen Friend, is able to bind up every wound.

V. And if this be so with you in sorrow, then in the hour of your own death you will have the one Friend with you who can go down with you into the dark valley, where all other friends must leave you.

VI. Lastly, if Jesus be with us, loved and trusted in the common hours of the common life, not only will He comfort and sustain us when we are called to pass under the cloud and the shadow of sorrow, not only will He uphold us in the hour of death, but He will even give us promised strength, beyond the thought of man to conceive!—He will even give us boldness in the Day of Judgment.—Erskine Clarke, *Penny Pulpit*, vol. xii. No. 676, p. 75.

'And when they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no man, save Jesus only.'—Matthew xvii. 8.

For the Word of the Law and Wrath must give place to the Word of Life and Grace; because, though the Word of Condemnation be glorious, yet the Word of Life and Salvation doth far exceed in glory. Also, that Moses and Elias must both vanish, and leave Christ and his Saints alone.—John Bunyan.

References.—XVII. 8.—W. Baxendale, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xli. 1892, p. 195. H. J. Wilmot-Buxton, *Sunday Sermonettes for a Year*, pp. 79, 138. W. J. Knox-Little, *Church Times*, vol. liv. 1905, p. 165. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xvi. No. 924. XVII. 14.—C. Perren, *Revival Sermons in Outline*, p. 124. W. T. Houldsworth, *Church Times*, vol. xxxvii. 1897, p. 139. XVII. 14-21.—W. M. Taylor, *The Miracles of Our Saviour*, p. 319. Archbishop Trench, *Notes on the Miracles of Our Lord*, p. 299. J. Laidlaw, *The Miracles of Our Lord*, p. 278.

UNBELIEF

'O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you! how long shall I suffer you?'—Matthew xvii. 17.

The disciples had the power to cast out devils. They tried and failed. They were weak in Christ's absence; they had been dejected by His previous words about His death, and now by His withdrawal to the mountain, and so they had been unsuccessful. They could not cast out because of their unbelief. The child's father was at his wit's end. He had had a poor trembling faith, if any. The scribes and others with none at all, were maliciously chuckling over their failure. To them all Christ comes straight from the Transfiguration, and when He sees their grief, these words which express holy impatience, endless pity, and personal sorrow are wrung from Him. They are:—

I. A Cry of Pain.—We can understand how the sight should have been more than ordinarily sorrowful to Him, from its sharp contrast with the Transfiguration, and therefore there was pressed out what was ordinarily hidden, the sharp pain and real grief which it was to Him to walk among men.

We all know what uncongenial society means, but perhaps we do not give sufficient prominence to this phase of Our Saviour's life. He was the 'man of Sorrows'; 'Himself bare our sicknesses,' and other passages speaking of Him as bearing the burden of sin, do not point only to His death on the Cross, but to all His earthly life. Remember His nature, perfect purity, perfect love, perfect knowledge, acute human sensibility, and take all these as heightening the daily martyrdom which it was to Him to dwell among men. We see but little of it, but it was most real, and all this was borne for us, and He bears it all still.

II. A Word of Loving Remonstrance.—It is not a word of anger, but of remonstrance, seeking to cure, and that is how He stands before human unbelief.

III. A Promise of Infinite Forbearance and Abiding Presence.—Christ recognizes in the disciples' weakness without Him a necessity for His still continuing with them. He is staid by their need of Him, as a mother by her tottering child. And in like manner the second clause is really: 'How long will you draw on my forbearance with nothing but the under thought that it is inexhaustible?' So we have the assurance of His pitying presence with us, and that presence is the cure, if we will, for all our ills, and of His endless long suffering. He never goes away from any of us. We cannot break the covenant of His love.—A. Maclaren.

References.—XVII. 17.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xiv. No. 821. W. Howell Evans, *Sermons for the Church's Year*, p. 48. W. J. Knox-Little, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxviii. 1905, p. 97. XVII. 17, 18.—H. Scott Holland, *ibid.* vol. xxxviii. 1890, p. 193. XVII. 19.—J. E. C. Welldon, *The Spiritual Life*, p. 243. E. A. Stuart, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xlix. 1896, p. 342. James Denney, *Gospel Questions and Answers*, p. 39. XVII. 19, 20.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—St. Matthew IX.-XVII.* p. 352. XVII. 19-21.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. x. No. 549; vol. xlii. No. 2454.

THE VICTORY OF FAITH

'If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed . . . nothing shall be impossible unto you.'—Matthew xvii. 20 (with 1 John v. 4).

I. Faith is a Quality which ensures Man's Growth and Expansion.—It does not operate suddenly or effect miraculous changes; it takes time like the grain of mustard seed, but it is victorious in the end even against overwhelming odds. In one way or another all the greatest things we know of have been and are achieved by its power. It is faith that removes mountains of difficulty, that overcomes the manifold dangers, oppositions, weaknesses, impossibilities, of this mortal life of ours, and casts them into the sea of human triumph.

(*a*) *Take the realm of commerce by way of example.*—What is it that enables a man to launch forth into enterprises that startle the world, but faith in the practicability of some great scheme which to the cautious and prudent seems only foolhardy and chimerical?

(*b*) *What is it that buoys up the lonely scientific worker*, through years of painstaking calculation and experiment, but faith in the certainty of an ultimate discovery?

(*c*) *Or what, in the sphere of intellectual effort*, accounts for the difference between the good or the bad teacher, but that one believes and the other does not believe in the efficacy of the training and instruction it is their business to give. The good teacher is

one who believes that his or her efforts will never be wasted, however unpromising the soil on which the good seed is sown.

(*d*) *It is faith which has inspired and carried through all the crusades* against evil and all the reforms and revolutions that have helped to rid the world of tyrannies, abuses, cruelties, and depravities of every kind.

II. Faith is the Conquering Principle in Religion.—For Christian faith is not a thing apart from one's ordinary human nature and imposed upon it from without; it is the expansion of an original inherent moral quality, common to us all; it is the spiritualization of a natural faculty; it is the daily energizing, vitalizing power in which we live and do our best work, brought into contact with the Divine power. So glorified it overcomes the world—the worldly spirit with its carnal aims, countless temptations, and unholy methods, being the hardest thing there is to overcome. But even unglorified, it has this overcoming power, and if we only get to see this clearly, we shall not find so much difficulty in transferring to the life of religion a quality which we have learnt to regard as the supreme essential in every secular sphere.

THE MUSTARD SEED OF FAITH

'Verily I say unto you, if ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove, and nothing shall be impossible unto you.'—MATTHEW XVII. 20.

THIS text seems to tell me three things:—

I. The Infinite Value of even a Little Faith.—That little bit of faith which you have, though it is only like a little grain of mustard seed, is the most valuable treasure you have got. We never know when we plant a seed and water it what it will grow to. Therefore, while not despising the little grain of mustard seed of faith in ourselves, let us not despise it in others. Scatter the seed when you can, and go on bravely, leaving it to the Eternal God to water the seed and make it grow.

II. The Absolute Certainty that Faith Grows.—I heard the other day an address by a very able and devout man, who is a great authority in science, and I was very much struck with one thing he said. 'I look back over twenty years, and I would not exchange for anything the solid certainty of to-day for the warm feelings of twenty years ago. I would not give up the way that my faith has grown for the more ardent feelings of my youth.' We are taught by feeling, but we walk by faith. And if there are any people discouraged in middle life by the little warmth of feeling they now have, the question for them is. Has their faith grown?

III. The Wonderful Power of Faith.—'If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you.' One hardly dare say to oneself that there is almost an exaggeration in such a statement as that, and yet, when you look at life on a large scale, that is exactly what happens. You could not possibly describe it more precisely. Faith removes mountains.

IV. How is that Faith to grow and Expand that it may become this Strong and Useful Tree?—We must see to it that the seed of faith is not dissipated by some flippant remark, is not snatched away by the Evil One in waiting. The seed has no chance unless you give it a chance. But when you have done your part, remember that God is ready to do His part.—BISHOP WINNINGTON-INGRAM, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. LXVIII. p. 331, 1905.

REASONS OF FAILURE

'Because of your unbelief.'—MATTHEW XVII. 20.

I. THE text covers all failures. 'Because of your unbelief.' Jesus had but one explanation. You do not get on in life because of your unbelief. The reason you fail in business is because of your unbelief; the reason why you wither in intellect is because of your unbelief. You do not know how deeply faith goes, you cannot tell what a penetrating power it has and how it takes up all things along with it, and secures them all in one multifold and compendious blessing. Faith is not sentiment, but power. The mystery is that you have been believing the wrong thing, you have been working at the wrong end, and you have been miscalculating the whole purpose of the kingdom of God, which is power—power to live, power to think, power to overcome temptation, power to drive out of the life everything that sucks out of it the very pith of existence. You must know that without power you die. And faith is not only power, faith is beneficent power. Power of the beneficent sort would make a new world. Beneficent power never goes about the streets seeking what it can gain for itself; beneficent power parades the road in order to take out of that road everything that can hinder life, everything that can keep back the light, everything that can prevent the soul growing, expanding, blossoming in God.

II. If faith is beneficent power, then the want of faith inflicts serious injury on society. It is not what you are doing, but it is what you might be doing, that is the great and solemn question, that is continually before the serious mind of the serious man. If I have not faith it is not I who lose only, it is the other man.

Faith conquers all, rules the whole kingdom, and will prosper and succeed and fructify into blessed, beneficent fruits when all your intellectual framework has melted away and is no longer to be seen, for it is not only of works, but of the meanest kind of works, works with which you have nothing to do, it came to you without your seeking, and will wither away because of your mere wordy, tumultuous pride.

III. You are never a man in the full sense until you have faith. Faith is manhood as well as a gospel. Faith is the secret of commerce as well as the secret of eternity. Unless you have faith you cannot be really at your best estate. That is a proposition which must be thought out and thought out care-

fully, so that you can lay hold upon it and live by it. You were meant to believe that all that ever came before Christ were thieves and robbers; they had not got the right idea of manhood. Manhood is faith; faith is manhood, and unless you have faith you cannot come to the full estate of manhood as God meant you to come to it.—JOSEPH PARKER, *City Temple Pulpit*, vol. VI. p. 146.

REFERENCES.—XVII. 20.—Stopford A. Brooke, *The Fight of Faith*, p. 38. J. M. Neale, *Sermons Preached in Sackville College Chapel*, vol. iv. p. 201. T. F. Lockyer, *The Inspirations of the Christian Life*, p. 63. XVII. 21.—Archdeacon Colley, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xliii. 1893, p. 115. J. H. Jowett, *Meditations for Quiet Moments*, p. 110. XVII. 24-7.—J. Laidlaw, *The Miracles of Our Lord*, p. 116. Archbishop Trench, *Notes on the Miracles of Our Lord*, p. 307. W. M. Taylor, *The Miracles of Our Saviour*, p. 331. XVII. 25, 26.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—St. Matthew, IX.-XVII.* p. 374; see also *Creed and Conduct*, p. 374. XVII. 27.—T. Champness, *New Coins from Old Gold*, p. 102. C. S. Robinson, *Simon Peter*, p. 294.

SPIRITUAL SINS

'At the same time came the disciples unto Jesus, saying, Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?'—MATTHEW XVIII. 1.

I. Spiritual Envy.—Our text relates to the first occasion. Our Lord has just taken St. Peter, St. James and St. John away from the other disciples into the Mount of Transfiguration. The other disciples had doubtless plied them with questions, but they could get no information from them as to what had happened. We can understand their thought—how on the part of the nine disciples there may have been envy at this time, envy of the other three because of the greater privilege which they enjoyed. There is, I am afraid, a disposition on the part of very many to envy those to whom Heaven has given blessings it has withheld from ourselves. We imagine that others are the favourites of Heaven. How does our Lord rebuke this spirit in the disciples? He takes a little child and sets that little child in the midst of them, as much as to say, 'God has no favourites. God loves all, even this little child.' You must receive this little child, and you must not imagine for a single moment that though God gives certain privileges to certain men which He denies to other men, these men therefore are the special favourites of Heaven. He has denied them to you because for your work they are not necessary. So it seemed good to the Father for the working out of His own great purposes in the world.' On the other hand there may have been on the part of the other three a creeping in of pride that they had been thus singled out by the Master, that they had been admitted, as it were, into a great secret, and there was a temptation, it may be, to be proud towards the others. If there is anything of that kind, how the great Master scorns it. He tells these very men, that if there is one thing they are to beware of it is of this pride. Christ would teach both those who envy others and those who may be tempted to be proud of their gifts. He wants them to remember that these gifts are given for the building up of the Church, and not on account of their own merit.

II. Spiritual Ambition.—In St. Matthew xx. 20 the circumstances are quite different. Our Lord has just foretold His coming death, and St. James and St. John are able to look through this announcement of the coming Cross and see the Kingdom beyond, and so they came to him and asked Him that they might sit one on His right hand and the other on His left in His kingdom. The other disciples are moved with envy of these two, and so our Lord speaks to the other ten. 'Whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister.' There is an ambition which our Lord Jesus Christ does not blame. He does not blame this ambition of St. James and St. John. It was splendid faith, which was able to believe that even though there was to be the Cross there was certain to be the Crown. It was splendid faith which, just at that moment, when He foretold His Cross, was able to keep its eye fixed upon the Throne; and there was courage which enabled them to endure everything for the sake of that Throne. And Jesus Christ tells us how it is to be obtained. God helping, it is to be obtained by resignation, by submission, by drinking of the cup, by being ready to be baptized with the death. There must be a perfect submission of your life to God. The only man who really commands the homage of other men is the man who is willing to serve.

III. Spiritual Pride.—The third occasion upon which there is this strife as to who shall be the greatest is in St. Luke xxii. 24. They have now entered the upper chamber, and our Lord has told them, 'One of you shall betray Me'. And we read in the twenty-fourth verse, 'There was also a strife amongst them, which of them should be accounted the greatest'. Now it is more difficult to see exactly what led to strife on this third occasion, but I think, putting all the verses together, this strife, seems to have arisen after our Lord said, 'One of you shall betray Me'. They seem to have looked one upon the other, doubting to whom He spoke. No doubt afterwards they began to ask, 'Lord, is it I?' I do not think they asked that question first. At first they began to think it must be one of the others who was going to betray Him. I fancy then one and the other began to think, 'At any rate I will never betray Him'; and I fancy that this strife as to who was the greatest may be accounted for by that attitude at that moment. Our Lord rises from supper, takes a towel and girds Himself, and then goes round and washes all their feet, and then He comes and takes His garments and sits down again. Then they had learnt the lesson, and I venture to think that this third is an occasion of spiritual pride, looking down upon others because of some fancied superiority in spiritual things. How does our Lord deal with it? He teaches them that all need cleansing—St. Peter as well as all the rest—and He will go round and wash all their feet; and then they learn the

lesson. Then, instead, of looking one upon another, doubting of whom He speaks, they begin to ask, crestfallen, 'Lord, is it I?' They begin to imagine there are signs of sin in themselves which could produce even such a dastardly deed as that.

References.—XVIII. 1.—J. A. Bain, *Questions Answered by Christ*, p. 40. James Denney, *Gospel Questions and Answers*, p. 98. XVIII. 1-3.—H. Scott Holland, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxxii. 1907, p. 267. J. H. Thom, *A Spiritual Faith*, p. 199. J. Martineau, *Hours of Thought*, vol. ii. p. 304. XVIII. 1-4.—H. Scott Holland, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xlvi. 1894, p. 161. XVIII. 1-6.—Stopford A. Brooke, *ibid.* vol. xli. 1892, p. 393. XVIII. 1-6, 10-14.—D. Fraser, *Metaphors in the Gospels*, p. 158. XVIII. 1-14.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—St. Matthew XVIII.-XXVIII.* p. 1.

A CHILD IN THE MIDST

(Christmas)

'And Jesus called a little child unto Him, and set him in the midst of them.'—Matthew xviii. 2.

I. At Christmas time, especially, we bethink ourselves of those words of His. Whatever other meanings this sacred festival may have, this perhaps is the most prominent thought of it. Once a year a Divine child is set in the midst of us. Incarnate God and yet a little child. One who grew up to a perfect man and to possess all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, yet never left behind, as we do, the things which make childhood attractive. One who was called by His disciples to the last, 'Thy holy child Jesus'.

II. All grown-up people at some time or other have longed for or dreamed of a return to childhood, and sighed as they realized the impossibility of it. Truly the lessons which we most need to learn are just those which are breathed forth from the artless lips and shouted in the innocent delights of a happy, hopeful child. And so at Christmas time, the child Jesus seats Himself in the midst and speaks to us. He bids the doctors depart, and the sages be silent, and the world's science hold its lips, and the din of politics hush itself, and the clamours of prejudice and passion be still, that we may take in His heavenly teaching of faith, and innocence, and joy.

III. There are times when we get a little weary of all the grand talk about knowledge, and genius, and brilliant statesmanship, and the march of science and invention, and the cleverness of human foresight, and the omniscience of intellect, and the victories won over material forces, and the triumphs of civilization, and the cunning of worldly men. We have a suspicion that it is not doing for us all that the boasters say, that civilization does not quite mean paradise, and that grasp of mind is not the same thing as rest of soul. And therefore we will sit down at the feet of the child Jesus, and pray together that science may learn His humility, that intellect may have His reverence, that commerce may drink from His wells of purity and justice, that riches may clothe themselves with His simplicity and be filled with His self-denying spirit, that education and enlightenment may have their cold, freezing light made warm and gentle with His love, and that the nations as they ring the bells in honour of His nativity may bethink themselves of the spirit of the Divine child whom they worship, and gather from His simple innocence lessons of sublimest wisdom.—J. G. Greenhough, *Christian Festivals and Anniversaries*, p. 220.

THE CHILD IN THE MIDST

(For Holy Innocents' Day)

'Jesus called a little child unto Him, and set him in the midst.'
—Matthew xviii. 2.

To-day's festival reminds us of the majesty with which childhood is invested in the Gospel.

I. Characteristics of Little Children.—Fresh from the waters of baptism they are worthy to be companions to the holy angels. Theirs is the life spiritual, unsullied as yet by the life natural. Then, as intelligence begins to dawn, we notice their guilelessness and simplicity; their trustfulness and confiding faith; their truthfulness. They forgive most readily and forget right soon. They are ever hopeful. The memory of past sorrow passes from them with incredible swiftness; and straightway the mirror is as bright as ever. Is it fanciful to note the very slender hold they have on the things of earth? Their hold upon the things of earth is, at all events, speedily relaxed; while possessions, infancy has none.

II. There seems to be much Tender Beauty and fine catholic instinct and Gospel grace in this Feast of the Holy Innocents—this day kept in honour of the babes of Bethlehem, whereby God caused infants to glorify Him by their deaths.

III. There was the Further Design of administering a yearly word of consolation, in this way, to parents. Scarcely a family is there in which some blossoms of hope have not been snatched away before they opened into flowers of promise, or ripened into fruits of joy. A balm has been provided in this day's commemoration for the heart of many a parent whose child has been taken home. The Lord Jesus has called the child and set him in the midst, for of such is the kingdom of heaven.

References.—XVIII. 2.—E. A. Draper, *The Gift of Strength*, p. 60. E. Fowle, *Plain Preaching to Poor People* (7th Series), p. 49. T. E. Ruth, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxxiv. 1908, p. 97. XVIII. 2, 3.—H. Jones, *ibid.* vol. xxxvii. 1890, p. 86. W. H. Brookfield, *Sermons*, p. 47.

CONVERSION

'Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.'—Matthew xviii. 3.

What is there about little children which must also be found in those of a ripe age who would be citizens of the kingdom of God?

I. Pure Affection.—In childhood, affection is spring-water. It just bubbles up most naturally, and is pure and delicious. In manhood, affection is too often tap-water. It has flowed through pipes of expediency, prudence, and calculation, and it has lost its sparkle and limpidity. 'Master, who shall be greatest in the kingdom of heaven?' There you

have affection which is losing its purity, affection with a selfish aim, affection yoked to personal ambition. The Lord wants us to have the pure, uncalculating love of little children. He wants us to live so much with Him that to love Him shall be our highest bliss.

II. Fine Sensitiveness.—A child's spirit is like a photographer's sensitive plate, exceedingly impressionable, responding to the daintiest touch of the softest light. The joys and sorrows of the world find in children a most ready and sympathetic response. This fine sensitiveness is apt to be lost as childhood is left behind. Our impressionableness is prone to lose its delicacy. The grief and happiness of the world do not move us with the same facility as of old. Our character is inclined to harden in one of two directions—towards a gloomy pessimism or towards a glaring worldliness. The child-disposition may be symbolized by the month of April. April weather easily breaks into sunshine, and quite as easily melts into rain. We pass either into the dull heavy, pessimistic gloom of November, and it is difficult to move us into smiles, or into the hard, worldly glare of June, when it is difficult to melt us into tears.

III. Open-Mindedness.—Childhood is an age of eager questionings, and not of dogmatic conclusions. It is a season of keen receptiveness, of intense love of the sweet light. Now that open-mindedness is apt to be lost with the growth of our years. Revelation is regarded as closed; the volume as ended; all light as given; so that our knowledge can now be arranged in final forms. That was certainly the condition of the people among whom Christ's earthly ministry was passed. Their minds were closed, shut up tight against the reception of any new revelation from God. There were two forces actively at work closing their minds, and they are quite as active to-day, the forces of pride and prejudice. When these abound in a life, every door and window is closed, and the 'Light of the World' will seek admission in vain.—J. H. Jowett, *Meditations for Quiet Moments*, p. 35.

LITTLE CHILDREN

'Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom.'—Matthew xviii. 3.

The call to be children is Christ's supreme call. Failure to meet it was the cardinal sin of the respectable religious people of that day.

I. We must repent, and be like children. How easy and simple it is for a child to repent—how bitter for us! The truth is we are afraid—afraid to repent lest love and faith should carry us we know not where. We cover ourselves with many wrappings of position, calling, philosophy, just because we are cowards, and dare not face ourselves. Half the problems we think so dark, half the difficulties we multiply so proudly, take their origin in this. We dare not be alone. 'I was afraid and hid myself, because I was naked.'

And yet the natural line is that of Christ—to feel sorry like a child, humble like a small schoolboy who knows he is at the bottom. This is all we can do, when the facts stream in upon us. This, above all else, divides us from the world. We do, they do not, think repentance and humility a duty. Our enemies tell us that we are not better than they are, and often worse. Alas! we know it. It is because we are bad that we want to touch the hem of His garment, not because we are good.

II. But though it begins with humbled grief, repentance does not end there. The child who says he is sorry always adds, I'll try and never do it again. That faith in the future, even more than the grief, is the note of the Christian. He believes, the world does not believe, that with God's help he may become better.

III. For the child's repentance, and the child's amendment we need the inexhaustible faith of childhood, its infinite and inalienable romance. That which springs up naturally in human childhood is for us the supreme gift, a grace to be sought with prayer—this faith, that is at the root of the careless gladness of children, and of the ease and buoyancy of saints like St. Francis—this faith so uplifting, so hard to win, yet so essential. For without it where are we? Whether we look at the prospects of the Church or our own life, probability, rational calculation, common sense are all ranged on the cynic's side.

People talk of the Church in danger—the Church is always in danger; the miracle is not in her weakness, but in her existence. It is only as we throw ourselves on God that we shall certainly conquer—for 'of ourselves we have no power to help ourselves'. Yet with that aid victory is not merely likely, but certain.—J. Neville Figgis, *The Gospel and Human Needs*, p. 155.

BECOMING AS LITTLE CHILDREN

'Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven.'—Matthew xviii. 3.

What did our Lord mean by bidding us become as little children? Let us recall the circumstances in which our Lord spoke about the children; and we shall at once see.

I. The most striking of His references to children comes in that very solemn warning against despising them. 'Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones, for I say unto you that their angels in heaven do always behold the face of My Father in heaven.' The imagery is drawn from the court of a king. Those who see the king's face are they who stand immediately in his presence and are especially in his confidence. It is the privilege of innocent children to be very sure of God, to speak to Him familiarly in prayer, to rest in the assurance of His protection.

II. A second childlike quality which if we lose we must recover before we can be of the kingdom, is *sincerity*. The prayer, 'I thank Thee, O Father,' etc., was uttered after the rejection of His Gospel by the elders of the Jews and its acceptance by the band of Apostles; and to that it must refer. And, I

would ask you, is not one of the most characteristic qualities of children this habit of theirs of looking straight at things and people and judging them to the best of their power without either prejudice or fear of consequences? This is the characteristic recognized in Hans Andersen's delightful story of the Emperor's Robe, which everybody pretended to see and admire, until a child cried out that there was no robe at all to see. Plainly it was this childlike sincerity in the Apostles—what our Lord called 'the single eye'—that distinguished them from the Pharisees and enabled them to receive a new revelation.

III. There is a third childlike quality to which our Lord calls attention, which also, if we have unhappily lost, we must labour to win back again—unpretentiousness, the absence of self-importance.

How can this temper be recovered? Clearly we cannot recover the *unconscious* unpretentiousness of childhood. But there are two or three things we can do. (1) We can *aim* at taking a real and unaffected interest in others, looking for their good qualities and valuing them. (2) We can make ourselves give exact reasons for any dislikes we feel. (3) We can at anyrate apply the check at the point where the unchristian feeling passes into word or deed.—H. C. Beeching, *Church Family Newspaper*, 3 April, 1908, p. 302.

'Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.'—Matthew xviii. 3.

You have the child's character in these four things—Humility, Faith, Charity, and Cheerfulness. That's what you have got to be converted to. 'Except ye be converted, and become as little children.' You hear much of conversion nowadays; but people always seem to think they have got to be made wretched by conversion, to be converted to long faces. No, friends, you have got to be converted to short ones; you have to repent into childhood, to repent into delight and delightsomeness.—Ruskin, *Crown of Wild Olive*.

Wordsworth has told us the law of his own mind, the fulfilment of which has enabled him to reveal a new world of poetry: *Wisdom is oft-times nearer when we stoop, Than when we soar.* That it is so likewise in religion, we are assured by those most comfortable words, *Except ye become as little children, ye shall not enter the kingdom of heaven.* The same truth is well expressed in the aphorism, which Charles the First, when he entered his name on the books at Oxford, in 1616, subjoined to it: *Si vis omnia subjicere, subjice te rationi.* Happy would it have been for him, if that which flowed thus readily from his pen had also been graven upon his heart. He would not then have had to write it on the history of his country with characters more glaring and terrible than those of ink.—Julius Hare.

References.—XVIII. 3.—M. Dods, *Christ and Man*, p. 226. Henry Alford, *Quebec Chapel Sermons*, vol. iii. pp. 67, 116. F. B. Woodward, *Sermons* (2nd Series), p. 1; see also *Selected Sermons*, p. 58. XVIII. 3, 4.—S. H. Kellogg, *The Past a Prophecy of the Future*, p. 157. XVIII. 4.—Stopford A. Brooke, *Short Sermons*, pp. 152, 158. XVIII. 4, 5.—A. Murray, *The Children for Christ*, p. 233. XVIII. 5.—J. B. Mozley, *Sermons Parochial and Occasional*, p. 297. XVIII. 6, 7.—H. Ward Beecher, *Sermons* (1st Series), p. 511.

CAUSING OTHERS TO SIN

'Woe unto the world because of offences! for it must needs be that offences come; but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh!'—Matthew xviii. 7.

There is a sin which very many people think little about, the sin of making others sin. It is a real sin, a common sin, and a very dreadful sin. It was the first sin committed in the world, for it was the sin of the tempter who tempted the woman to disobey God; and it was the first fruit of the Fall of man, for the first thing which the woman did when she had sinned herself was to make the man sin also. It has ever been the great means of keeping sin alive and strong in the world; one generation has taught the next, and handed on its fatal tradition of evil.

I. Besides all sins, then, that we may commit ourselves for our own pleasure or advantage, out of the wickedness and folly of our own hearts, there is yet this burden, the sin of making others sin. And this may be in two ways. It may be in the way of direct temptation. I am not speaking of those who tempt others, as the devil tempts men, for the sake of making them do wrong. I am speaking of people who, when they are doing wrong themselves, do not care about, or see the additional harm and sin, of dragging others into it with them.

II. But the sin of making others sin comes in yet another way than that of direct temptation to others. It comes more subtly and secretly, and in a sense more awfully, because less under our direct control, in the example which others see in us and follow. We forget what we are doing merely by our example. We forget what wrong things we are sanctioning, not by trying to make others do them, but by letting them see that we do them without check or fear. We forget that the sins which we thus, often from mere thoughtlessness, encourage, are apt to increase tenfold in those who quote us for their warrant and pattern.

III. And is this a sin to think little about—the sin of making others to sin? Surely it is one which we ought to take account of when we are trying to realize to ourselves what will be the strict and just judgment of God on our heart and life.—R. W. Church, *Village Sermons* (2nd Series), p. 255.

References.—XVIII. 7.—J. B. Lightfoot, *Cambridge Sermons*, p. 248. W. G. Rutherford, *The Key of Knowledge*, p. 134. A. G. Mortimer, *The Church's Lessons for the Christian Year*, part iii. p. 178.

SELF-MUTILATION FOR SELF-PRESERVATION

'If thy hand or thy foot causeth thee to stumble, cut it off, and cast it from thee.'—Matthew xviii. 8 (R.V.).

We mark these three points. First, the case supposed, 'If thy hand or thy foot cause thee to stumble'. Then the sharp, prompt remedy enjoined, 'cut them

off and cast them from thee'. Then the solemn motive by which it is enforced, 'It is better for thee to enter into life maimed than, being a whole man, to be cast into hell-fire'.

I. 'The case supposed.'

1. Hand and foot and eye are, of course, regarded as organs of the inward self, and symbols of its tastes and capacities. Our Lord takes an extreme case. If members of the body are to be amputated and plucked out should they cause us to stumble, much more are associations to be abandoned and occupations to be relinquished and pleasures to be forsaken if they draw us away. But it is to be noticed that the whole stringency of the commandment rests upon that *if*. '*If* they cause thee to stumble,' then, and not else, amputate. The powers are natural, the operation of them is perfectly innocent, but a man may be ruined by innocent things. And, says Christ, if that process is begun, then, and only then, does My exhortation come into force.

2. Then there is another point to be observed in this case supposed, and that is that the whole matter is left to the determination of personal experience. Nobody else has a right to decide for you what it is safe and wise for you to do in regard of things which are not in themselves wrong. Do not let your Christian liberty be interfered with by other people's dictation in regard of this matter.

3. But, on the other hand, do not you be led away into things that damage you because some other man does them, as he supposes, without injury. There are some Christian people who are simply very unscrupulous and think themselves very strong; and whose consciences are not more enlightened, but less sensitive than the 'narrow-minded brethren' upon whom they look.

4. It does not mean that we are to abandon all things that are susceptible of abuse, for everything is so; and if we are to regulate our conduct by such a rule, it is not the amputation of a hand that will be sufficient.

5. Nor does the injunction mean that unconditionally we are to abandon all occupations in which there is danger. It can never be a duty to shirk a duty because it is dangerous.

II. 'Cut it off and cast it from thee.'

Entire excision is the only safety. I myself am to be the agent of that. That is to say, we are to suppress capacities, to abandon pursuits, to break with associates when we find that they are damaging our spiritual life and hindering our likeness to Jesus Christ. We have to empty our hands of earth's trivialities if we would grasp Christ with them. We have to turn away our eyes from earth if we would behold the Master; and rigidly to apply this principle of excision in order that we may advance in the Divine life.

Then it is not to be forgotten that this commandment, stringent and necessary as it is, is second best. The man *is* maimed, although it was for Christ's sake that he cut off his hand, or put out his eye. His hand was given him that with it he might serve God, and the highest thing would have been that in hand and foot and eye he should have been anointed, like the priests of old, for the service of His Master. But until he is strong enough to use the faculty for God, the wisest thing is not to use it at all.

III. Christ rests His command of self-denial and self-mutilation upon the highest ground of self-interest. 'It is better for thee.'

The maimed man may enter into life, and the complete man may perish. The maimed man may touch Christ with his stump, and so receive life, and the complete man may lay hold of the world and the flesh and the devil with his hands, and so share in their destruction.—A. Maclaren, *Christ in the Heart*, p. 293.

References.—XVIII. 8.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—St. Matthew XVIII.-XXVIII.* p. 9. F. B. Woodward, *Sermons* (1st Series), p. 47; see also *Selected Sermons*, p. 9. XVIII. 8, 9.—P. N. Waggett, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxxiii. 1908, p. 205.

DYING TO LIVE

'And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out and cast it from thee.'—Matthew xviii. 9.

There is and there can be (according to our Lord) for all men but one supreme end and aim—to 'enter into life'. To 'enter into life' means (if we may attempt to define the expression) to enter into conscious and purposeful fellowship with God: first, here; and then, hereafter. This is the supreme aim; and all that interferes with it—even though it be good in itself, as it often is—must be ruthlessly sacrificed.

I. It is clear that this conception of our Lord's is opposed to two widely contrasted ideals.

1. It is opposed to *asceticism*, in the more common use of that word. For it is evident that while our Lord regards the possession of 'two eyes' or 'two feet' as good in itself, and only counsels their sacrifice for the sake of something better, asceticism regards the sacrifice as in itself desirable and praiseworthy. Our Lord would prefer that we should use and enjoy all our faculties; that the world should be full of men with keen eyes and strong arms; asceticism would regard the one-eyed or the one-armed man as superior to normal and healthy human beings; it would exult in a maimed and mutilated humanity.

2. It is equally opposed to what is sometimes called *æstheticism*. Æstheticism proclaims that the main object of man is to see and to feel. It declares that art is free, and must be free, from all moral considerations. It professes to worship the beautiful—the eye must see, both eyes must see, all that is to be seen, whether they 'offend,' 'cause one to stumble,' or no. Its aim—preserved at all costs—was to have two eyes and two hands—to enjoy what it would call a 'full and complete life'.

II. Now let us be quite sure that the religion of Christ is no enemy to art or culture. But while the religion of Christ finds full scope—in its teaching and in its practice: in architecture, in stained-glass win-

dows, in the music of the Church—for the love of beauty to find its expression even in worship, it has never been forgetful of the awful danger which may beset, and often has beset, those who make the pleasure of the senses, even in their most refined forms, the great end of life.

This, at any rate, is what the Christian religion says. It says that a full life is a good thing, but a sound life is a better; and that to have a sound life—a healthy life—to 'see salvation'—we must, if necessary, be prepared to sacrifice some of the fullness.

III. It is better 'to enter into life'. For notice that whatever the sacrifice required in the present, the end is to be a fuller, not an emptier existence. If the lower is to go, it is only that the higher may be preserved. 'Whosoever will lose his life shall save it.'—H. R. Gamble, *Christianity and Common Life*, p. 105.

Illustration.—All parts of our nature were made by God. The best thing is that we should be able fully to exercise all our faculties; but we must be safe at the centre before we can be free at the circumference. Whatever exposes us to temptation that is too strong for us must at any cost be abandoned.—Bishop Gore.

'See that ye despise not one of these little ones.'—Matthew xviii. 10.

What is Contempt, George Meredith asks in his *Essay on Comedy*, 'but an excuse to be idly minded, or personally lofty, or comfortably narrow, not perfectly humane? . . . Anger is not much less foolish than disdain.'

He who despises mankind will never get the best out of either others or himself.'—De Tocqueville.

References.—XVIII. 10.—G. H. Morrison, *Sunrise*, p. 62. Morgan Dix, *Sermons Doctrinal and Practical*, p. 40. H. Varley, *Spiritual Light and Life*, p. 161. H. P. Liddon, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 467. F. E. Paget, *Sermons for the Saints' Days*, p. 89. W. Boyd Carpenter, *The Burning Bush*, p. 21. J. S. Maver, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxii. 1902, p. 438. A. J. Forson, *ibid.* vol. lxxii. 1907, p. 313. XVIII. 10, 11.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons Preached in Sackville College Chapel*, vol. ii. p. 315; see also *Readings for the Aged* (3rd Series), p. 227. XVIII. 11.—R. Davidson, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. liv. 1898, p. 26. Horace Bushnell, *Christ and His Salvation*, p. 57. XVIII. 12.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—St. Matthew XVIII.-XXVIII.* p. 19. XVIII. 12, 13.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxxv. No. 2083. XVIII. 12, 14.—Cosmo Gordon Lang, *Thoughts on Some of the Parables of Jesus*, p. 263. XVIII. 13.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—St. Matthew XVIII.-XXVIII.* p. 29. XVIII. 14.—C. Vince, *The Unchanging Saviour*, p. 103. H. Montagu Butler, *Harrow School Sermons*, p. 230. Henry Alford, *Quebec Chapel Sermons*, vol. iv. p. 257.

'If thy brother trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone.'—Matthew xviii. 15.

With a little more patience and a little less temper, a gentler and wiser method might be found in almost every case; and the knot that we cut by some fine heady quarrel-scene in private life, or, in public affairs, by some denunciatory act against what we are pleased to call our neighbour's vices, might yet have been unwoven by the hand of sympathy.—R. L. Stevenson, *Across the Plains*, p. 314.

'Go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone.'—Matthew xviii. 15.

When a man is to be amended, it becomes the office of a friend to urge his faults and vices with all the energy of enlightened affection, to paint them in their most vivid colours, and to bring the moral patient to a better habit.—Burke.

You reprove me like a friend, and nothing comes so welcome to me as to be told of my faults.—Walpole *to Mason*.

Professor York Powell describes Richard Shute, the Oxford scholar, as a man 'who had devotion enough for his friends to tell them when he thought they had got on the wrong path, and he would manage this with singular tact, so that a man, however young and vain, could hardly feel his raw self-respect hurt, even though Shute spoke plainly enough to show him his full folly. Not many men of his years have courage to help their friends in spite of themselves.'

References.—XVIII. 15-17.—E. Griffith Jones, *The Cross and the Dice-Box*, pp. 53, 69. Lyman Abbott, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xlix. p. 156. XVIII. 15-27.—G. Jackson, *ibid.* vol. lviii. 1900, p. 284. XVIII. 17.—W. Binnie, *Sermons*, p. 202. W. Farquhar Hook, *Hear the Church*, p. 3. XVIII. 18.—C. Silvester Horne, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xliii. 1893, p. 35. XVIII. 18-20.—J. Laidlaw, *Studies in the Parables*, p. 283. XVIII. 19.—R. W. Church, *Village Sermons* (2nd Series), p. 274. K. Lahusen, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxxiii. 1908, p. 363. XVIII. 19, 20.—'Plain Sermons' by contributors to the *Tracts for the Times*, vol. ii. p. 206.

SOCIAL WORSHIP

'Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them.'—Matthew xviii. 20.

This text has no special reference to meetings for worship, but includes these as well as all others. Christ's own definition of a Church is independence of all times and places.

I. Social Worship—its Grounds.

(1) The necessity of worship as the expression of religion. (2) The necessity of private worship from the individuality of man and the tensely individual character of the acts of religion. (3) Necessity of social worship from the equally obvious destination of man for society.

II. Social Worship—its Nature.

(1) 'In My name.' That is, He, Christ, is the bond of union. It must be in conscious obedience to Him, as opposed to a mere formal meeting. (2) It should be as far as possible the engagement of the whole man. (3) It should be common prayer involving the participation of all, possibly formal. (4) It should have the two parts, speaking to God and to man.

III. The Blessings of Social Worship.

(1) The help to deeper devotion in the outward associations of fixed times and places. These material helps are like reservoirs which hold supplies that feed a town. (2) The expression and help to highest unity. A counterbalance to personal cares and

peculiarities. Our prayers are apt to take one special form; selfish wishes, personal peculiarities. (3) Revelation of the oneness beneath all social and intellectual distinctions. (4) That the Gospel alone has preaching thus embedded in its services. The living voice will always be the most potent instrument for the conversion of men.—A. Maclaren.

'Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them.'—Matthew xviii. 20.

The devout meditation of the isolated man, which flitted through his soul, like a transient tone of Love and Awe from unknown lands, acquires certainty, continuance, when it is shared by his brother men. *Where two or three are gathered together* in the name of the Highest, then first does the Highest, as it is written, appear among them to bless them; then first does an Altar and act of united Worship open a way from Earth to Heaven; whereas, were it but a single Jacob's ladder, the heavenly Messengers will travel, with glad tidings and unspeakable gifts for men.—Carlyle.

References.—XVIII. 20.—A. A. Bonar, *British Weekly Pulpit*, vol. ii. p. 237. B. F. Westcott, *The Historic Faith*, p. 115. C. C. Collins, *Public Worship in the City Churches, Sermons*, 1895-99. F. S. Webster, *In Remembrance of Me*, p. 11. J. Wright, *The Guarded Gate*, p. 171. Lyman Abbott, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxxix. 1891, p. 156. H. Scott Holland, *ibid.* vol. xlvii. 1895, p. 385; see also vol. lvii. 1900, p. 393. F. Temple, *ibid.* vol. lii. 1897, p. 216. J. G. Stevenson, *ibid.* vol. lxv. 1904, p. 17. E. Cornwall-Jones, *ibid.* vol. lxxi. 1907, p. 245. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxx. No. 1761. XVIII. 21.—J. A. Bain, *Questions Answered by Christ*, p. 46. C. Parsons Reichel, *Sermons*, p. 362. XVIII. 21, 22.—G. Jackson, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxiv. 1903, p. 38.

'How oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times? Jesus saith unto him, Until seventy times seven.'—Matthew xviii. 21, 22.

When thou turn'st away from ill,
Christ is this side of thy hill.

When thy heart says, 'Father, pardon,'
Then the Lord is in thy garden.

When to love is all thy wit,
Christ doth at thy table sit.—

George Macdonald.

'If you are exchanging measurable maxims for immeasurable principles,' wrote F. W. Robertson in a letter, 'you are surely rising from the mason to the architect. "Seven times?"—no—no—no—Seventy times seven. No maxim—a heart principle. I wonder whether St. Peter *wholly understood* that, or got a very clear *conception* from it.'

References.—XVIII. 22.—C. S. Robinson, *Simon Peter*, p. 310. A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—St. Matthew XVIII.-XXVIII.* p. 37. XVIII. 23-25.—A. Brown, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xli. 1892, p. 68. R. Winterbotham, *The Kingdom of Heaven*, p. 111. T. Guthrie, *Parables of Our Lord*, p. 242. XVIII. 25.—S. Baring-Gould, *Village Preaching for a Year* (2nd Series), vol. ii. p. 184. XVIII. 27-34, 35.—J. H. Jellett, *The Elder Son*, p. 55. XVIII. 28.—A. R. Buckland, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xliv. 1893, p. 316. XVIII. 32, 33.—W. H. Hutchings, *Sermon-Sketches* (2nd Series), p. 221. A. G. Mortimer, *Life and Its Problems*, p. 71.

'Shouldest not thou also have had compassion on thy fellow-servant, even as I had pity on thee?'—Matthew xviii. 33.

The correcting, hallowing, consoling rush of pity.—Pater.

'Nothing,' says Charlotte Brontë, of her sister Emily, 'nothing moved her more than any insinuation that the faithfulness and clemency, the long-suffering and loving-kindness which are esteemed virtues in the daughters of Eve become foibles in the sons of Adam. She held that mercy and forgiveness are the Divinest attributes of the Great Being who made both man and woman, and that what clothes the Godhead in glory can disgrace no form of feeble humanity.'

References.—XVIII. 33.—F. E. Paget, *Faculties and Difficulties for Belief and Unbelief*, p. 201. Henry Alford, *Quebec Chapel Sermons*, vol. v. p. 184. A. MacLeod, *Days of Heaven Upon Earth*, p. 100.

THE UNJUST STEWARD

'So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses.'—Matthew xviii. 35.

This parable does not deal with the limits of human mercifulness, but with its ground and pattern. If we understand these, we shall not need to ask, as St. Peter asked, 'How often?' for the question will answer itself.

I take the whole parable for consideration, and I think we shall find that it yields us great thoughts about our relations to God and men.

I. The King and his Debtor.—The analogy between sin and debt is imperfect, and we are not to look for correspondence between the details of the parable and the realities of men's relation to God.

The one point is the *immense* sum owing. The debt is stated in talents—each talent represents a large sum. So each sin against God is great.

II. The Debtor's Prayer.—Here again the imperfect analogy, for no future righteousness can wipe out past sin. 'I will pay thee all.' How long would it take a penniless bankrupt to amass 10,000 talents?

III. The King's Mercy.—This is as great as his severity had been. He is moved with compassion. He goes far beyond the debtor's petition. What seems all but incredible in men and rarely found in them represents God's mercy.

IV. The Contrast between the Treatment Shown to the Forgiven Debtor and his Treatment to his Debtor.—He had just been the object of mercy which should have made his heart glow. He had come through the agonies of an experience which should have made him very tender and very ready to do as he had been done by. The hands which were wrung in agony and entreaty are now throttling his 'fellow-servant'. Such inconsistency excites the notice of his fellow-servants, who tell it to the Lord. The world will be quick to notice if Christians show malice

and unmercifulness. Note that 'wrath' comes in here for the first time. Unmercifulness in a recipient of God's mercy is a worse sin than many which are more recognized. The cancelled debt is revived. It is a solemn thought that if we cherish any feelings but those of merciful readiness to forgive, our possession of the sense of God's pardon is dimmed. No man can at the same moment feel God's mercy lapping him in its warm folds, and give way to the emotions which are naturally excited by another man's faults to us. Observe that the parable lays down the principle that the personal reception of God's mercy in Christ precedes our showing mercy to others. And, with equal clearness, that showing mercy is the proper result of having received that Divine mercy, and the condition of retaining it.

So the two lessons are: (1) Recognize your debt to God and seek forgiveness by Christ. (2) See that you imitate what you hope in, and keep the grace received by letting it shape your lives and characters. —A. Maclaren.

'From your hearts forgive every one his brother his trespasses.'
—Matthew xviii. 35.

In a letter to James Boswell, Dr. Johnson observes: 'I had great pleasure in hearing that you are at last on good terms with your father. Cultivate his kindness by all honest and manly means. Life is but short; no time can be afforded but for the indulgence of real sorrow or contests upon questions seriously momentous. Let us not throw away any of our days upon useless resentment, or contend who shall hold out longest in stubborn malignity. It is best not to be angry; and best, in the next place, to be quickly reconciled.'

References.—XVIII. 35.—G. W. Herbert, *Notes of Sermons*, p. 195. Canon Wilberforce, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xlvi. 1894, p. 280. W. R. Huntington, *ibid.* vol. lxxiii. 1908, p. 141. XIX. 4-6.—E. W. Langmore, *The Divine Law in Relation to Marriage with a Deceased Wife's Sister, Sermons*, 1818-83. XIX. 5.—Canon R. E. Sanderson, *Church Times*, vol. xxxvi. 1896, p. 110. D. M. Ross, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxxviii. 1890, p. 301.

'And great multitudes followed Him; and He healed them there.'—Matthew xix. 2.

Goethe describes, in his autobiography, how Marie Antoinette passed through Strasburg on her way to Paris: 'Before the Queen's arrival, the very rational regulation was made that no deformed persons, cripples, or disgusting invalids, should show themselves on her route. People jested about this precaution, and I made a little poem in French upon the subject, in which I contrasted the advent of Christ, who seemed to wander through the world for the special sake of the sick and lame, with the arrival of the Queen, who scared such unfortunates away.'

References.—XIX. 5, 6.—Lyman Abbott, *ibid.* vol. xlix. 1896, p. 204. W. J. Knox-Little, *The Perfect Life*, p. 319. XIX. 6.—D. C. MacNicol, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lii. 1897, p. 150. XIX. 9.—W. Allan Whitworth, *Church Times*, vol. xxxiii. 1895, p. 538.

'If the case of the man be so with his wife, it is not good to marry.'—Matthew xix. 10.

No temper in the world is so little open to reason as the ascetic temper. How many a lover and husband, how many a parent and friend, have realized to their pain, since history began, the overwhelming attraction which all the processes of self-annihilation have for a certain order of minds!—Mrs. Ward.

References.—XIX. 12.—Paul Bull, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxv. 1904, p. 342. XIX. 13.—F. Pickett, *ibid.* vol. lxxx. 1905, p. 138. T. Sadler, *Sermons for Children*, p. 1. XIX. 13-30.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xliii. No. 2517.

WHEN THE CHILD-SPIRIT DIES

'Of such is the kingdom of heaven.'—Matthew xix. 14.

It is a beautiful conception, daring and fresh as it is beautiful, that the one attribute of all the citizens of God must be the possession of the childlike heart.

I. Now of course to be childlike is one thing; and it is quite another to be childish. To be childlike is to have the spirit of the child, to have the touch of the Divine about us still. It is to live freshly in a glad fresh world, with a thousand avenues into the everywhere out of this dull spot that we call *now*. But to be childish is to be immature; to have no grip of things, never to face facts squarely; and he is a poor Christian who lives so. It is one distinguishing glory of our Lord that He looked the worst in the face, and called it bad.

There can be little doubt, too, that in claiming the childlike spirit Jesus was reaching up to the very highest in man. Jesus, stooping to the little children, was really rising to the crown of life. Show me the greatest men in human history—the men who were morally and nobly great—and I shall show you in every one of them tokens and traces of the childlike heart. Great souls, with the ten talents flaming into genius, live in a world that is so full of God, that men say they are imprudent, careless; and Jesus sees that they are little children.

And you cannot read the story of Jesus Christ without feeling that to the very close of it the child-spirit was alive in Him. No scoffing hardened Him. No disappointment soured Him. No pain dulled the keen edge of His love. He still believed, spite of Iscariot. He had still a Father, spite of Calvary. And that sweet spirit, as of a little child, has been the dew of heaven to the world.

II. There is no loss more tragic for a soul than the loss of that spirit of the child.

There are three penalties that follow when the child-spirit dies:—

1. That we cease to be receptive. The joy of childhood is its receptivity. The child knows nothing of a haunting past yet, and it is not yet anxious about the future. Its time is *now*, with its magnificent content, and now is God's time too.

2. No doubt it is that very receptivity that makes the little children dwell apart. I have long thought that the aloofness of the Christian, his isolation in the busiest life, was closely akin to the aloofness of the

child. For the Christian also dwells apart, but not in the solitude of emptiness. He has *his* world, just as the children have; old things have passed away from him in Christ.

3. When the child-spirit dies, then the simplicity of faith is gone. There is an exquisite purity about the faith of children; sometimes they make us blush —they trust us so. But better than to be trusted, is to trust; to walk by faith and not by sight; and when the spirit of the child dies out, it is not possible to walk that way again. For when we cease to be childlike we grow worldly, and to be worldly is always to be faithless.

4. When the child-spirit dies, then the feeling of wonder disappears. For the child is above all else a wonderer, and is set in the centre of a wonderful world.

'I had rather,' said Ruskin, 'live in a cottage and wonder at everything, than live in Warwick Castle and wonder at nothing.' You have all felt the *trials* of existence, I want you to feel the *wonder* of it now; and the great wonder that the Lord should be your Shepherd, and should have died upon Calvary for you.—G. H. Morrison, *Sun-Rise*, p. 187.

References.—XIX. 14.—J. Page Hopps, *Sermons of Sympathy*, p. 63. A. Murray, *The Children for Christ*, p. 241. W. H. Murray, *The Fruits of the Spirit*, p. 494. J. H. Thom, *Laws of Life*, p. 253. XIX. 16.—Marcus Dods, *Christian World Pulpit*, 1890, vol. xxxviii. p. 152. J. A. Bain, *Questions Answered by Christ*, p. 52. W. Howell Evans, *Sermons for the Church's Year*, p. 53. XIX. 16-26.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—St. Matthew XVIII.-XXVIII.* p. 46.

FAITH AND OBEDIENCE

'If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments.'—Matthew xix. 17.

What is meant by faith? it is to feel in good earnest that we are creatures of God; it is a practical perception of the unseen world; it is to understand that this world is not enough for our happiness, to look beyond it on towards God, to realize His presence, to wait upon Him, to endeavour to learn and to do His will, and to seek our good from Him. It is not a mere temporary strong act or impetuous feeling of the mind, an impression or a view coming upon it, but it is a *habit*, a state of mind, lasting and consistent. To have faith in God is to surrender one's self to God, humbly to put one's interests, or to wish to be allowed to put them into His hands Who is the Sovereign Giver of all good. . . . To believe is to look beyond this world to God, and to obey is to look beyond this world to God; to believe is of the heart, and to obey is of the heart; to believe is not a solitary act, but a consistent habit of trust; and to obey is not a solitary act, but a consistent habit of doing our duty in all things. . . . Works of obedience witness to God's just claims upon us, not to His mercy; but faith comes empty-handed, hides even its own worth, and does but point at that precious scheme of redemption which God's love has devised for sinners.—J. H. Newman.

References.—XIX. 17.—F. W. Farrar, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lv. 1899, p. 257; see also, *The Anglican Pulpit of To-day*, p. 220. George Tyrrell, *Oil and Wine*, p. 243. J. J. Tayler, *Christian Aspects of Faith and Duty*, p. 184. XIX. 19.—A. Pinchard, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxxiii. 1908, p. 236. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. iii. No. 145. XIX. 20.—F. E. Paget, *Sermons on Duties of Daily Life*, p. 43. James Denney, *Gospel Questions and Answers*, p. 1.

'If thou wilt be perfect.'—Matthew xix. 21.

They who are living religiously, have from time to time truths they did not know before, or had no need to consider, brought before them forcibly; truths which involve duties, which are in fact precepts, and claim obedience. In this and such-like ways Christ calls us now. . . . Nothing is more certain in matter of fact than that some men do feel themselves called to high duties and works, to which others are not called. Why this is we do not know. But so it is; this man sees sights which that man does not see, has a larger faith, a more ardent love, and a more spiritual understanding. No one has any leave to take another's lower standard of holiness for his own. It is nothing to us what others are. If God calls us to greater renunciation of the world, and exacts a sacrifice of our hopes and fears, this is our gain, this is a mark of His love for us, this is a thing to be rejoiced in.—Newman.

References.—XIX. 21.—W. J. Knox-Little, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxv. 1894, pp. 184, 211. H. Price Hughes, *ibid.* vol. liv. 1898, p. 72.

'He went away sorrowful.'—Matthew xix. 22.

Every light of moral beauty, permitted to enter but not allowed to guide us, becomes, like the after-image of the sun when idly stared at, a dark speck upon the soul which follows us at all our work, adheres to every object, approaches and recedes in dreams, and is neither evaded by movement, nor washed out by tears. If the fairest gifts are not to be turned into haunting griefs, it can only be by following in the ways of duty and denial, along which they manifestly lead.—Martineau.

'A rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven.'—Matthew xix. 23.

Temptations connected with money are indeed among the most insidious and among the most powerful to which we are exposed. They have probably a wider empire than drink, and, unlike the temptations that spring from animal passions, they strengthen rather than diminish with age.—W. E. H. Lecky.

References.—XIX. 23-26.—D. Fraser, *Metaphors in the Gospels*, p. 169. XIX. 27.—Henry Gee, *Sermons for the People*, vol. ii. p. 65. J. A. Bain, *Questions answered by Christ*, p. 57. G. W. Herbert, *Notes of Sermons*, p. 210. J. T. Bramston, *Sermons to Boys*, p. 59. XIX. 28, 29. J. Wright, *The Guarded Gate*, p. 117.

'Every one that hath forsaken . . . for my name's sake, shall receive an hundredfold.'—Matthew xix. 29.

In his volume on *French and English* (p. 162), after describing the arduous labours of the French nuns among the poor and sick, Mr. Hamerton adds: 'The active sisterhoods are repaid to some extent in this world by a beneficent law of human nature.

They have one remarkably uniform characteristic: they seem to be invariably cheerful, with bright moments of innocent gaiety. This serenity of mind . . . is gained by the ever-present sense of duties accomplished in the past and the determination to face them in the future. It is the spirit which inspired Wordsworth's 'Ode to Duty' with a health surpassing all songs of love and wine.

BE VIGILANT

'But many that are first shall be last; and the last shall be first.'—MATTHEW XIX. 30.

THE question of St. Peter is wrong in spirit. So while Christ recognized rewards, He rebukes the spirit which seeks them, in these words of warning.

The first case dealt with in the text is one of priority in time. A man may have had a start in the race of life and be overtaken and passed. Advantages of any kind, such as talents, opportunities, etc., may be neutralized and disadvantages conquered. So at the end the order in which men stand is widely different from what it was at the start, as in a race.

I. Look at the Working of it in the Christian Life.—No man however advanced can relax vigilance, care, effort. There is no height beyond the reach of gravitation. The spring must never be uncoiled. The higher we go, the steeper the slope down and the worse the fall. The 'First' have temptations which yielded to will make them 'Last'. There is no such conquest of sin for us here that without perpetual vigilance it will never recur again. We may have long overcome it, and holier habits may have supervened, but still the thing is there, and we can feel the temptations stirring now and then.

Then there are temptations which belong to each stage, and the more advanced are not without their special ones. Temptations to rely in some degree on past attainments; to get into a mechanical mode of life; to lose early fervour and freshness without gaining fixed principle; to become weary even in well-doing.

And there are temptations which belong to the older stages of any career—the Christian as well as any other—irrespective of the degree of advancement which we have made. Just because we have been doing something for a long time, we are apt to think that we can do it well. To become slaves of habit, to become conceited, to get deep into the ruts, to lose fresh interest, to take it easy, as a spring works more feebly near the end.

II. There are no Disadvantages which need be Permanent.

1. Take the case of the Penitent Thief and of St. Paul. Many a man coming late to Christ's service, and crowding a life of work into a few years.

2. Take the case of inferiority in attainments.

3. Take the case of inferiority in Christian character. That need not be permanent. It is the grand confidence of Christianity that any man may reach the highest levels.

III. The Practical Discipline.

1. The constant realization of the two facts—the stern possibility of falling to make us vigilant; the grand hope of ability to rise to make us full of effort.

2. The constant cherishing of the same graces and emotions with which we began.

So let us labour, as knowing that there are infinite resources in His hands. There is no reason why you and I should not rise far above our former selves, 'Forgetting the things which are behind'.—A. MACLAREN.

REVERSAL OF JUDGMENT

'But many that are first shall be last; and the last shall be first.'—MATTHEW XIX. 30.

I. THIS is a saying to make us pause, full of deep suggestiveness, applicable to many spheres of life and religion. It should lead to self-scrutiny to be thus told authoritatively that in the spiritual world there will be a complete reversal of human judgment, such moral surprises as that the first and the last should change places. How true it is we sometimes see even here, true of men, and nations, and Churches. Innumerable are the illustrations of how God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things that are mighty. It is a commonplace of history and experience. The fable of the hare and the tortoise is only a parable of life. Again and again has first in time been last in reaching the goal; first in privilege been last in achievement; first in position been last in permanent power.

II. And if this is so even in such palpable instances, how much truer is it in the things of the spirit, in the kingdom of Heaven which cometh not with observation. The spiritual world is a *secret* world. There an act is judged not by its size, not even by its good result, but by its motive alone; and a man is judged not by the place he fills in men's minds, not by the splash he makes in the world, but by his spirit alone. Character will be stripped bare, and only moral worth will remain. The things we thought goodness, the things which deceived us, which we looked on as of first importance, will be seen as they are. So that many that are first are last, and many that are last are first.

Even now, though often late, justice is done, and contemporary judgment is reversed, and we can see the truth of our text. The Jews were first in privilege, but the Gentiles laid hold of eternal life, and the favoured people were left a broken branch on the tree. And in the Christian Church again and again it has been not the mighty, the noble, the wise, those patently first to the eye, who have been called to high service, but the poor and the weak, and the foolish; and the last has been first. There is another judgment, according to intrinsic spiritual worth, and that will be the final judgment of all.

III. Above all, let us ask the question of ourselves as individuals. Our virtues and graces, the things that people admire in us, or that we admire in ourselves, may be only tending to our deterioration, if we

have lost sight of the essential thing, if our hearts are not pure from the taint of self.

IV. But there is more than warning in these deep words. There is also a message of hope to all who feel themselves last, the despondent, all who think themselves overmatched in the warfare of life, and outrun in the race of life. What God asks from all, the high and the low, the first and the last, is a sincere heart in which burns the pure flame of love. Whatever be our scale of earthly precedence, though it be reckoned last in our purblind judgment, that is first—so far first that it has no second.—H. Black, *Edinburgh Sermons*, p. 123.

THE WEAPONS OF SAINTS

'Many that are first shall be last; and the last shall be first.'—Matthew xix. 30.

Let us understand our place, as the redeemed children of God. Some *must* be great in this world, but woe to those who make themselves great; woe to any who take one step out of their way with this object before them. If we are true to ourselves, nothing can really thwart us. Our warfare is not with carnal weapons, but with heavenly. The world does not understand what our real power is, and where it lies. And until we put ourselves into its hands of our own act, it can do nothing against us. Till we leave off patience, meekness, purity, resignation, and peace, it can do nothing against that Truth which is our birthright, that Cause which is ours, as it has been the cause of all saints before us. But let all who would labour for God in a dark time beware of anything which ruffles, excites, and in any way withdraws them from the love of God and Christ, and simple obedience to Him. This be our duty in the dark night, while we wait for the day, while we wait for Him Who is our Day, while we wait for His coming, Who is gone, Who will return, and before Whom all the tribes of the earth will mourn, but the sons of God will rejoice. . . . It is our blessedness to be made like the all-holy, all gracious, long-suffering, and merciful God; Who made and Who redeemed us; in whose presence is perfect rest, and perfect peace; Whom the Seraphim are harmoniously praising, and the Cherubim tranquilly contemplating, and angels silently serving, and the Church thankfully worshipping. All is order, repose, love, and holiness in heaven.—J. H. Newman.

'Many that are first shall be last; and the last first.'—Matthew xix. 30.

Not a day passes over the earth, but men and women of no note do great deeds, speak great words, and suffer noble sorrows. Of these obscure heroes, philosophers, and martyrs, the greater part will never be known till that hour when many that are great shall be small, and the small great.—Charles Reade.

There is so much inevitable ignorance in our judgments now, so much mistake, so much exaggeration in what we praise and in what we condemn; so much good of which we know and imagine nothing, so much evil of which we know nothing; such strength of virtue which we never suspect, never give men credit for, such depths of sin which perhaps here are never found out. Who can doubt what awful discrepancies will, in many cases, appear between God's judgment and ours, beyond the veil?—R. W. Church.

In Hawthorne's *American Notebooks*, one suggestion for a tale is, 'A person to consider himself as the prime mover of certain remarkable events, but to discover that his actions have not contributed in the least thereto. Another person to be the cause, without suspecting it.'

That solemn sentence which Scripture has inscribed on the curtain which hangs down before the Judgment Seat.—Mozley.

References.—XIX. 30.—H. J. Wilmot-Buxton, *Holy-Tide Teaching*, p. 100. J. B. Mozley, *Sermons Preached before the University of Oxford*, p. 72. G. Salmon, *Non-Miraculous Christianity*, p. 307. T. Teignmouth Shore, *The Life of the World to Come*, p. 137. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxxvii. No. 2221. XX. 1.—F. B. Woodward, *Sermons* (1st Series), p. 226. H. Harris, *Short Sermons*, p. 256. R. E. Hutton, *The Crown of Christ*, vol. i. p. 265. W. Howell Evans, *Sermons for the Church's Year*, p. 61. XX. 1, 3, 5, 6.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xi. No. 664. XX. 1, 6, 7.—H. Scott Holland, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xliii. 1893, p. 156. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xliv. No. 2602. XX. 1-8.—Sanday, *Expositor* (1st Series), vol. iii. p. 81. Hill, *ibid.* (1st Series), vol. iii. p. 427. Bruce, *Parabolic Teaching*, *etc.*, and in *Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. iii. p. 447. Cox, *Expository Essays*, pp. 239, 251. Calderwood, *Parables*, p. 291. Trench, *ibid.* p. 166. Dod, *Parables of Our Lord* (1st Series), p. 151. Pusey, *Sermons for Church's Seasons*, p. 133, and *Selections from Pusey*, p. 102. Parker, *Inner Life of Christ*, vol. iii. p. 73. Parsons, *Sermons*, p. 413. Cumming, *Foreshadows*, p. 137. A. Roberts, *Plain Sermons*, vol. i. p. 161. Simeon, *Works*, vol. xi. p. 484. C. J. Vaughan, *Sermons*, 1853, p. 309. XX. 1-16.—E. A. Lawrence, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. li. 1897, p. 262. J. Laidlaw, *Studies in the Parables*, p. 147. Rayner Winterbotham, *The Kingdom of Heaven*, p. 121. T. Guthrie, *Parables of Our Lord*, p. 269. W. Gray Elmslie, *Expository Lectures and Sermons*, p. 217. B. W. Maturin, *Practical Studies on the Parables of Our Lord*, p. 93. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol xliii. No. 2517. *Ibid.* vol. xliii. No. 2517. XX. 6.—S. Baring-Gould, *Village Preaching for a Year*, vol. i. p. 157. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xliv. No. 2602.

WORK IN GOD'S VINEYARD

'And about the eleventh hour He went out, and found others standing idle, and saith unto them, Why stand ye here all the day idle? They say unto Him, because no man hath hired us.'—Matthew xx. 6, 7.

This fragment of the parable is itself a parable. With the main scope of the parable I am not concerned. I desire to separate from the rest of the parable just these five words: 'No man hath hired us'.

I. **God's Care.**—The text shows us that there is a God Who concerns Himself about us. That is the teaching of Jesus Christ as contrasted with the cold creed of the Deist who would have us believe that God created the world and peopled it with mankind, but needs it no longer. We are told by Jesus Christ of a God Who looks upon us with a gaze as keen as it is merciful, a God Who knows what we are, a God Who knows by what precise steps of ascent or descent we have reached our present standing-place, a God

Who comes in, as it were, day by day to notice and to question—nay, who rather does not need to come in, for He is here—here in necessity of a Divine omnipresence.

II. God's Call.—God has a work going on everywhere. The work for which He employs men is the work of man's moral culture. He has to form in man a God-like character. All His redeemed are the workmen. The work which God permits to every man is a twofold work.

(*a*) *Each Individual Soul is a Vineyard*, and he has charge of it—the weeding and tending of that heart out of which issues the life. He must free the soil from noisome and deadly weeds, he must plant it with the choicest vine, he must subject it to God's watering, he must seek for it evermore the dew of His blessing, the rain of His Grace, the sunshine of His countenance.

(*b*) *Life Itself is a Vineyard*—the life of a man as it is lived amongst his fellows. The life of the family in which each one of us is a son, a brother, a daughter, a sister—here is a sheltered spot of the vineyard in which God bids us work, and in which many stand in God's sight all the day idle. I think that the lazy selfishness of many a young man in his home life, though he is active enough in a wider sphere, is neither creditable to himself nor to the Christian name he bears. There must of necessity be great variety in the work to be done by each in the vineyard of life, but amidst all this variety there is unity. Go where you may, you cannot escape the call to be God's workman. God bids a clergyman go into the vineyard, but the call to him is not substantially different from the call to any other man. God calls the soldier, the lawyer, the business man to work in his vineyard. Neither is sex any restriction. God calls the woman in her many duties to work in His vineyard. God bids us set before ourselves in youth as in age this one object—so to live as to make others better, so to live as to make God known.

III. What Answer are We Making?—We are here some of us in the early morning of life, and some have reached the eleventh hour. Still the same call, patient and long-suffering, is in all our ears. Honestly, are we really at work in God's vineyard, or are we in God's sight still standing idle? The selfish life is an idle life, and this is the point I wish specially to emphasize. Are we saying in reply to God's question, 'Because no man hath hired us'? The parable speaks of the heat and burden of the day. That burden is not avoided, that burning sun is not escaped by those who stand idle. For each of us life will have its load. The toils, cares, and sorrows of life are not lightened, but rather multiplied, by living for ourselves. Yet the scorching sun will beat upon those equally within or without the vineyard. Only there will be this difference. Shall we have a friend constant in life and changeless in eternity, or shall we be living and dying by ourselves? Even to the longest life comes an evening which is both a sunset and a dawn.

References.—XX. 6, 7.—H. Scott Holland, *Church Times*, vol. xlii. 1899, p. 347; see also, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lvi. 1899, p. 193. C. Herbert, *ibid.* vol. lxiii. 1903, p. 93. XX. 7.—W. H. Hutchings, *Sermon-Sketches*, p. 65. A. Legge, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. li. 1897, p. 138.

'When even was come, the Lord saith, Call the labourers, and give them their hire.'—Matthew xx. 8.

We are not sent into this world to stand idle all the day long, but to go forth to our work and to our labour until the evening. *Until* the evening, not *in* the evening only of our life, but serving God from our youth, and not waiting till our years fail us. . . The *end* is the proof of the matter. That evening will be the trial; when the heat, and fever, and noise of the noontide are over, and the light fades, and the prospect saddens, and the shades lengthen, and the busy world is still.—Newman.

References.—XX. 8.—Bishop A. Pearson, *Sermons for the People* (2nd Series), vol. ii. p. 161. XX. 9.—R. Collyer, *Where the Spirit Dwelleth*, p. 37. XX. 13.—S. Baring-Gould, *Village Preaching for a Year* (2nd Series), vol. i. p. 113. XX. 13-16.—A. G. Mortimer, *The Church's Lessons for the Christian Year*, part iv. p. 191. XX. 14.—J. Baldwin Brown, *Misread Passages of Scripture*, p. 25. A. W. Potts, *School Sermons*, p. 29. W. J. Butler, *Sermons for Working Men, The Oxford Sermon Library*, vol. ii. p. 99. J. H. Jellett, *The Elder Son*, p. 43. XX. 15.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. ii. No. 77. W. Cunningham, *Church Times*, vol. xxxii. 1894, p. 642. S. Cox, *Expositions*, p. 208. H. Scott Holland, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lv. 1899, p. 65. F. E. Paget, *Sermons for Special Occasions*, p. 181. R. Flint, *Sermons and Addresses*, p. 241.

MANY CALLED, BUT FEW CHOSEN

'Many are called but few are chosen.'—Matthew xx. 16.

Few are *choice:* such surely is the thought of our text. There are such distinctions among the adherents of the Kingdom. It does not follow that because all are enrolled in the same service they are all either equally efficient or equally worthy. Some wear their loyalty with a difference. They are the élite of the Christian society, the flower and chivalry of the band; whose number, unhappily, is soon counted. Consider then this outer Christian circle—how wide it is: and this inner Christian circle—how select it is: also how one may hope to pass from the one within the other.

I. *This outer circle* — consider *how large it is.* 'Many,' says our Lord, 'are called.' By which it is evident that He means not merely privileged to hear God's merciful invitation addressed to them, but inwardly drawn to obey it as well. He is thinking of the Kingdom's *bona fide* servants, who wear the genuine livery and render a service which will be rewarded in its measure one day; and of such He says that they are 'many'.

II. Nevertheless it remains true that amongst the many few are 'choice'. The *inner circle* is *select* always. They are 'choice'; that is, they are men chosen or picked out of the Christian band. You note in them a selectness, a refinement, and a Christian grace, which put them in a category quite different from the ordinary, and merit for them the name of Christ's 'chosen' or 'choice' disciples.

1. For example, there is what may be termed the *unworldly* type. Very often such a man is more thoughtful than other men—more prone to meditation than they, and loving no exercise more than to place himself in the presence of God, and brood there over the deep things of existence.

2. There is what you may call the more especially *Christian* type. That is to say, there are Christians of whom it is in a peculiar degree true that Jesus Christ is the Alpha and Omega of their lives.

3. There is what you may call the *filial* type. I mean the Christians whose grand endeavour manifestly is to live here the life of a son of God.

III. The means by which any of us may hope to *pass from the outer to the inner circle* of Christ's followers.

1. *First*, it is a thing never to be forgotten that the makings of a saint are in every Christian. Sometimes it is supposed that it is only specially favoured natures that may dare to aspire so high. Nature may give some men the start, but grace duly improved must surpass nature in the long run.

2. And *again* remember that the scene in which a believer is to attain all this is just the life—the very ordinary and commonplace life, as a rule—he already has. You know the other misgiving that haunts men here. No sooner do they waken to the high aims God sets before them than they are apt to sigh for better opportunities of realizing them. We may be sure that if there had been another life in which we would have been more favourably placed for parting with our old nature for the image of the heavenly, He would have given us that life, for He is God and can give nothing but the best.—A. Martin, *Winning the Soul*, p. 117.

References.—XX. 16.—B. Wilberforce, *Feeling After Him*, p. 171. Henry Alford, *Sermons on Christian Doctrine*, p. 134. J. Fraser, *Parochial and other Sermons*, p. 105. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxxvii. No. 2221. XX. 17-19.—*Ibid.* vol. xxxvii. No. 2212. XX. 20-23.—R. Rainy, *Sojourning with God*, p. 80. F. D. Huntington, *Christian Believing and Living*, p. 232.

'Grant that my two sons may sit, the one on Thy right hand, and the other on Thy left.'—Matthew xx. 21.

Nearly all the evils in the Church have arisen from bishops desiring *power* more than light. They want authority, not outlook.—Ruskin.

References.—XX. 21, 22.—A. F. Winnington Ingram, *Church Times*, vol. lii. 1904, p. 145. See also *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxvi. 1904, p. 105.

'We are able.'—Matthew xx. 22.

'Words are given prodigally,' says F. W. Robertson in a letter, 'and sacrificial acts must toil for years to cover the space which a single fervid promise has stretched itself over.'

'It has for many generations been an Italian error,' says Agostino in Mr. Meredith's *Vittoria*, 'to imagine a positive blood relationship—not to say maternity itself—existing between intentions and deeds.'

THE VENTURES OF FAITH

'They say unto Him, We are able.'—Matthew xx. 22.

Success and reward everlasting they will have, who persevere unto the end. Doubt we cannot, that the ventures of all Christ's servants must be returned to them at the Last Day with abundant increase. This is a true saying, He returns far more than we lend to Him, and without fail. But I am speaking of individuals, of ourselves one by one. No one among us knows for certain that he himself will persevere; yet every one among us, to give himself even a chance of success at all, must make a venture. As regards individuals, then, it is quite true, that all of us must for certain make ventures for heaven, yet without the certainty of success through them. This, indeed, is the very meaning of the word 'venture'; for that is a strange venture which has nothing in it of fear, risk, danger, anxiety, uncertainty. Yes; so it certainly is; and in this consists the excellence and nobleness of faith; this is the very reason why faith is singled out from other graces, and honoured as the especial means of our justification, because its presence implies that we have the heart to make a venture.

THE OLD AGE OF ST. JOHN THE DIVINE

[St. John] had to bear a length of years in loneliness, exile, and weakness. He had to experience the dreariness of being solitary, when those whom he loved had been summoned away. He had to live in his own thoughts, without familiar friend, with those only about him who belonged to a younger generation. Of him were demanded by his gracious Lord, as pledges of his faith, all his eye loved and his heart held converse with. He was as a man moving his goods into a far country, who at intervals and by portions send them before him, till his present abode is wellnigh unfurnished. He sent forward his friends on their journey, while he stayed himself behind, that there might be those in heaven to have thoughts of him, to look out for him, and receive him when his Lord should call. He sent before him, also, other still more voluntary pledges and ventures of his faith, a self-denying walk, a zealous maintenance of the truth, fasting and prayers, labours of love, a virgin life, buffetings from the heathen, persecution, and banishment. Well might so great a saint say, at the end of his days 'Come, Lord Jesus!' as those who are weary of the night, and wait for the morning. All his thoughts, all his contemplations, desires, and hopes, were stored in the invisible world; and death, when it came, brought back to him the sight of what he had worshipped, what he had loved, what he had held intercourse with, in years long past away. Then, when again brought into the presence of what he had lost, how would remembrance revive, and familiar thoughts long buried come to life! Who shall dare to describe the blessedness of those who find all their pledges safe returned to them, all their ventures abundantly and beyond measure satisfied?—J. H. Newman.

References.—XX. 22.—E. B. Pusey, *Parochial Sermons*, vol. ii. p. 98. G. W. Herbert, *Notes of Sermons*, p. 234. H. J. Wilmot-Buxton, *Holy-Tide Teaching*, p. 143. J. M. Neale, *Sermons for Some Feast Days in the Christian Year*, p. 204; see also, *Sermons Preached in Sackville College Chapel*, vol. iv. p. 136. A. Fleming, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxvi. 1904, p. 294. S. Baring-Gould, *Village Preaching for Saints' Days*, p. 150. XX. 22, 23.—Bristow Wilson, *The Communion of Saints*, p. 180.

NEXT THE THRONE

'To sit on My right hand, and on My left, is not Mine to give, but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared of My Father.'—Matthew xx. 23.

The seats by Christ's side.

There is distinctly, in the words of my text, the principle of diversity of degree corresponding to what we call rank, and that diversity depends upon, and is, diversity in closeness to Jesus Christ. All shall be close to Him, and all shall be every moment getting closer, but there shall be diversity in the proximity, and some shall sit on the right hand and on the left.

Of course we start with the conception of equality. All get the penny in the parable. All 'sit down with Him on the throne,' which is the apex of the universe. But perfection does not exclude growth. Equality does not exclude variety, and perfection is not inconsistent with progress, and if there be progress there must necessarily be diversity of stages. Such diversity is a necessary result of the very conception of the future, as being the retribution for the present.

Nor let us forget, in reference to this diversity, that we are taught in the context to discharge from our minds, in connexion with it, all earthly ideas of superiority, wherein the excellency of the one is the inferiority of the others, and pre-eminence for A means degradation for all the rest of the alphabet.

II. The law of precedence in the kingdom.

It belongs to them 'for whom it is prepared of My Father'. The language is strongly metaphorical.

The seats are prepared, first, for those that have drunk most deeply of Christ's cup.

The measure in which we Christian people incorporate Jesus Christ into ourselves here will determine all our future.

The context gives a second condition of that pre-eminence. It falls to those who most fully imitate His life and death of service and sacrifice. Unselfish service for His sake is the only path.

These words about the preparation by the Father further suggest the certainty that these seats thus prepared shall be ours if we adhere to the conditions.

III. My text speaks of Jesus Christ as, under the aforesaid laws and restrictions, the Giver of the precedence.

To take the words before us as being an unconditional disclaimer, on His part, of His authority to give heavenly places would be to run counter to the whole tenor of Scripture. For His disclaimer must necessarily be interpreted with reference to the conceptions to which it is the answer. And these conceptions were that He could give the kingdom, and pre-eminence in it, as a pure piece of partiality, and arbitrary favouritism, with regard to fitness. The gift is surely from His hand, for if the hand had not been pierced with the nails it never had been able to give the crown. And all that we hope for in the future, or possess in the present, is alike the purchase of His blood and the result of His great sacrifice.—A. Maclaren, *The Unchanging Christ*, p. 24.

THE CROSS AND THE THRONE

(*For St. James the Apostle's Day*)

'To sit on My right hand, and on My left, is not Mine to give, but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared of My Father.'—Matthew xx. 23.

The incident recorded in the Gospel is a familiar one in the life of St. James and his brother St. John. Salome, their mother, was evidently jealous of the sons of Jonas, the late neighbours and partners of her own sons; and as she, like all other mothers, loved her own above all others, she yielded to the temptation to desire from Christ that they should occupy the most exalted position in His kingdom (Mark x. 35-37).

I. But She Asked for a Wrong Thing; and St. James and St. John did wrong when they prevailed upon their mother to intercede with Christ for them. Ambition is a salutary stimulus if free from selfishness; but when it is allied to selfishness, it is a passion charged with pride, envy, and covetousness, and most injurious to the soul. Christ declared His emphatic disapprobation of such selfish ambition. 'If any man,' said He, 'will come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross, and follow Me.' The cross, therefore, must be borne ere the throne be occupied. And this St. James and St. John found out in their after-experience; they were both baptized with the baptism of Christ, and drained the same cup of suffering. This toned down their ambition, chastened their spirit, and sanctified their life.

II. The Martyrdom of St. James.—In the forty-fourth year of our Lord, about the time of the Passover, St. James was accused by some of the Jews to Herod, who, to conciliate them, ordered his apprehension, and condemned him to death. On his way to execution, it is said that St. James performed a miracle of healing upon a paralytic, by which one Josias—a principal witness against the Apostle—was so affected that he fell at his feet and implored his pardon. Surprised at this sudden change, St. James raised him up and embraced him; and after he had imprinted a kiss on his cheek, he saluted him, saying, 'Peace be to thee, my brother'. This return of good for evil, of love for hate, so wrought on Josias that he there and then declared that he was, too, a believer in Christ. This bold confession led to his condemnation also; and he was beheaded at the same time and place as St. James. St. James had thus the great honour of being the proto-martyr of the Apostles, as St. Stephen had that of being the proto-martyr of the Church. Such was his pre-eminence at last; and now his desire is gratified—he sits with Christ in His throne.

FROM THE FOUNDATION

'To sit on My right hand, and on My left, is not Mine to give, but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared of My Father.'—MATTHEW XX. 23.

THIS is part of Christ's answer to the mother of Zebedee's children. It was a little family gathering; they had made it all up among themselves. There are many toy-makers. They thought it would be well if the kingdom of heaven could be in some way divided amongst the family. Some people's notion of heaven never gets beyond some family arrangement. They are themselves little, and can only do with little notions. We think that God is living from hand to mouth, inventing a new policy for every day, introducing surprises into the economy of His kingdom. Jesus Christ rebukes that foolish and truly atheistic notion, for there is no God in it, and He says in effect, The kingdom is already apportioned; the right-hand seat and the left-hand seat are already reserved. God does nothing by surprise and offhand and at the bidding of human suggestion; from the foundation every seat was settled.

I. 'From the foundation;' and where is the foundation? It is in the thought of God, in the purpose of the Eternal, away beyond all the little candle-stars, away where no comet has ever been seen by mortal vision, away to the everlasting, the unbeginning, the inconceivable, the ineffable—that wondrous position that we want to define by polysyllables, and cannot.

Now Jesus Christ was with the Father from the foundation; He was part of the foundation; yea, He was an essential element in the foundation; He was before all things, and by Him all things consist, and by Him all things will be judged. When there were no fountains abounding with water He faced the Eternal Love. So when He speaks thus to the mother of Zebedee's children He does not renounce His majesty, He uses His limitation that He may help her beyond her own. All things, according to the teaching of Christ, have been settled from the foundation, part of the Divine purpose, part of the Divine nature, wondrous, ineffable things, before even dreams began or poetry fashioned a harp.

II. See how the Incarnation is defined. Let us reverently paraphrase the music of the Son of God: Lord, I have come to do Thy will in the prepared body; I have come to show the world something of what the world could never see, the glory I had with Thee before the world was.

This was the purpose of the Incarnation, to show all men and women in all ages that everything was in the purpose of God and will be settled according to the Divine purpose; and as for the front seats and the back seats and the intermediate seats, woman, man, mother of ambitious sons, all these things were settled from the foundation.

III. And then see how it not only defines the Incarnation, but how it interprets the great ministry of providence. How many things are settled for us, if we would only believe it, and how many prayers are answered which are never offered except by some Divine intent which is a great mystery in the heart of every man. We have the most of things without asking for them. There are some things it would be absurd to ask for. We owe all the greatest things to prayers we never uttered and never can utter, and would de-Christianize ourselves if we attempted to utter them. We live in the greater prayer.

The only happiness is consonance with God, unity with that which was from the foundation—I mean the foundation below the foundation, the base below the base, the other base that makes the superficial base a possible term in geometry or economy.—JOSEPH PARKER, *City Temple Pulpit*, vol. IV. p. 127.

'Ye shall drink indeed of My cup, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with.'—MATTHEW XX. 23.

THERE was never wedge of gold that did not first pass the fire; there was never pure grain that did not undergo the flail. Let who will, hope to walk upon roses and violets to the throne of heaven: O Saviour, let me trace Thee by the track of Thy blood, and by Thy red steps follow Thee to Thine eternal rest and happiness.—BISHOP HALL.

REFERENCES.—XX. 23.—J. Parker, *City Temple Pulpit*, vol. iv. p. 127. E. L. Hull, *Sermons Preached at King's Lynn*, (3rd Series), p. 53. A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—St. Matthew XVIII.-XXVIII.* p. 56; see also *Sermons Preached in Manchester* (3rd Series), p. 351. XX. 25—R. F. Horton, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxx. 1906, p. 225. XX. 25, 26.—J. Clifford, *ibid.* vol. xliii. 1893, p. 280.

'Whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister.' —MATTHEW XX. 26.

THE great cry with everybody is *get on, get on!* just as if the world were travelling post. How astonished people will be, when they arrive in heaven, to find the angels, who are so much wiser, laying no schemes to be made archangels!—JULIUS HARE.

IT is a beautiful and salutary arrangement which we seldom reflect on as we ought, that, as a rule, men can only become rich and great by supplying some want of their fellow-men, by doing some work for others which others need and are willing to pay for, be that work moral guidance or material provision. We cannot rise to command except by stooping to serve; we cannot obtain conspicuous station among men or power over them without in some way or other rendering ourselves useful or necessary to them. —W. RATHBONE GREG, *Literary and Social Judgments*, p. 486.

GREATNESS BY SERVICE

'Whosoever would become great among you, shall be your minister; and whosoever would be first among you, shall be your servant. Even as the Son of Man came not to be ministered to, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.'—MATTHEW XX. 26-28.

I. CHRIST stood forth before men, and said, 'Behold I am among you as He that serveth'. St. Paul singled out this as the characteristic feature of his Divine Master that, though He was in the form of God, He emptied Himself of all honour and glory, and took upon Him the form of a slave.

Yet, in spite of Christ and His Apostles, in spite of the influence of the Church as a moral force, the idea still survives in many quarters that to serve others in a menial or subordinate capacity is degrading, while to be served by others is an honourable and dignified estate.

We commonly speak of our Lord's 'human ministry'. But do we reflect that the word 'ministry' simply means service, the doing of helpful, assisting work, and that a large space of Christ's time was spent in healing the sick and the suffering (which was reckoned in those days to be the work of a slave), and more generally in surrendering His own personal freedom for the sake of bearing the burdens of the obscure and friendless.

II. Service, however lowly, when willingly rendered in the spirit of sympathetic concern for others' good, exalts the doer. But the service must cost the doer of it something. It is best and rarest when the heart's blood is distilled into it: it is worth most when combined with careful thought and intelligence.

True service, such as confers greatness, is the ripe fruit of a long discipline of the impulses and the emotions, carried on through many stages, and only perfected after many ambitious failures. Doing good and being good are indissolubly united, being the active and the passive sides of the Christian character. And, like all beautiful things, both are arduous.

III. No one—not even the best of us—who feels the call to minister to others' good, and nobly ventures along that difficult path, can be sure that success will attend his efforts. But no one who does this in sincerity and humbleness can make of his life half so dismal a failure as he who is always demanding from others the willing service that he never thinks of repaying.—J. W. Shepard, *Light and Life*, p. 254.

References.—XX. 27.—Henry Alford, *Quebec Chapel Sermons*, vol. i. p. 51. XX. 27, 28.—Lyman Abbott, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xlix. 1896, p. 226.

THE SERVANT-LORD AND HIS SERVANTS

'Even as the Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister.'—Matthew xx. 28.

I. Let us look first at the perfect life of service of the Servant-Lord.

In order to appreciate the significance of that life of service, we must take into account the introductory words, 'The Son of Man came'. They declare His pre-existence, His voluntary entrance into the conditions of humanity, and His denuding Himself of 'the glory which He had with the Father before the world was'. We shall never understand the Servant-Christ until we understand that He is the Eternal Son of the Father. His service began when He laid aside, not the garments of earth, but the vesture of the heavens, and girded Himself not with the cincture woven in man's looms, but with the flesh of our humanity, 'and being found in fashion as a man,' bowed Himself to enter into the conditions of earth. It was much that His hands should heal, that His lips should comfort, that His heart should bleed with sympathy for sorrow. But it was more that He *had* hands to touch, lips to speak to human hearts, and the heart of a man and a brother to feel *with* us as well as *for* us.

But then, passing beyond this, we may dwell upon the features, familiar as they are, of that wonderful life of self-oblivious and self-sacrificing ministration to others.

1. The life of Jesus Christ is self-forgetting love made visible. The source from which his ministrations have flowed is the pure source of a perfect love.

2. No taint of bye-ends was in that service; no side-long glances at possible advantages of influence, or reputation, or the like, which so often deform men's philanthropies and services to one another. Like the clear sea, weedless and stainless, that laves the marble steps of the palaces of Venice, the deep ocean of Christ's service to man was pure to the depths throughout.

3. That perfect ministry of the Servant-Lord was rendered with strange spontaneity and cheerfulness. On His cross He had leisure to turn from His own physical sufferings and the weight of a world's sin, which lay upon Him, to look at the penitent by His side, and He ended His life in the ministry of mercy to a brigand. And thus cheerfully, and always without a thought of self, 'He came to minister'.

4. Think, too, of the sweep of His ministrations. They took in all men; they were equally open to enemies and to friends, to mockers and to sympathizers. Think of the variety of the gifts which He brought in his ministry—caring for body and for soul; alleviating sorrow, binding up wounds, purifying hearts; dealing with sin, the fountain, and with miseries, its waters, with equal helpfulness and equal love.

5. And think of how that ministry was always ministration by a Lord. For there is nothing to me more remarkable in the Gospel narrative than the way in which, side by side, there lie in Christ's life the two elements, so difficult to harmonize in fact, and so impossible to have been harmonized in a legend, the consciousness of authority and the humility of a servant.

6. That ministration was a service that never shrank from stern rebuke. For it is not service but cruelty to sympathize with the sinner, and say nothing in condemnation of his sin. And yet no sternness is blessed which is not plainly prompted by desire to help.

II. Secondly, note the service that should be modelled on His.

There is no ground on which we can rest greatness or superiority in Christ's kingdom except this ground of service. The servant who serves for love is highest in the hierarchy of heaven. If we are ever to be near the right and the left of the Master in His kingdom, there is one way, and only one way to get it, and that is to make self abdicate its authority as the centre of our lives, and to enthrone there

Christ, and for His sake all our brethren. Be ambitious to be first, but, remember, *Noblesse oblige*. He that is first must be last.—A. Maclaren, *Christ's Musts*, p. 55.

'The Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister.'—Matthew xx. 28.

This was one of the three texts which Dean Colet quoted in addressing Wolsey at his installation as Cardinal in Westminster Abbey. The others were, 'He who is least among you shall be greatest in the kingdom of heaven,' and 'He who exalts himself shall be humbled, and he who humbles himself shall be exalted'.

References.—XX. 28.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. iv. No. 181. C. J. Ridgeway, *The King and His Kingdom*, p. 50; see also *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lii. 1897, p. 285. A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—St. Matthew XVIII.-XXVIII.* pp. 71, 80. Hugh Black, *Christ's Service of Love*, p. 23. W. H. Murray, *The Fruits of the Spirit*, p. 441. H. Scott Holland, *Logic and Life*, p. 227. XX. 29-34.—Archbishop Trench, *Notes on the Miracles of Our Lord*, p. 351. J. Laidlaw, *The Miracles of Our Lord*, p. 323. XX. 32.—Henry Alford, *Quebec Gospel Sermons*, vol. iii. p. 146. XX. 34.—J. Parker, *City Temple Pulpit*, vol. v. p. 98.

SEEING AND FOLLOWING

'Their eyes received sight, and they followed Him.'—Matthew xx. 34.

Here is the greatest of all prayers: 'Lord, that our eyes may be opened'. We can do nothing until that great miracle is worked. It is just there that God comes in; after that, certain consequences will happily flow, but those consequences are impossible until a certain miracle has been wrought. 'Lord, that our eyes may be opened.' We have eyes, but the very possession of them is a trouble to us, because it is a continual mockery; our very eyes seem to be groping after the light, and cannot find it. 'Lord, that our eyes may be opened.' It is the inclusive prayer. Give us our eyesight, and then we may learn how to do certain little things at least for ourselves; but we cannot do them until our eyes are opened, and there is only one power that can open them: Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on us!

I. Prayer is educational. Always pray for the thing you need, and let the things you want stand on one side. To want is one thing, to need is another. Mere want cannot pray; true need can do nothing but pray, it must cry. If we have this great faculty of discernment, we can make some little progress.

II. They 'received' sight. Why did not they give themselves sight? Notice that word 'received'. It was through no power of their own; they had often rubbed their eyes, they had often touched their sightless eyeballs, but they had not that touch that would enable the eyes to receive the morning; they could only receive the kiss of the sun, not its smile. And we must make this a spiritual faculty, as it was a physical fact in the instance before us. We have nothing that we have not received. Is that so? Yes; and until you realize it you have no religion. True religion is an impossibility to your experience until you know that you are receivers and not originators. We are miracles of grace. The Apostle says, 'What hast thou that thou hast not received?' Art thou an eloquent man? thou art not eloquent of thyself, but thine eloquence explains some great act of reception.

III. And here is the right use of faculty—'they followed Him'. 'They received sight, and they followed Him.' That is the kind of action which we call the true profession of Christianity. It is not nominal profession, it is not an offhand profession, but they followed Him. Why, they could see His footprints then. The joy of putting my feet into the very print on the ground made by Christ! Now that is impossible literally, but it signifies what is possible—namely, the spiritual following of Christ, the keeping on the road He trod, the doing of the things He did, the entrance into the very spirit of redeeming love.—Joseph Parker, *City Temple Pulpit*, vol. v. p. 98.

'And they followed Him.'—Matthew xx. 34.

If pardon be, even for a moment, severed from a moral process of renovation, if these two are not made to stand in organic and vital connexion with one another, that door is opened through which mischief will rush.—W. E. Gladstone.

References.—XXI. 1-3.—A. G. Mortimer, *One Hundred Miniature Sermons*, vol. i. p. 1. XXI. 1-5.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons on the Prophets*, vol. ii. p. 208. XXI. 1-16.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—St. Matthew XVIII.-XXVIII.* p. 89. XXI. 2, 3.—Jesse Brett, *The Soul's Escape*, p. 77. XXI. 3.—H. P. Liddon, *Passion-Tide Sermons*, p. 167. J. M. Neale, *Sermons for the Church's Year*, vol. ii. p. 80. XXI. 4.—C. Kingsley, *Sermons on National Subjects*, p. 1. XXI. 4, 5.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—St. Matthew XVIII.-XXVIII.* p. 97. Harvey Goodwin, *Parish Sermons*, p. 275. C. A. Berry, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xlv. 1894, p. 273. XXI. 5.—J. Parker, *City Temple Pulpit*, vol. v. p. 279. C. J. Ridgeway, *The King and His Kingdom*, p. 50. S. Baring-Gould, *Village Preaching for a Year* (2nd Series), vol. i. p. 183. C. Kingsley, *Sermons on National Subjects*, p. 306. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. vii. No. 405; vol. xviii. No. 1038. XXI. 7, 8, 9.—S. Baring-Gould, *Village Preaching for a Year*, vol. i. p. 249.

PALM SUNDAY AND ITS LESSONS

'And the multitudes that went before, and that followed after, cried, saying, Hosanna to the Son of David.'—Matthew xxi. 9.

Palm Sunday ought to have something to say to us, if we can hear its voice and learn its lessons.

I. One thing we learn here is that *the sympathies of the multitude are right*. This great mass of people, untaught, ignorant, simple-minded, with no one to guide them, instinctively gave their honour and adoration to Christ. They had heard of His kindly works, His sympathy with all who were in sorrow, His uniform goodness and purity, and their hearts went out to Him. Their instincts, as we may call them, were right. But their opinions and judgments were weak and easily swayed. And when a

few crafty priests and glib-tongued Pharisees had been in and out among them saying this and that false thing of Christ, slandering and reviling Him, and declaring that He sought not the people's good, but to subvert their customs and destroy the nation, that was quite enough to change the sentiments and voices of all who had greeted Him with Hosannas. You can get any sort of music from a crowd, if you know how to play skilfully enough. Everything depends upon those to whom they lend their ears—their guides and leaders.

II. *The ideals of the multitude are often coarse and material*, and sorely need to be purified and raised. On that Palm Sunday they were chanting praises, not to the real Christ as He was, but to the imaginary Christ which they thought He ought to be. When they spread those palm branches for Him to tread upon, they had no idea that He had come to save them from their sins and uncleanness, and to purify their hearts. They thought He was the Messiah whose purpose was to enrich them and the nation with wealth and bodily comfort, to relieve them of Rome's bondage and heavy taxation, and bring in a time of plenty and prosperity for the very poorest. That was what the shoutings and songs of Palm Sunday meant. And that sort of glorying and huzzaing could not last. It was soon to pass away, like so much empty breath, simply because it came out of a falsehood. They found out very soon that that coarse material work was not Christ's purpose at all, and then they turned against Him. There is no real worship of Christ save that which is founded on a true understanding of His character and mission. He comes not to change things without, but to make the world slowly new by a change of the heart within.

III. Palm Sunday bids you go steadily on. You are not to be elated by temporary triumphs, or cast down by the proved fickleness of those among whom you labour. If you are engaged in any sort of public work you will have the palm branches waved around you at one season, and ere long there will be no palm branches, but something not unlike the shadow of a cross. And you need to steady your heart's purpose by sitting at the feet of Christ.—J. G. Greenhough, *Christian Festivals and Anniversaries*, p. 20.

ADVENT

'And the multitudes that went before, and that followed, cried, saying, Hosanna to the Son of David: Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest.'—Matthew xxi. 9.

The Advent, or coming of Christ, in one sense or other is the message of all Scripture. This coming of Christ is manifold in its nature.

I. Christ came to visit us in great humility. At first men found no room for Him, and then they slew Him. There were occasions, however, when the power of His Divine majesty claimed their wonder and adoration even at this season. A great multitude spread their garments in the way as though He were some mighty king; others strewed palm branches before Him, as though He were some triumphant conqueror; and all cried to Him as unto their Saviour—Hosanna. And yet in one short week the King—the Conqueror—the Saviour—was forgotten; and men cried *Away with Him—Crucify Him*—and mocked Him as He hung upon the cross.

This advent of Christ into Jerusalem is but a figure and a pattern of His general reception in the world. We must not only be willing to confess a conquering King, but ready also to believe in a crucified Saviour.

II. Think of the Second Advent—of Christ's entrance into a new Zion not to die but to reign—when He shall 'return in glorious majesty to judge both the quick and the dead'. Think then of the witness which our own conscience will bear against us when Christ shall judge the world; and so judge yourselves that ye be not judged. We know nothing perhaps so little or so badly as our own heart. It will not be so at that day. Then we shall see our sins as God sees them. No one speaks carelessly of death and the judgment after death but he who knows nothing of himself—nothing of God. The first lesson which we learn of our own nature, if we deal sincerely with ourselves, must be one of deep, inexpressibly deep humility. The first lesson which we learn from the Bible, if we truly realize its teaching, must be one of deep, inexpressibly deep gratitude.

III. But there is yet a third Advent full of joy and peace and hope and comfort to every troubled soul. Christ comes to each one of us who have been made His in especial manner—as He once came to His own, in love and tenderness.

If Christ be already with you, labour more and more earnestly that your whole life may be devoted to God through Him. If Christ be not found in you, pray faithfully for the presence which He has pledged to you. Pray faithfully, earnestly, ceaselessly, and be very sure that your prayer will be heard, and Christ will come to you, and make His dwelling with you.

But that Christ may thus come to us, we must cast out all that is hostile to Him. We must patiently wait for Him. We must be silent. We must pray to Him, as the multitude prayed, Hosanna. Save now, we beseech Thee.—B. F. Westcott, *Village Sermons*, p. 1.

References.—XXI. 9.—H. J. Wilmot-Buxton, *Sunday Sermonettes for a Year*, p. 72. W. C. E. Newbolt, *Church Times*, vol. xlix. 1903, p. 489. R. W. Church, *Village Sermons* (2nd Series), p. 1. M. G. Glazebrook, *Prospice*, p. 98. H. P. Liddon, *Passion-Tide Sermons*, p. 196. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxxvii. No. 2196. Parker, *Inner Life of Christ*, vol. iii. p. 91; and see his *Homiletic Analysis of Matthew*. *Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. iii. p. 136. *Pulpit Analyst*, vol. iii. p. 654. Dr. Arnold's *Sermons* (3rd Series), No. ix.

'WHO IS THIS?'

'And when He was come into Jerusalem, all the city was moved, saying, Who is this? And the multitude said, This is Jesus, the Prophet of Nazareth of Galilee.'—Matthew xxi. 10.

Who is this? The question was asked by some, no doubt, in idle curiosity; by some, perhaps, in

doubting hesitation, for the days were evil, and the glory seemed to have departed from Israel; by some with eager hope that the answer would announce their King.

I. So is the question asked still in varying moods. *Who is this?* Who is the Leader of the great Christian procession of the ages? The Chief Figure in that procession is now as of old a Master of men. But who is He? Why do men go after Him?

It is a great question for every soul. You can hardly escape it. That great procession passes by your doors, incessant and unending. You must have an answer. It is answered in the text, you say. *This is the Prophet, Jesus, from Nazareth of Galilee.* Yes, that was a true answer as far as it went; but we cannot forget that the men who gave it seem soon to have lost their faith in the Prophet.

II. *Who is this?* The question comes to us still, and meets, alas! at times with as poor an answer. Men and women still follow the great Christian procession. They join in the Confession, which declares that He on whom their eyes are fixed is the Christ, the Redeemer, 'Very God, of Very God'. But they have not really thought of what they are saying. And so when the question comes to them, as come it surely does one day, Who is this? they receive a shock. It is best left to theologians, they suppose; and so they take refuge in an answer which nobody can gainsay: *This is Jesus, the Prophet.* He was the world's greatest Teacher, who spake *as man never spake,* who brought men a message of holiness and peace. They do not see that they have given the lie to all their previous professions; they have robbed their half-hearted allegiance of the only element which justified its existence at all.

III. It is a real danger that we should acquiesce in this way of thinking about our Lord. The devotion of the Christian centuries is not devotion to the memory of a great Prophet of the past, but love to an ever-present Lord and King who still lives and reigns among men. We cannot replace the one conception by the other without disaster to our spiritual life, without a shipwreck of faith, without peril to our souls.

And thus the story of the text with its terrible sequel teaches us the miserable insufficiency of any such view of the Christ as that which regards Him only as a great Teacher, a great Prophet. Such a belief as that will not nerve men and women with courage to trust Him in an hour of spiritual darkness, in days of perplexity and distress and pain.—J. H. Bernard, *Via Domini*, p. 136.

References.—XXI. 10.—J. Cameron Lees, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lviii. 1895, p. 116. H. P. Liddon, *Advent in St. Paul's*, p. 1. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. li. No. 2939. XXI. 10-16.—*Selected Sermons of Schleiermacher*, p. 103.

And Jesus went into the temple of God.'—Matthew xxi. 12.

As the good husbandman, when he sees the leaves grow yellow, and the branches unthriving, looks presently to the root; so didst Thou, O Holy Saviour, upon sight of the disorders spread over Judea and Jerusalem, address Thyself to the rectifying of the temple.—Bishop Hall.

When nations are to perish in their sins,
'Tis in the Church that leprosy begins.
—Cowper.

References.—XXI. 12-14.—V. R. Lennard, *Passion-Tide and Easter*, p. 33. XXI. 13.—A. G. Mortimer, *One Hundred Miniature Sermons*, vol. i. p. 7. T. H. Ball, *Persuasions*, p. 1. R. F. Horton, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lviii. 1900, p. 8. F. D. Huntington, *Christian Believing and Living*, p. 502. XXI. 15.—W. H. Lyon, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lviii. 1900, p. 269. XXI. 15, 16.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxx. No. 1785. XXI. 17.—W. P. Balfern, *Glimpses of Jesus*, p. 167. XXI. 17-20.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxxv. No. 2107. XXI. 17-22.—J. Laidlaw, *The Miracles of Our Lord*, p. 125. Archbishop Trench, *Notes on the Miracles of Our Lord*, p. 357. XXI. 18, 19.—V. R. Lennard, *Passion-Tide and Easter*, p. 33. XXI. 18-22.—W. M. Taylor, *The Miracles of Our Saviour*, p. 412.

PUNISHMENT

'And (Jesus) said unto it, Let no fruit grow on thee henceforward for ever.'—Matthew xxi. 19.

'Let no fruit grow on thee henceforward for ever;' and presently the fig-tree withered away. A stern sentence surely, and executed with dreadful swiftness, and for that very reason, worthy of our notice; since it concerns us very deeply to remember, that although the Lord our God is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and of great kindness, He who is very Holiness cannot bear with wilful and unrepented sin. He Who is the Truth itself may not endure hypocrisy, and the pretence of righteousness in those that have it not.

Consider carefully what the real forgiveness of sins is, and what are its conditions. There are two great facts about sin and forgiveness:—

I. In this World there is no 'Forgiveness of Sins'.—Nature is unflinchingly, cruelly just. Those who keep her laws shall prosper, those who break them must suffer. We all recognize this to some extent in outward things, and shape our course accordingly. We know that the fire will burn us, that the deep waters will drown us, and we call him a madman who acts as if it were not so, and suffers for his neglect. But the laws of our moral nature are not less stern. We may dream, if we will, that we can play for a while with the burning fire of lust or anger, and come away unscathed, but it is not so; before we know it, our souls are seared and branded with scars that nothing earthly can ever efface. Let us never fancy that we can sin a sin and be done with it. When you are tempted to sin, think what you are doing not to yourself only, nor your neighbours, but to others, whom maybe you will never know.

In this world there is no forgiveness of sins. Yet we believe that God will pardon us and heal us, if we turn to Him rightly; it was for this that Jesus Christ died upon the cross; that we might be cleansed and restored, and live with Him for ever.

II. There is no Forgiveness at all without Repentance.—Real repentance means doing as well as feeling; and the first thing to do is to read carefully

through that sad chapter of the past which we would so gladly close for ever, in order that we may truly know what we have been doing; and laying our sin before God in all its meanness, stripped of every excuse, implore His pardon. It may be, of course, if we have been grievously sinning against others, that our conscience will bid us make open confession and reparation; but in every case there must be absolute plainness with ourselves, absolute submission to God. You see it is not a pleasant nor an easy thing to repent; think of this too when you are going to sin.

III. Consider the especial sin and its punishment which are denounced in our text; the sin of spiritual barrenness, what I may call ineffectualness, the failure to help our fellow-creatures, and its punishment, the loss of power to help.

Day by day, and hour by hour, the choice of good and evil is offered to you, and every time you choose the better part you are bearing fruit acceptable to God; every time you yield, and choose the worst, you are losing power; and remember this, that if you go on refusing God's service, and doing what seems easiest, a time will come when it will be too late, when the will is utterly paralysed, and repentance is only despair. To such an one the judgment is come in his lifetime; on him already the terrible doom is pronounced, 'Let no fruit grow on thee henceforward for ever'. Is it not the experience of all of you, that already your own shortcomings have prevented you from boldly rebuking vice, or stretching out a hand of help, when you would gladly have done it, if you had dared.

Let us learn of Jesus Christ how the poor wasted lives, which we manage so ill for ourselves, may become rich and useful—these are His words: 'I am the Vine, ye are the branches. He that abideth in Me and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit, for without Me ye can do nothing.'—J. H. F. Peile, *Ecclesia Discens*, p. 97.

FRUITLESSNESS

'And when He saw a fig tree in the way, He came to it, and found nothing thereon, but leaves only, and said unto it, Let no fruit grow on thee henceforward for ever. And presently the fig tree withered away.'—Matthew xxi. 19.

The whole thing is symbolical—only so is it intelligible.

I. Christ Seeking Fruit.—He comes to give, but also to require. He has a right to you. He is the Creator of you, as of the tree, and He is the Redeemer. He desires fruit from you. He not only demands, but desires, longs for and delights in it. The fruit He desires is yourself.

II. The Barrenness which is a Crime.—What a lively image of human nature this is—plenty of leaves, that is professions, talk, etc., but no fruit! Now observe that naturally we ought to bring forth fruit. Human nature is made for God, to blossom in goodness just as does the tree. He comes requiring, for the demands of God's law cannot drop down to our impotence. What we ought to be remains always the same, however much we may vary.

III. The Close of the Time of Seeking.—This points to the great law of the limitation of the period of probation. The whole analogy of God's dealings seems to teach that the time of probation is limited. Christ comes seeking fruit for the last time, then there is:—

IV. The Punishment of Fruitlessness by Perpetual Fruitlessness.—Sin punished by continual sinfulness. A natural process which God allows to take effect. And this is the most awful idea of hell, that the bottomless pit is an endless descent; that the fire which shall never be quenched is the fire of burning passions; that the chains of darkness are 'the cords of his sins'. Every sin tends thitherwards.—A. Maclaren.

THE BARREN FIG-TREE

'And when He saw a fig tree in the way, He came to it, and found nothing thereon, but leaves only, and said unto it, Let no fruit grow no thee henceforward for ever. And presently the fig tree withered away.'—Matthew xxi. 19.

This tree was a symbol of that which, in man, is a worse sin than a merely fruitless life. It had leaves, you will observe, though it had no fruit. That was the distinction of this particular tree among its fellows ranged along the road, with their bare, leafless, unpromising branches. They held out hopes of nothing beyond what met the eye. This tree, with its abundant leaves, gave promise of fruit that might be well-nigh ripe, and thus it was a symbol of moral or of religious pretentiousness.

I. And thus the fig-tree represented immediately, we cannot doubt, in our Lord's intention, the actual state of the Jewish people. The heathen nations, judged from a Divine point of view, were barren enough. Israel was barren also, but then Israel was also pretentious and false. Israel was the fig-tree of the spoken parable which our Lord had pronounced just a year before. No Jew with his eye on the language of the Prophets, particularly of Ezekiel, could have doubted that in this parable our Lord referred to the Jewish people; but what He then taught by words He now would teach, in its completeness, by action, for now the year for which the dresser of the vineyard had pleaded had just run out. During that year of patient appeal our Lord had stretched out His hands, in entreaty, all day long, to a disobedient and gainsaying people. The tree by the roadside was a visible symbol of the moral condition of Israel as it presented itself to the eye of Jesus Christ, and there was no longer any reason for suspending the judgment which had been foretold in the Saviour's parable. 'No man eat fruit of thee, hereafter, for ever.' If humanity needed light, strength, peace, consolations, Israel could no longer give them. Israel was hereafter to be a blasted and withered tree on the wayside of history.

II. But the parable applies with equal force to nations or to Churches in Christendom, which make great pretensions and do little or nothing of real value to mankind. For a time the tree waves its leaves in the wind. It lives on, sustained by the

traditional habits and reverence of ages. But, at His own time, Christ passes along the highway—passes to inquire and to judge some unforeseen calamity, some public anxiety, some shock to general confidence, lifts the leaves of that tree, and discovers its real fruitlessness.

III. To every individual Christian this parable is full of warning. The religious activity of the human soul may be divided, roughly, into leaves and fruit—into showy forms of religious activity and interest, on the one side, and the direct produce of religious conviction on the other. It is much easier, we all know, to grow leaves than to grow fruit, and many a man's life veils the absence of fruit by the abundance of leaves. It is always easier, for instance, to take interest in and to discuss religious questions, than to submit the will entirely to religious principle. An anxious question for all of us is whether the foliage, so to call it, of our Christian life is the covering of fruit beneath that which is ripening for heaven, or whether it is only a thing of precocious and unnatural growth which has drained away the tree's best sap before its time, and made good fruit almost impossible. To take an interest in religious questions, in religious society, in religious observances, is most right and important; but it is not necessarily the same thing as being the servant of Christ our Lord in whose soul His wonder-working grace is bringing forth the fruit of the Spirit—'love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance'. We know that what He demands is fruit, not merely leaves.—H. P. Liddon, *Penny Pulpit*, vol. xiv. No. 830, p. 317.

References.—XXI. 19.—R. W. Church, *Village Sermons* (2nd Series), p. 71. H. P. Liddon, *Sermons on Some Words of Christ*, p. 100; see also *Expository Sermons on the New Testament*, p. 45. J. Parker, *Hidden Springs*, p. 98. XXI. 21.—H. Ward Beecher, *Sermons* (1st Series), p. 536. XXI. 22.—F. E. Paget, *Helps and Hindrances to the Christian Life*, vol. ii. p. 131. XXI. 23.—J. A. Bain, *Questions Answered by Christ*, p. 65. A. F. Winnington Ingram, *Lenten Mission*, 1905, p. 35. XXI. 23-27.—A. B. Davidson, *Waiting Upon God*, p. 183. F. D. Maurice, *Lincoln's Inn Sermons*, vol. iv. p. 84; see also *Sermons*, p. 95. XXI. 23-46.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xlvii. No. 2756. XXI. 25.—H. J. Martyn, *For Christ and the Truth*, p. 158.

WORKING FOR THE MASTER

'A certain man had two sons; and he came to the first, and said, Son, go work to-day in my vineyard. He answered and said, I will not: but afterward he repented, and went. And he came to the second, and said likewise. And he answered and said, I go, sir: and went not.'—Matthew xxi. 28-30.

I. Let us consider how this parable applies to the classes our Lord was especially addressing at that time. You will find on looking at the context that our Lord was addressing the elders and chief priests in the Temple. The chief priests and elders and Pharisees whose outward deportment seemed to make them correspond with the one who said, 'I go, sir, but went not,' rejected our Lord's teaching, disparaged His miracles, refused His invitations and scorned His threatenings, and, on the other hand, the history shows us that His preaching of the truth came home with power and effect to the hearts of the publicans and the harlots who pressed into the kingdom of God. Such is the application of the parable to those whom our Lord primarily addressed.

You will see how it applies with equal force to the Jew and the Gentile.

II. Let us bring this home to ourselves. Does not this parable find, in almost every congregation, two classes very aptly represented on the one hand by the first son who refused but afterwards went, and on the other by the second son who seemed to assent but nevertheless went not. In almost every congregation you will find a number of persons who may be very easily wrought upon and impressed by peculiar circumstances. There will be many who will listen with eager, breathless attention as the message comes: 'Go work to-day in My vineyard'. The attitude they assume, their eager, riveted interest, might well fill a minister's heart with hope and confidence. Yet often those who say, 'I will not,' will doubtless be found amongst the best workers in the vineyard of Christ.

How often have some of you known it in your own experience how the promise made on a sick bed is altogether forgotten when the season of health returns, and he who under sickness and trial responded readily to all the minister had to say about eternity shows how evanescent have been the resolutions he made, and the man who said 'I go' afterwards went not.

III. The message comes to every one of us, 'Son, go work to-day in My vineyard'. Prodigals as many of us may be, all our wanderings do not destroy the fact that we are still, in some sense, God's children, and He addresses us as our father: 'Son, go work to-day in My vineyard'.

But though salvation is freely provided and offered to us and becomes ours by faith in Him who wrought it out, yet there is a work for every one of us to do. There is no room for sloth, we are summoned to work for God, for ourselves and for others, and to work to-day. To-day is the only time that we can call our own.

References.—XXI. 28.—C. G. Lang, *Church Times*, vol. lv. 9 Feb. 1906, p. 183. F. W. Farrar, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxxvii. 1890, p. 353. W. L. Watkinson, *ibid.* vol. liv. 1898, p. 184; see also vol. lxvi. 1904, p. 122. H. W. Burrows, *Oxford Lent Sermons*, 1868, p. 45. A. F. Winnington Ingram, *The Call of the Father*, p. 114. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxiii. No. 1338.

PROMISING WITHOUT DOING

'A certain man had two sons; and he came to the first, and said, Son, go work to-day in my vineyard. He answered and said, I will not: but afterward he repented, and went. And he came to the second, and said likewise. And he answered and said, I go, sir; and went not.'—Matthew xxi. 28-30.

So very difficult is obedience, so hardly won is every step in our Christian course, so sluggish and inert our corrupt nature, that I would have a man dis-

believe he can do one jot or tittle beyond what he has already done; refrain from borrowing aught on the hope of the future, however good a security for it he seems to be able to show; and never take his good feelings and wishes in pledge for one single untried deed. Nothing but *past* acts are the vouchers for *future*. Past sacrifices, past labours, past victories over yourselves—these, my brethren, are the tokens of the like in store, and doubtless of greater in store; for the path of the just is as the shining, growing light. But trust nothing short of these. 'Deeds, not words and wishes,' this must be the watchword of your warfare and the ground of your assurance But if you have done nothing firm and manly hitherto, if you are as yet the coward slave of Satan, and the poor creature of your lusts and passions, never suppose you will one day rouse yourselves from your indolence.—J. H. NEWMAN.

REFERENCES.—XXI. 28-30.—J. H. Newman, *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, vol. i. p. 165. H. Scott Holland, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lviii. 1895, p. 145. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xlvii. No. 2747. XXI. 28-31.—Stopford A. Brooke, *Short Sermons*, p. 287. T. Sadler, *Sermons for Children*, p. 30. C. J. Vaughan, *Last Words in the Parish Church of Doncaster*, p. 293. XXI. 28-32.—B. W. Maturin, *Practical Studies on the Parables of Our Lord*, p. 110. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xiii. No. 742. Trench, *Parables*, p. 191. Calderwood, *ibid.* p. 163. Marcus Dods, *ibid.* p. 171. XXI. 28-32; 33-43.—R. Winterbotham, *The Kingdom of Heaven*, p. 129.

'Afterward he repented himself and went.'—MATTHEW XXI. 29.

THAT doing of the right thing, after a term of paralysis, cowardice—any evil name—is one of the mighty reliefs, equal to happiness, of longer duration.—GEORGE MEREDITH, *One of Our Conquerors*, chap. XXV.

REFERENCES.—XXI. 30.—H. Ward Beecher, *Sermons* (1st Series), p. 414. XXI. 31.—C. H. Parkhurst, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xlvi. 1894, p. 388.

'Ye repented not afterward, that ye might believe him.'—MATTHEW XXI. 32.

I HAVE often observed how incongruous and irrational the common temper of mankind is, especially of youth, in that they are not ashamed to sin, and yet are ashamed to repent; not ashamed of the action for which they ought justly to be esteemed fools, but are ashamed of the returning, which only can make them be esteemed wise men.—DEFOE, *Robinson Crusoe*, chap. I.

REFERENCES.—XXI. 33-46.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—St. Matthew XVIII.-XXVIII.* p. 107. XXI. 37.—R. D. B. Rawnsley, *Village Sermons* (3rd Series), p. 12. XXI. 39.—H. Hensley Henson, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxviii. 1905, p. 296. XXI. 40, 41.—H. Scott Holland, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lviii. 1900, p. 153. XXI. 44.—J. Smith, *The Integrity of Scripture*, p. 109. A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—St. Matthew XVIII.-XXVIII.* p. 116; see also *Sermons Preached in Manchester*, p. 1; *Creed and Conduct*, p. 348. XXII.—G. Tyrrell, *Oil and Wine*, p. 103. XXII. 1.—B. Wilberforce, *Sanctification by the Truth*, p. 40. XXII. 1-4.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—St. Matthew XVIII.-XXVIII.* p. 126. XXII. 1-14.—B. W. Maturin, *Practical Studies on the Parables of Our Lord*, p. 124. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xlviii. No. 2809. XXII. 2.—J. Vaughan, *Fifty Sermons* (9th Series), p. 193. XXII. 2-4.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xvii. No. 975. XXII. 3.—F. E. Paget, *Helps and Hindrances to the Christian Life*, vol. ii. p. 108.

THE FRIVOLOUS SPIRIT

'But they made light of it.'—MATTHEW XXII. 5.

I. THERE are of course some things that every wise man will make light of. There are petty grievances in every lot. 'Think, sir,' said Dr. Johnson to a worrying friend, 'think, sir, how infinitely little that will seem a twelve-month hence.' It is an untold blessing to have a little vision and a little humour, and see things in their true sizes and proportions. There is a gentle art of making light.

But it is the corruption of the best that is the worst: and it is the overstraining of our instincts that degrades: and it is the making light of everything that is our ruin.

II. These men of our text were essentially frivolous. And I want to guard you now against a common mistake. I want you to remember that there is a whole world of difference between frivolity and a truly buoyant spirit. It is one thing to be a light weight. It is quite another thing to be light-hearted. Many a solemn face is but a mask for an utterly frivolous and petty soul. And many a heart that is tremendously in earnest about life, has the most infectious laugh in the whole company. The Pharisees were most supremely solemn; but, on the testimony of Jesus, most supremely flippant.

III. There is a double condemnation of frivolity.

1. It is utterly insufficient for life's journey. There are worse bankruptcies than ever come before the courts. There are men who go bankrupt in hope, in aspiration, in ideal, long before the end. And life is far too grim, and sometimes far too sad, to be carried through with a frivolous heart.

And is not that one task of sorrow in the world? It sobers, sanctifies: brings men and women to themselves again, and bringing them to themselves leads them to God.

2. But for us who are Christians there is another condemnation of frivolity. It is the fact that Jesus our teacher and our Lord has mightily increased the seriousness of life. I could understand an old pagan being frivolous, for for him there was nothing infinite in man. But Jesus has come, and God has tabernacled and tabernacles still in man; and life has been lifted into heavenly meanings, and swung out through death into eternal ages; and when my life means fellowship, kinship with God, eternity, then to be frivolous is antichrist.—G. H. MORRISON, *Flood-Tide*, p. 34.

MAKING LIGHT OF THE GOSPEL

'But they made light of it.'—MATTHEW XXII. 5.

'BUT they made light of it.' They made nothing of the grand chance. How could they make anything of it? Their characters are here described. If their characters or occupation or engagement had not been referred to we might have invented reasons for this

frivolity; but the reason of the frivolity is given in the parable itself. These were prosperous men; they had married wives and bought oxen and entered into merchandise and possessed themselves of large farms. These people had never needed a Gospel; that is to say, they had never been sensible of their need of it. A prosperous man, as the world counts prosperous, does not want the Gospel. He could not understand it if he heard it, it would be an alien tongue; only the broken-hearted can listen to the Gospel; only the bereaved catch the word resurrection as if it were a revelation; only those who have been desolated and orphaned and smitten in two can detect a possible hope in such sweet words as the Gospel gives. The fat beast needs no organ or trumpet or banner or promise or sacramental love; he lives beneath the Gospel, away from the great offer made in blood.

I. Let us beware of frivolity. Frivolity always means ruin; frivolity, being translated, means loss.

Is this frivolity, destruction, or ruin only in Gospel things? No; frivolity is ruin everywhere. That is the great plea of the Christian Gospel; it says, Fools, hear me; you are not only wasting me, you are wasting life. The frivolous man is not only wasting his chance of heaven, he is wasting his own business; that is how the Gospel has such a determining and beneficent hold over men.

II. What is this age suffering from? Want of discipline. I hear a great deal about making life cheerier, brighter, this and that, and something else: all of which may within given limits be right; but the character that made England, the only England that cannot be shaken, was a character of hard work, labour—a misunderstood and degraded term. Until we get back to discipline we shall not get back to hardihood, to true soldierliness, to the pith that means victory in any contest. It is the disciplinarian wht wins, only he may have long to wait for his victory; yet when it comes no man can pluck it from him.

III. Now there are many persons who make light of opportunity. They squander away their chances; they are always here at the wrong time, and they are always there at the wrong place, and they were always just going to do it, but suddenly the night fell, the night in which no man can work. Be on the outlook for opportunities, be on the outlook for the best chances; make every occasion great; make every call a call to a feast, the best feast you can provide; and if you are going to provide a good feast in your pulpit it will not be you that fail, if failure there is, it will be God, and God cannot ultimately fail.

Until you get back to your principles of faith, the innermost meanings of the Divine purpose, you may get up as many twentieth-century funds as you please, and they all amount to nothing. Have no faith in gigantic financial manipulation, have no faith even in a self-constructed patronage, have no place to which you must go cap in hand to ask for another dole; so live your principles as to leave God to supply your necessities, and He will do it. You have never tried Him. Call upon Me, saith He, prove Me now, let faith prove the God of redemption, and there will be a great marriage feast, and all things will be ready. Do not begin at the wrong end of things. Do not begin at the money end; begin at the prayer end, the faith end, the self-examination end.—Joseph Parker, *City Temple Pulpit*, vol. i. p. 218.

References.—XXII. 5.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. ii. No. 98. S. Baring-Gould, *Village Preaching for a Year* (2nd Series), vol. ii. p. 167. XXII. 10.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxxiv. No. 2022. XXII. 10-14.—H. Scott Holland, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xlviii. 1895, p. 177.

THE INTRUDER AT THE FEAST

'When the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment.'—Matthew xxii. 11.

A feast is an old picture of Gospel blessings (Prov. ix. 1-5; Is. xxv. 6), but it remained for Christ to show them, as a wedding feast, an occasion of greatest joy. The first manifestation of His glory was His providing for a wedding feast (John ii. 11). What will the last triumphant manifestation be? (Rev. xix. 7, 17, 18).

The guests who were first invited were *the Jews*. God first sent to them His Prophets (v. 3); but they would not hear (Acts vii. 51, 52). When the sacrifice was offered, and all was ready, He sent again His Apostles (v. 4), but they refused to hear (Acts xiii. 46; xxviii. 17-29); so wrath came upon them to the uttermost (1 Thess. ii. 14-16).

The guests who are now being gathered in to the wedding feast are *all who will come*—Jew or Gentile (Rom. i. 16). It matters not who, provided they are *in Christ* (Col. ii. 11).

But now mark—at wedding feasts in ancient times there was a certain garment peculiar to the occasion, and those who came without it were considered intruders. Here we find a man who entered without a wedding garment. See—

'**I. How he was Discovered** (v. 11).—The king came in to see the guests—God notes all (Rev. ii. 1, 2; Cant. vii. 12). The man was not discovered *till the king himself saw him* (Jer. xxiii. 24; 1 Sam. xvi. 7). But when once the king was come, then he was detected (Prov. xv. 3, 11; Amos ix. 2-4). What a discovery shall take place when Christ shall come!

II. How he was Tried (v. 12).—The king takes him on his profession of friendship (Ps. l. 21). He asks him only, 'How camest thou in hither, *not having on a wedding garment?*' this is the one regulation (John x. 1). How do you come otherwise (Ps. l. 16, 17). What does he say? Nothing. '*He was speechless*' (Rom. iii. 19; Job v. 16).

III. How he was Sentenced (v. 13).—He was bound (Matt. xiii. 30-41). He was taken away (Matt. xxv. 41-46). He was cast into outer darkness (John xii. 35, 36; viii. 12). Such is the end when

God visits an *unprepared* soul (Job xxvii. 8-10; Matt. xxiv. 50, 51; John xv. 2-6).

References.—XXII. 11, 12.—H. Montagu Butler, *Harrow School Sermons*, p. 387. XXII. 11-13.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxxiv. No. 2024. XXII. 11-14.—*Ibid.* vol. xvii. No. 976. R. H. McKim, *The Gospel in the Christian Year*, p. 137.

THE SELF-DECEIVER DETECTED

'And he was speechless.'—Matthew xxii. 12.

There is a spirit by nature, in all of us, which refuses to accept salvation as a gift of free grace. The feeling is, that we can accomplish our salvation by our own efforts and deservings.

I. When the man who has refused to clothe himself with the wedding garment is confronted with the king, he is absolutely speechless. Why is this? First, because he sees his offence in the right light. To us, in the present twilight state of existence, the sin of a practical rejection of Jesus Christ seems a very trifling matter. But in the estimation of God the matter assumes a very different aspect. In God's sight the sin of all sins is the rejection of the Son of His love. It comprises all other sins. Perhaps it is not easy for us to see this now. But we shall see it hereafter. And a terrible thing it will be if we see it too late; for when the great final disclosure comes, what will befall the man who carelessly, thoughtlessly, has put away from him the proffered righteousness of Jesus Christ; and gone, in reliance upon his own merits and his own strength, into the awful presence of the heart-searching God? He will be speechless.

II. 'But,' you may say, 'why does he not cry for mercy?' Because it is too late, and he knows that it is too late. The time in which he might have taken the wedding garment is passed by.

III. 'But,' it may be said again, 'is it possible that unconverted, unspiritual men, should go out of this world in perfect ignorance of their condition before God, and wake up, only when the light of eternity falls upon them, to see things as they really are?' I believe it to be perfectly possible. I should believe it, even if I had not the teaching of this parable to guide me. Men *can* deceive themselves as to their standing before God, and wake up to the consciousness of the truth, when it is too late to alter what has been done.

'Search us, O God, and know our hearts; try us, and know our thoughts! And see if there be any wicked way in us, and lead us all in the way everlasting.'—Gordon Calthrop, *Penny Pulpit*, vol. xli. No. 680, p. 106.

References.—XXII. 12.—A. G. Mortimer, *One Hundred Miniature Sermons*, vol. ii. p. 130. W. Howell Evans, *Sermons for the Church's Year*, p. 216. XXII. 15-22.—H. Hensley Henson, *Christ and the Nation*, p. 86; see also *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxxii. 1907, p. 216. XXII. 17.—J. A. Bain, *Questions Answered by Christ*, p. 74.

HUMAN COINS

'Whose is this image and superscription?'—Matthew xxii. 20.

The question, 'Whose is this image and superscription?' was an example of one of our Lord's suggestions for a thought-excursion into the transcendent truth of the inseverability of God and man.

There is a threefold lesson for us, arising out of the suggested thought-excursion, in our Lord's question—theological, personal, practical.

I. The Theological Lesson, from the human coin stamped with the Divine image, is one of the utmost importance as a stimulus to optimism. It is the transcendent twin-truth of the Eternal humanity in God, and the Eternal Divinity in man; that inasmuch as all that is must have pre-existed, as a first principle, in the mind of the Infinite Originator, and as the highest of all that is, so far as we at present know, is man, the archetypal original of man must be in the Deity; and therefore man, however buried and stifled now in the corruptible body, is, in his inmost ego, indestructible, and inseverably linked to the Father of Spirits. Moreover, that for the purpose of Divine self-manifestation, man is as necessary to God as God is to man. As God's power is revealed in the wheeling planet, God's nature is revealed in the thinking man. Inasmuch as humanity is the chosen vehicle of the self-unfolding of the absolute, humanity will, through much initial imperfection, and through many changes, struggle upwards and onwards in development, until, at last, it shall be found complete in Him, and the pre-ordained purpose of the Absolute be completely fulfilled.

II. The Personal Lesson.—'With God,' said Tocqueville, 'each one counts for one.' Each one of us is a responsible, moral being, perfected, purified, tested and found faithful, is not machine-made, he must be grown; he is the product of evolution; and, for the purposes of evolution, he must emerge triumphant from resistance, as the blade of wheat emerges triumphant from clay and stones. That this educative operation of the will of the Father-Spirit may be effected, man is, by the determinate foreknowledge of God, a composite being. He possesses an inferior animal nature, a lower region of appetite, perception, imagination, tendency, and so on; in other words, to carry on the analogy used by our Lord, *there is a reverse side to the coin.* Obviously, if we concentrate all our attention on the reverse side of the coin, we are apt to forget that the king's image is on the other side. We can only see one side at a time; and while we gaze at the reverse side, and the other side is hidden, doubt, depression, pessimism, are the inevitable result. What is the moral of the analogy? It is this: the inevitable inaccuracy of human judgments; the need for caution in our verdicts.

1. As to ourselves. Remember, you cannot see both sides of the coin at once.

2. In our judgments of others. Here again, remember, we cannot see both sides of the coin at once, and therefore our judgments are literally one-sided.

III. The Practical Lesson.—'Whose is this image and superscription?' asks the Head of humanity of the human items that make up the race. A recognition of the truth underlying the question would prove to be the golden key which would unlock all the great

social problems of the age. I believe that all the prominent evils which degrade humanity would pass away before it, and the kingdoms of the world would become the kingdoms of our Lord.—Archdeacon Wilberforce, *Speaking Good of His Name*, p. 75.

Illustration.—Did you ever examine closely the reverse side of a sovereign? Close to the date you will see the minute capital letters 'B. P.' Not one person in a thousand has ever seen these initials; they have not looked for them. They are the initials of Benedetto Pistrucchi, the talented chief engraver to the Mint, in the reign of George III., the designer of the coin which Ruskin said was the most beautiful coin in Europe—the English sovereign.—Basil Wilberforce, *Speaking Good of His Name*, p. 83.

THE IMAGE OF GOD

'Whose is this image and superscription?'—Matthew xxii. 20.

With His finger upon the coin, our Lord enunciated a great truth. He showed that the authority of God and of man are not to be opposed to each other. 'Render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's; and unto God the things that are God's.'

Now consider:—

I. What ought we to render to Cæsar, the representative of human authority? As Christians we are taught to render to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour. The principle of government is from God, and the governor who rules the nation has a right to levy taxes from his subjects for the good of the nation. Moreover, as the principle of government is from God, the governor is *primâ facie* entitled to fear and honour as the representative of Divine authority.

The governor is to be obeyed because 'there is no power but of God; and the powers that be are ordained of God'.

Our duty to the State requires us both to obey the laws of the State and to uphold our rulers by the active force of earnest and constant intercession.

II. A penny piece is a token of the law of our duty to Cæsar, but we bear upon ourselves a higher image and superscription, which reminds us of our duty to God, from Whose mint we have come.

What then are the things that are God's, the things which duty requires us to render to Him?

The Church Catechism gives us our answer. It teaches us to render to God faith, fear, love, worship, thanksgiving, trust, prayer, honour, and a life-long service, with all the powers of our heart, and mind, and soul, and strength. The understanding is to be opened to know what the will of the Lord is. The affections are given to us in order that they may be set on things above, and not on things on the earth. The speech is to be with grace, seasoned with the salt of sound wisdom. The eyes, the ears, and all the members of the body are to be rendered to God as a living sacrifice. We owe to God public worship, private devotion, all such good works as are prepared for us to walk in, prayer, fasting, almsgiving, and life-long earnest labour in our Heavenly Father's vineyard.

III. What then is left for ourselves? Nothing. The Lord Himself is the portion of mine inheritance. Man is not created for himself and his own glory, but for God and His glory.

Christ loved the Church and gave Himself for it. He asks the members of the Church to love Him and to give themselves wholly to Him. Not until we give to God the things that are God's, ourselves, our souls and bodies, do we find rest, or peace, or joy, or a life worth living.—Canon Bodington, *The Twelve Gates of the Holy City*, p. 175.

THE CATHOLICITY OF CHRISTIANITY

'Whose is this image and superscription?'—Matthew xxii. 20.

Christianity comes to us all, in all points, in all interests, and in all undertakings, with this one great question: you are living your life; every act you do bears the stamp of some image or superscription, whose image and superscription is it? Unless it bears the image and superscription of the Christ, it is not the image and superscription which God has a right to expect.

I. Christianity and the Business.—Work is a law of life. When a man goes forth to work, if he undertakes an honest occupation and trade, it bears the impress of God, for it is God's work given to men. But there always comes in the higher law of the moral and spiritual life. The Master asks us—and it is a practical question—in the pursuit of your profession, in the pursuit of your trade, in the pursuit of your business, what is the moral and spiritual influence which is at work? What is influencing you? Whose image and superscription does that calling bear?

II. Christianity and Home Life.—Or look at the home life, which is the source and the very centre of the national existence. Does the father or the mother say, this is my prayer, this is my desire, this is my passion and longing for my child, that he should be great in the eyes of the Lord? Whose image and superscription, says the Master, is being written upon the home life?

III. The Right Use of Money.—When the Master spoke these words and asked this question, He held a Roman coin in His hand. Every coin bears some image or some superscription. The value in the markets of the world comes from the image and superscription. But there is another mint in the world besides the mint which coins gold and silver. There is the mint in the man himself—the purposes and the uses to which he puts that money. As he pays his money out he impresses a new image upon it; and the Master says to each one of us as we spend our coin, Whose image and superscription does it bear?

IV. Life in Relationship.—We do not live for ourselves. We live in relationship. The paradox of life is, He that loses himself shall save himself. You never know the greatness of your own soul, nor the greatness of your fellow-men, nor the magnificence of

life till you lift your eyes above and beyond the little hedge which surrounds your own body. Nay, no man lives to himself, nor dies to himself; and unless we catch the spirit of Christ, which is the spirit of sacrifice and unselfishness, we have not yet got His image and superscription stamped upon us.—A. B. Boyd Carpenter, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxxii. 1907, p. 84.

References.—XXII. 20.—G. H. C. MacGregor, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xliv. 1893, p. 134. XXII. 20, 21.—J. Stalker, *ibid.* vol. lvii. 1900, p. 372.—XXII. 21.—B. Wilberforce, *Feeling After Him*, p. 223. R. W. Hiley, *A Year's Sermons*, vol. ii. p. 241. R. Flint, *Sermons and Addresses*, p. 254. S. Baring-Gould, *Village Preaching for a Year* (2nd Series), vol. ii. p. 192. Henry Alford, *Quebec Chapel Sermons*, vol. ii. p. 194. J. Baldwin Brown, *Misread Passages of Scripture*, p. 14. A. G. Mortimer, *One Hundred Miniature Sermons*, vol. ii. p. 147. J. Parker, *Studies in Texts*, vol. i. p. 152. H. Wace, *Religion in Common Life*, p. 90. H. Scott Holland, *Church Times*, vol. xlvi. 1901, p. 340; see also *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lx. 1901, p. 193.

CHRIST AND THE HERODIANS

'When they had heard these words, they marvelled, and left Him, and went their way.'—Matthew xxii. 22.

This passage invites us to 'consider Him who endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself'. There are three kinds of people the Christian finds constantly opposed to him in the world—the *self-righteous* man, the *unbelieving* man, and the *worldly* man. Here we see our blessed Lord dealing with each. The Pharisees (vv. 34, 35); the Sadducees (v. 23); and the Herodians (v. 16). It is with the last of these that we are specially employed to-day, and we shall dwell upon the two leading points of the narrative:—

I. The Question put by the Herodians.—You know that they were a political party amongst the Jews who favoured the rule of the Herod family. There were no religious pretensions about them; they were essentially worldly. They ask, 'Is it lawful to give tribute to Cæsar, or not?' Mark, if He said 'Yes,' there was the anger of the people to be apprehended; if He said 'No,' there was the appearance of revolution. So their object was to *entangle* Him (v. 15), and thus worldly people are constantly asking, 'Do you think it right to do this or that?' not because they wish to know, but because they desire to make you trip. Let this remind us of the character of such. They plot against God's people (Ps. xxxviii. 12; cf. Neh. iv. 8), they are always enticing to evil (Prov. i. 10-14; 2 Tim. iii. 6), they delight in the iniquity of others (Prov. ii. 4; Rom. i. 32). Such are worldly people.

II. The Answer given by Our Lord.—He calls for a penny, and making them acknowledge that it belonged to Cæsar, He says, 'Render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and unto God the things that are God's' (vv. 19-21). It is only by following this example that the child of God can meet the world. Realize the difference between those who rule in the world. There are *two* kingdoms (Col. i. 13), *two* rulers (Eph. ii. 2; Acts iii. 15), *two* laws (Rom. vii. 22, 23; vi. 16). There are *but* the two, and the mistake is attempting a neutral position (Matt. vi. 24; Luke xi. 23). If we are children of God we are stamped with the image of the King (Rom. viii. 29), we know what our duty is (1 Cor. vi. 19, 20).

References.—XXII. 22.—E. Fowle, *Plain Preaching to Poor People* (2nd Series), p. 117. E. C. Wickham, *The Glory of Service, Sermons*, 1895-99. XXII. 29.—T. L. Lynch, *Three Months' Ministry*, p. 193. J. Bell, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xli. 1892, p. 186.

'In the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven.'—Matthew xxii. 30.

'All I can say about the text is that it has nought to do with me and my wife,' Charles Kingsley wrote once to a friend. 'I know that, if immortality is to include in my case identity of person, I shall feel to her for ever what I feel now. That feeling may be developed in ways which I do not expect; it may have provided for it forms of expression very different from any which are among the holiest sacraments of life: of that I take no care. The union I believe to be as eternal as my own soul. I have no rule to say in what other pair of lovers it may or may not be eternal. I leave all in the hands of a good God.' Elsewhere, in his correspondence, Kingsley returns to this subject, avowing that this text 'has been to me always a comfort. I am so well and really married on earth, that I should be exceeding sorry to be married again in heaven. All I can say is, if I do not love my wife, body and soul, as well there as I do here, then there is neither resurrection of my body nor of my soul, but of some other, and I shall not be I.'

References.—XXII. 30.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xiv. No. 842. Henry Ward Beecher, *Sermons* (4th Series), p. 551. XXII. 31, 32.—H. L. Mansel, *Oxford Street Sermons*, 1868, p. 29.

THE HOPE OF IMMORTALITY

'God is not the God of the dead, but of the living.'—Matthew xxii. 32.

I. The Hebrews never believed that death means absolute extinction. The common belief was that at death a man descends into Sheol, 'the land of darkness and the shadow of death,' a place of silence and forgetfulness. Enoch and Elijah were supposed to have escaped this dreary fate, but only by not dying.

I. Had the Israelites, then, no hopes that were not bounded by the grave? Yes, they had. But it was the glorious future of their nation, to which they looked forward, and on this earth. The feeling of solidarity was much stronger with them than it is with us, and especially, like all Orientals, they hoped to live again in their children and grandchildren, so that childlessness was to them a greater calamity than death itself.

Such was the common Jewish faith. The Jew loved life and feared death, but he was almost content with the thought that his descendants would

inhabit a more glorious Jerusalem, while he was lying in Sheol, an unsubstantial ghost.

II. It is the prophets who first preach individual retribution. Jeremiah and Ezekiel both protest against the 'sour grapes' proverb, and say that 'Every one shall die for his own iniquity'. This necessarily leads to belief in a personal future life.

In the interval between the latest books of the Old Testament and the Gospels, the belief in the resurrection of individuals grew steadily, till in our Lord's time it was only rejected by the Sadducees.

III. Our Lord Himself gives us very little definite teaching about the next world. He was understood by His disciples to have promised an early return in glory to inaugurate a kingdom at Jerusalem; and it was believed that the dead Christians would be resuscitated to share in it. In this they were mistaken; but it is plain that our Lord spoke of the resurrection mainly in connexion with His *kingdom*, and that the penalty of His enemies would be exclusion from the kingdom, and banishment into outer darkness. All through the Bible, in the New Testament as well as in the Old, where immortality is referred to, it is *corporate* immortality which is mainly thought of. By corporate immortality I do not mean a sham immortality—a life in the memory of others. In its purer form, the desire for corporate immortality almost forgets the individual, as we have seen was the case with the Jews and early Christians. The triumph of the nation, of the Church, of the principles of righteousness, seems a much greater thing than our private survival, and it is easier to feel a strong faith in the eternal victory of a great cause than of a small individual, because the great cause enlists the highest capabilities, the most devoted efforts and sacrifices of one generation after another.

These considerations do not in any way affect the belief in personal immortality. That remains where it was. But I suggest that one chief reason why our faith in immortality is often so dim is that we are too self-centred in our thoughts about it. We think of our own resurrection, and that of our friends; but we do not, like the Biblical writers, think of the future and more glorious life of our nation, and of our Church, as part of our religious hope.—W. R. Inge, *All Saints' Sermons*, 1905-1907, p. 103.

References.—XXII. 32.—R. J. Campbell, *A Faith for To-day*, p. 331; see also, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lvii. 1900, p. 68. XXII. 32, 33.—F. E. Clark, *ibid.* vol. lviii. 1900, p. 111. XXII. 34-40 (R.V.).—R. E. Bartlett, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xlvi. 1894, p. 340. XXII. 34-46.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—St. Matthew XVIII.-XXVIII.* p. 135. XXII. 35-40.—H. Hensley Henson, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxiv. 1903, p. 276. S. Cox, *Expositions*, p. 88. XXII. 36-38.—W. Boyd Carpenter, *British Weekly Pulpit*, vol. ii. p. 111. XXII. 36-40.—H. Ward Beecher, *Sermons* (4th Series), p. 205.

RELIGION FOR THE ENTIRE MAN

'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.'—Matthew xxii. 37.

The religion of Christ is a religion for all men. It is universal in its adaptation to the needs of humanity. But it is more than this. It is a religion for the whole of man. There is not a power, or faculty, or energy given to us which lies outside its influence. It claims as its own all our being. This surely is the meaning of the never-to-be-forgotten definition in which our Lord sums up man's duty to God.

Now, as we look into this definition, full as it is of valuable teaching, there are two truths which stand out very distinctly and prominently.

I. The Revelation of God as a God to be Loved.—The first truth is one of special importance to the Jewish disciples. What is it? It is the grand revelation of God as a God to be loved. Till now they had not realized this. God a God to be reverenced, held in awe, served, feared—this they knew; only now and then faint glimpses of something better seem to have been given to them, and so He Who came to fulfil all things teaches them that love is to religion what atmosphere is to a landscape, what tone is to a picture, what life is to a body. 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God.'

II. Religion is worthy of Man's Highest Powers.—But side by side with this there stands out another truth of a very special importance to us Christians to-day. It is this. Religion, the religion of Christ, is worthy of a man's highest intellectual powers. How much this is overlooked in our day! 'With all thy heart'—that is, with all the emotional powers of a man; 'with all thy soul'—that is, with all the spiritual instincts of a man. Yes, this may be true of religion; but, 'with all thy mind,' with all the intellectual faculties of the man—nay, is not this going too far? Religion, a sentiment, a thing of the emotions, of the feelings, yes; but religion a science, a thing to be known as well as felt, to be studied as well as believed in; this, in these days of intellectual pride, is forgotten, if not openly denied.

III. The Intellect in Religion.—What could better employ the powers of man's intellect than this? We consider a man's life well lived who has studied the heavens, and has tracked the worlds along their shining orbits, even though he discovers no new world; or who has tried to unravel the tangled threads of history, and has gathered up a single thread of the birth, or rise, or decline, or death of only one nation; or who has for a few short years held the helm of the State, and steered the vessel safely through the shoals and quicksands of diplomacy. Shall we then regard his time wasted, his talents thrown away, who has sought to know the God Who made each shining world, Who holds in His hand the fate of dynasties, Who is the King of kings reigning over all the kingdoms of the world? Nay, if this be Religion, Religion is not only a science, but it is the queen of sciences.

IV. The Union of Knowledge and Love.—But we must not stop there. Religion is a science, but it is more than a science. What is lacking? Jesus tells us. Mark, He links together knowledge and love. He tells us that this knowledge of God will not be held within the limits of the intellect, but

must overflow into the heart. He teaches us that he who knows God will love God; aye, that the more a man knows God the more he must love Him. Knowledge and love, what a close connexion there is between them! The love of husband and wife deepens as years pass on. Or think again: we know something of the meaning of a mother's love. There is no love like a mother's; life, with its sorrows, and trials, and disappointments, only helps to make us know it better, and greater knowledge brings greater love. Shall not the earthly faintly outline for us the heavenly? The knowledge of God, what is it to the Christian? To know God is to know His love; and to know His love is to love Him in return. If our religion is unsatifying, it is because we know God so little; and for this lack of knowledge we have only ourselves to blame.

CHRISTIAN FAITH AND MODERN THOUGHT

'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy mind.'— MATTHEW XXII. 37.

I. THE members of the Church must become thinkers. By thinkers we do not mean men gifted with special learning, or intellectual power. Christian thinkers are men and women who really try to put their intelligence into the service of their religion; men and women who are anxious to learn about the Bible, the Creed, the Sacraments, the Church out of the best books that they can get; who try to think out quietly just where and why the great Christian Faith has found their own life and experience, and then seek to express the reason for the faith that is in them in words which are real to themselves, and which their own neighbours and friends can understand. Every Christian man who thus uses his mind in religion is a link between Christ and his own day and generation. And, remember, that the strength of the chain is the strength of the individual links that compose it.

II. Want of thinking gives advantage to doubt. In most cases it is through defect rather than excess of thinking that doubt comes in to disturb. The air we breathe is full of the germs of doubt. None of us can be protected from it. Now and then a germ may reach you, and if it find your mind swept and garnished, or furnished only with your old child-like notions of religious things, it will enter and do its work. There are many people who surrender the truths of Christianity before they have taken the trouble to understand them. The man who uses the best mind that God has given him, the best books he can reach and the best teachers he can find, to know really what his faith means, and to be able to express it intelligently to himself and his friends—that man is fortified against doubt.

III. Want of thought creates division. The party spirit, alas! we know is the greatest hindrance to the spirit of truth. We have a pleasant word in which we describe our divisions; we call them 'Schools of thought'. There is an unconscious irony in the phrase, for it is want of thought that is mainly responsible for the cleavage between these schools. Men become victims of catchwords—catchwords which are substitutes for thought, or else the victims of a shallow logic which moves with deceptive simplicity along a narrow groove. But the more we read and think, the more we see that the truth cannot be contained in these phrases, or tied in this narrow logic. Real thought always makes for synthesis; that is to say, for some point of view in which differences are not ignored or even lost, but merged in a deeper unity. And if only our ordinary Christians in England would begin to read and think a little more there would be more prospects of the spirit of Christian brotherhood.

IV. Let us put this plea for using our minds in religion on its truest and highest ground. It is a form of service. It is that love of God with all the mind which our Lord lays down as part of the first and the greatest duty of man. To give God the thoughts of our mind is part of our fundamental religious duty. We owe it to Him. He has given us these minds that they may be enriched and find their highest exercise in the study of His truth.—ARCHBISHOP LANG, *Church Times*, 23 Oct., 1908, p. 539.

LOVE TO GOD—SERVICE TO MAN

'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.'—MATTHEW XXII. 37.

THERE is discoverable in this injunction a command, consolation, a prophecy.

I. *A command;* a parental order that no loyal son may disobey. You say love is the one emotion that will not come at command. True, but it is possible for a man willingly to place his whole being in such an attitude towards the Eternal Father, that love shall be unfolded from the heart as flower and fruit from a plant in its right attitude to the sun; for this command is a claim upon the WHOLE of MAN for God; heart, soul, and mind; emotions, will, and intellect. As the whole of each tree by the seaside is bent in the direction of the prevailing wind, so the whole of each life must be bent by the prevailing influence of God. In the feeblest love of what is true God is loved by the mind. In the simplest longing after what is good, by the heart. And in every honest effort, mental and physical, after the attainment of our ideal, He is loved by the soul and the strength.

II. But there is also *consolation* as well as command, and it is here; it is the death-blow of pessimism; an overwhelming proof of the all-embracing love of God for man. God says, 'He that planted the ear, shall He not hear?' And any child of God today may say, 'He that commanded me to love HIM with all my heart and mind and soul, shall He not love ME with all His heart, and mind, and soul? And that He may remove any doubts as to whether His ideal of whole-hearted love is different from ours, He has brought into action His moral attributes in the Incarnation.

And Fatherhood says, 'What think ye of the

Christ?' Does that character satisfy you? Here is one loving you unto the death, with all His sacred heart, and mind, and soul, and He, with all the authority of the incomprehensible God, declares, 'He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father'.

III. The consolation leads us to the *prophecy*. Thou *shalt* love, in the perfected future, not now; the capacity is wanting in the natural state. God says shall; all God's shalls are ultimately irresistible. Every shall in the Bible is a promise as well as a command.

Every soul here is enfolded in the shall of God; God-begotten, God-enclosed; God-loved, is every man. To know it is salvation, for the redeemed are all men, the saved those that know it.—Archdeacon Wilberforce, *Feeling After Him*, p. 121.

Illustration.—Faraday learnt this Divine lesson in boyhood by a childish experience. As a little lad, humbly earning his bread by selling newspapers in the street, he was waiting outside the office of the *Edinburgh Courant* for the morning issue of the paper, and thrust his head and arms through the railings of the iron gate. He was a born metaphysician, and began to speculate on which side of the railings he was. 'My head and hands are on one side,' he said to himself, 'and my heart and body are on the other.' The gate was opened hastily before he could disengage himself, and the wrench he received taught him, as he said in after life, that all true work required head and heart and hands to be on the same side.—Basil Wilberforce, *Feeling After Him*, p. 127.

References.—XXII. 37.—W. Howell Evans, *Sermons for the Church's Year*, p. 257. S. A. Barnett, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xliv. 1893, p. 358. XXII. 37, 38.—S. Baring-Gould, *Village Preaching for a Year* (2nd Series), vol. ii. p. 151. XXII. 37-39.—R. T. Davidson, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxiv. 1903, p. 257. XXII. 37-40.—(R.V.) R. A. Armstrong, *ibid.*, vol. xli. 1892, p. 298.

SELF-LOVE—NEW VERSION

'Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.'—Matthew xxii. 39.

Perhaps this is the most familiar text or verse in the Bible. Shall I startle you if I say that the words imply, or even enjoin, love for self? Yet surely they do. For if we are to try to love other people greatly and also to love them as ourselves, clearly, there must be self-love of some sort implied or enjoined. But all depends on what you mean by self-love. If we mean self-indulgence, self-gratification, self-spoiling, so to speak, if we are thinking of the commonplace, vulgar, stupid aim of doing simply what we like best, what is easiest, what is most comfortable, then certainly it is a degrading, a humiliating, a pitiful thing to have that sort of self-love. But why explain it thus? Is that what love means? Can you think of it thus as applied to wife, or child, or friend? Surely not. We think then of something quite different.

I. There is a form of Self-Love, or, as we like better to call it, Self-respect, which is strengthening, ennobling, stimulating and uplifting, which is approved of God, which is useful to man. Each of us in the common experience of life finds out that he has two different levels, or two different compartments, as it would sometimes seem, to his own life. There is in us a better self and a worse self. When the Prodigal had gone to the lowest degradations he could find, better thoughts came. He 'came to himself,' and began to find out that he was worth something better.

II. Now what we have got to do is to Encourage that Higher Self and make it assert itself oftener than it does. For ourselves separately, each one ought to try sometimes to think, 'What do I suppose was God's purpose for me?' If we are each one to be helpful to others, keeping straight and pure and strong and high-minded, we must see to it first that, so far as God enables us, we are fit men ourselves.

III. How are we to set about it?

(*a*) *By going back to the very fountain of our faith,* that which lies at the centre and the root, the Lord Jesus Christ.

(*b*) *The inspiration is not by example only.* You might find it impossible to follow that, but for the knowledge on His part and on ours that He is with you and me to-day. He Who set that example, Who gave us that pattern, will hear, day by day, from you and me, in the dusty, busy, working, interrupted harassed life, the prayer that we uplift from the heart, 'Keep me pure, keep me brave. Take my life and let it be Consecrated, Lord, to Thee.'

'The second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.'—Matthew xxii. 39.

Whoever walks a furlong without sympathy walks to his own funeral drest in his shroud.—Walt Whitman.

The greatest of all arts is the art of life, and the best of all music the harmony of spirits. There are many little rules to be learnt for giving harmony and melody to our life, but the thorough bass must be—love.—Max-Müller.

'As thyself.'—Matthew xxii. 39.

He who carries self-regard far enough to keep himself in good health and high spirits, in the first place thereby becomes an immediate source of happiness to those around, and in the second place maintains the ability to increase their happiness by altruistic actions. But one whose bodily vigour and mental health are undermined by self-sacrifice carried too far, in the first place becomes to those around a cause of depression, and in the second place renders himself incapable, or less capable, of actively furthering their welfare.—Herbert Spencer.

References.—XXII. 39.—J. Stalker, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lviii. 1900, p. 149. H. Hensley Henson, *Christ and the Nation*, p. 162. G. Macdonald, *Unspoken Sermons*, p. 189. XXII. 39, 40.—J. H. Jellett, *The Elder Son*, p. 214. XXII. 40.—D. M. Ross, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxxvii. 1890, p. 404. A. Boyd Carpenter, *ibid.* vol. lxxiv. 1908, p. 71. S. D. McConnel, *A Year's Sermons*, p. 261.

'On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.'—MATTHEW XXII. 40.

WHEN a man is told that the whole of religion and morality is summed up in the two commandments, to love God and to love our neighbour, he is ready to cry, like Charoba in Gebir, at the first sight of the sea, *Is this the mighty ocean? is this all?* Yes, all: but how small a part of it do your eyes survey! only trust yourself to it; launch out upon it; sail abroad over it: you will find it has no end: it will carry you around the world.—JULIUS HARE.

REFERENCES.—XXII. 41, 42.—J. Marshall Lang, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxxvii. 1890, p. 168. H. H. Snell, *ibid.* vol. xliv. 1893, p. 24. J. G. Greenhough, *ibid.* vol. lxi. 1902, p. 161. XXII. 41-46.—J. Morgan Gibbon, *ibid.* vol. lxii. 1902, p. 88.

WHAT THINK YE OF CHRIST?

'What think ye of Christ? whose son is he? They say unto him, The Son of David.'—MATTHEW XXII. 42.

I. You cannot make it a matter of indifference whether you think rightly of Christ or not; the question is very short, very simple, but the answer to it involves life or death.

1. Let us then inquire what it is to think rightly of Christ. First with respect to *His Person*, we must think that He is perfect God, equal with the Father, and together with Him and the Holy Ghost, making up the ever-blessed Trinity.

2. We must think of Him as *perfect man*, of like nature with ourselves in everything, sin only excepted.

3. We must think of Him as the great *Redeemer* and Saviour, who by the voluntary sacrifice and death of Himself made atonement for the sins of the whole world, provided a means of reconciliation between His Father and mankind, and brought in an everlasting righteousness which is unto all and upon all them that believe.

4. We must think of Him as a *King:* He is the great head of a spiritual dominion over the heart of all whom He chooses and calls out of the world.

5. We must think of Him as the *great High Priest*, who, like the Jewish high priest of old, has gone alone before us into the Holy of Holies, that is Heaven, to make satisfaction for the sin of His people with blood, even the blood of Himself, Who ever stands at the right hand of God to make intercession for them; and can always feel for and pity them, because as man He was tempted like as they are.

6. We must think of Him as the *Prophet* that should come, foretold by Moses shortly before his death, who has shown to mankind the way of salvation, who has clearly explained how God's mercy and God's justice can be reconciled when sinners are accounted righteous, who has taught us how God would have men to live, and has placed duties and morality upon their right foundation, and these are the inward motives and the heart.

7. We must think of Him as the great *Example*, who has left men a pattern that they should walk in His steps, who has given them, in His own person and behaviour, a model of conduct in nearly every department of life which they cannot strive too much to imitate.

II. But this is not all. There are two ways of thinking about Christ; both indeed are necessary to salvation, but one is very often found to exist without the other. It is one thing to think of Him with the head, and another to think of Him with the heart; it is one to think about His offices as a matter of opinion, it is another to rejoice in them as infinitely important to your own soul; it is one to know these things correctly, it is another to live as if you felt them; it is one to acknowledge that Christ is a mighty gift to ruined man, it is quite another to apply this healing medicine to your own case.—J. C. RYLE, *The Christian Race*, p. 168.

REFERENCES.—XXII. 42.—R. W. Hiley, *A Year's Sermons*, vol. ii. p. 172. G. W. Herbert, *Notes of Sermons*, p. 184. B. Wilberforce, *Following on to Know the Lord*, p. 3. J. S. Swan, *Short Sermons*, p. 136. C. S. Robinson, *Sermons on Neglected Texts*, p. 206. G. A. Chadwick, *Christ Bearing Witness to Himself*, p. 159. B. D. Johns, *Pulpit Notes*, p. 178. W. Alexander, *The Great Question*, p. 3. Bishop Simpson, *Sermons*, p. 295. A. G. Mortimer, *One Hundred Miniature Sermons*, vol. ii. p. 113. Marcus Dods, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xl. 1891, p. 281; see also vol. lxii. 1902, p. 116; vol. lxix. 1906, p. 149. Henry Varley, *ibid.* vol. xli. 1892, p. 228. R. A. Armstrong, *ibid.* vol. xli. 1892, p. 298. T. T. Munger, *ibid.* vol. xliii. 1893, p. 406. A Fellow of the Royal College of Physicians, *ibid.* vol. lxi. 1902, p. 101. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xix. No. 1093. P. McAdam Muir, *Modern Substitutes for Christianity*, p. 173.

'GREAT DAVID'S GREATER SON'

'What think ye of Christ? Whose son is He? They say unto Him, the Son of David. He saith unto them, How then doth David in spirit call Him Lord, saying, The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on My right hand, till I make Thine enemies Thy footstool? If David then call Him Lord, how is He his son?'—MATTHEW XXII. 42-45.

THAT Christ was lineally descended from David, and that as such, he had the body and the mind and the heart of a man, is an historical fact. In the same body and the same manhood, altered, but accurately the same, He walked this earth for forty days after His Resurrection. Before it was a natural body; after He rose, it was a spiritual body. Nevertheless all the while He was and He is God. The mystery of the union is utterly unfathomable; far above the reach of all knowledge and all conception. But it was prophesied of Him before He came. He asserted it of Himself; His Apostles bore witness to it even to the death, and He allowed Himself—mark this—He allowed Himself to be killed for it. For the high priest sentenced Him to die for blasphemy, and this was the blasphemy—that He said He was God. And any honest man who was not God would have said, 'You misunderstand. I do not mean that I am God.' He would not have allowed Himself to be put to death on the wrong misunderstanding of His own words. But Christ offered no qualifying word. He was crucified on that charge, and the alternative

is inevitable—either Christ was a dishonest man or He was God.

Such, then, is Christ at this very moment in Heaven—God and Man. Both perfectly equal, perfect God and perfect Man. So He is now at God's right hand, set before us in the Revelation; so He will return to this earth. For a little while He was pleased for our sake to divest Himself of His glory, and to come amongst us 'in the form of a man,' but the attributes and the prerogatives of the Godhead were still perfect in Him. He still assumed them. And now he is at once the Man, the wounded, crucified Man, a Man that has been slain, and yet as fully and as truly He is 'King of kings and Lord of lords,' with 'a Name which is above every name'; the object and adoration of saints and angels; the Judge of all men; the Creator of the universe—God, *God!*

I. Christ in Heaven.—'The Son of David'—a Man!—what is the result of that?

(*a*) Whatever He came to this earth to do, whatever it was, is finished and accepted, else He would not be resting there. Accepted of God, exalted to the highest.

(*b*) His presence there in manhood shows what manhood is capable of, what human nature may become. You look on a man as you see him here, as you see yourself, or any fellow-creature. You look on that very Man in Heaven and you see the capabilities of a man; read his destiny. Behold yourself in your Saviour.

(*c*) There—in that Man Christ, David's son—there we have a brother. His human form shows Him a brother. It shows His sympathy.

(*d*) That Son of David, that Man at God's right hand, He is a representative Man. He was a substitute on the Cross, not a representative. Now He is not a subsitute but a representative Man.

(*e*) And that Son of David, that Man in Heaven, is pledged as the forerunner of us all, 'the firstborn among many brethren,' the gathered sheaf which ensures all the harvest, the seed of the warrant of our eternal happiness.

II. David's Son and David's Lord.—So on earth and in Heaven He is David's Son and David's Lord. If Christ be a Man in Heaven, no less He is God. The thought of this union of God and manhood is utterly unfathomable. But the truth is clear and the comfort exceeding great. 'My Saviour is my God.' And all that this Man died to purchase—that same He now lives as God to give. He carries out in omnipotence what he wrought in the infinity of the love of His manhood. This Man who is my Brother, rules the world.

HOW TO READ THE BIBLE

'How then doth David in spirit?'—MATTHEW XXII. 43.

MANY of the prophets spake in the spirit, and in the spirit they must be interpreted. It is not for any one man to say where the whole meaning runs itself out, it is for us to wait until we can say, 'This is the man,' and many a time we have said this o'er the cradle of the child; we have said, 'This is He of whom Moses and the prophets did write'. There has been a wonderful unrest in our soul because we knew that the prophecy had not yet been quite fulfilled, but when Jesus came he said, 'This is the light; they that sat in darkness have seen a great light'. Jesus Christ takes up all that the prophets did say, and shows what the prophets themselves did mean, though they, the prophets, did not know their meaning at the time of their ecstasy and their madness.

I. How beautifully is the whole thing shown to us in that walk to Emmaus! 'And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, He expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself.' I think we should not be ashamed of finding Jesus where Jesus found Himself; we should study Jesus Christ's way of reading the Old Testament, and He always found Himself on every page: there a flower, and He said, 'I am the Rose of Sharon'; there a trickle of blood—oh, so red, so hot—and He said, 'I redeem with a great price'. He heard Himself in many an echoed song, and He said, 'This is the singing of the ages, and the music is fulfilled in Me'. Jesus Christ must set the example of how to read the Bible. He began at Moses—He could not begin earlier—and the Psalms, and the prophets, and, lest that should not be enough or be misunderstood, it is said, 'in all the Scriptures': they are full of Him, they burn with Him as the bush burned with God. The Lord hath yet more light and truth to break forth from His holy Word. We have not yet begun to understand either the miracles or the parables. We have approached them from our own point of view, and have found fault with them, we have made them a field of criticism. We should approach them from Christ's point of view, and find them to be music that can give rest to the soul, light that can satisfy the vision, and ministry that can appease the hunger of the heart.

II. Christ is the contemporary of all ages. He lives to-day; He is the dying Christ, the living Christ, the constant and never-departing Christ. If He has gone out of sight, it is only that from a higher level He may move the progress of the universe.

Every century has its own revelation. Why was not the whole thing revealed at once? It would be impossible, and it would be absurd. There can be no 'at once' in the movement of eternity. But could not the men of the first century have understood what the men of the twentieth century understand? No, they could not. The men of the twentieth century have a new responsibility, they have their own vision of God, and they are responsible to God for the use they make of it.

III. It has not been given to any man to see all things, and we are not to be harsh with those who do not see what we see. The Lord's school hath many scholars. If that is the truth—some remote and shiny point—then every man with his face

towards it is orthodox, though he come from east west, north, south, climbing the mountain that he may grasp the stars. That is orthodoxy, not your little notion and mine, but the great love-truth and the great truth-loving. He is orthodox who wants to know what is true.—Joseph Parker, *City Temple Pulpit*, vol. vi. p. 183.

References.—XXII. 46.—A. N. Obbard, *Plain Sermons*, p. 172. XXIII. 1-10.—T. A. Gurney, *The Living Lord and the Opened Grave*, p. 198. XXIII. 3.—Hugh Black, *University Sermons*, p. 246.

'They make broad their phylacteries, and enlarge the borders of their garments.'—Matthew xxiii. 5.

Old Samuel Johnson, the greatest soul in England in his day, was not ambitious. 'Corsica Boswell' flaunted at public shows with printed ribbons round his hat: but the great old Samuel stayed at home. The world-wide soul wrapt up in its thoughts, in its sorrows—what could paradings, and ribbons in the hat, do for it?—Carlyle.

Reference.—XXIII. 5.—C. Jerdan, *Pastures of Tender Grass*, p. 291.

'One is your Master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren.'—Matthew xxiii. 8.

The passage before us presents us with the true foundation on which all Christian teaching in God's Church rests, and with the consequent guard against the most dangerous of the perversions to which it may be exposed.

I. Christ the Sole Teacher in His Church.—They shall all be taught of God, was the Old Testament promise which described in the highest way the glory of the New Testament times. The universal prerogative of all Christian men is the possession of direct teaching from Christ Himself.

Then we have to consider the characteristics of this teaching of Christ's, and we shall best do so by keeping in view the tacit contrast between the limitations of ours, and the perfections of His.

II. Christ's Teaching is Inward.—We can only appeal to men by words which may move their hearts or clear their understandings. We can only present motives which may have power or not. Conviction by the force of truth, persuasion by the weight of motives—that is all we can do at the best for one another. We stand outside. But Christ can put His Hand into the secrets of the heart and touch the will. He uses His instruments, He blesses the word, He uses the discipline of life; but over and above all these, there is a teaching deeper than them all, when the soul in direct communication with Christ learns of Him.

III. Christ's Teaching is Original.—It is the impartation of Himself, and He is the Truth.—A. Maclaren.

References.—XXIII. 8.—D. M. Ross, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xliii. 1893, p. 364. A. H. Bradford, *ibid.* vol. xliv. 1893, p. 193. Lyman Abbott, *ibid.* vol. xlix. 1896, p. 264. H. Hensley Henson, *ibid.* vol. lxvi. 1904, p. 53. G. Philip, *Home in the World Beyond*, p. 114. J. J. Tayler, *Christian Aspects of Faith and Duty*, p. 150.

CHRIST OUR MASTER

'But be not ye called Rabbi: for one is your Master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren. And call no man your father upon the earth: for one is your Father, which is in heaven. Neither be ye called masters: for one is your Master even Christ.'—Matthew xxiii. 8-10.

I. Christ claims to be the supreme, and ultimately the sole, Teacher and Master of all Christian men. His first work was teaching: His followers were His disciples or scholars.

This is an aspect of Christ's work which is apt to be obscured. We think of Christ more in relation to faith than in relation to conduct; as the Redeemer of men rather than as their Teacher. And even when we do think of Him in relation to conduct, it is perhaps His example rather than His words that we think of. But Christ claims to be a teacher, with a definite body of teaching as to what we should believe and what we should do.

II. Christ claims to be our only Master and Teacher. What are the forces that prompt and guide and limit our activity? In many cases we shall confess the influence of maxims gathered from our own experience, or learned from the masters of worldly policy. How much, when we look into it, comes from other sources than Christ?

III. Let us begin to seek out and to apply His precepts to our whole life; to test by them all influences that govern us.

1. We shall find much that conforms to Christ's law, in so far as our civilization is Christian. Let us verify all this as from Christ, and follow it now as part of our obedience to Him.

2. We shall find precepts in Christ's teaching which, in what at least seems to be their plain meaning, we have not acted on. Such cases, where we seem to disregard, or diverge from, the precepts of the Master, call for careful examination. No doubt wisdom is needed for their interpretation.

3. We shall find in our application of Christ's precepts that there are still with us actions and feelings at variance with our Master's teaching.

4. We may find that our whole scale of moral values differs from Christ's: the scale of honour in which we range the virtues, the order of detestation in which we place the vices.

IV. Let it be said, too, that the disciple must carry his Master's teaching into all spheres, not only into his private life, but also into his business and his politics. It is in our own lives that we have the nearest and freest field for acting as disciples of Christ. Those only rightly obey Christ who believe on Him, who acknowledge Him as Master because they trust Him as Saviour.—P. J. MacLagan, *The Gospel View of Things*, p. 40.

'Be not ye called Rabbi . . . for one is your Master, even Christ.'—Matthew xxiii. 8-10.

To be throned apart, like a Divine being surrounded by the bought homage of one's fellows, and possessed of more power than a man can decently use, was a condition which excited in Delafield the same kind of

contemptuous revolt that it would have excited in St. Francis. 'Be ye not called master;'—a Christian even of his transcendental and heterodox sort, if he *were* a Christian, must surely hold these words in awe—at least so far as concerned any mastery of the external or secular kind. To masteries of another order, the saint has never been disinclined.—Mrs. Humphry Ward in *Lady Rose's Daughter* chap. xxiii.

References.—XXIII. 8-10.—T. G. Selby, *The Strenuous Gospel*, p. 314. J. Clifford, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xliii. 1893, p. 280; see also vol. xlvi. 1894, p. 216. G. Campbell Morgan, *ibid.* vol. lxxi. 1907, p. 99. XXIII. 13-15.—T. G. Selby, *The Lesson of a Dilemma*, p. 319. XXIII. 15.—H. Hensley Henson, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lx. 1901, p. 337.

'Ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte.'—Matthew xxiii. 15.

The proselytizing agency of the Roman Church in this country I take to be one of the worst of the religious influences of the age. I do not mean as to its motives, for these I do not presume to touch, nor feel in any way called upon to question. But I speak of its effects, and they are most deplorable. . . . With this pernicious agency I for my own part wish to have nothing whatever to do; although I am one who thinks lightly, in comparison with most men, of the *absolute* differences in our belief from the formal documents of Rome.—Gladstone in 1863.

More than thirty years later, in the *Nineteenth Century*, Mr. Gladstone remarked that he 'would define the spirit of proselytism as a morbid appetite for effecting conversions, founded too often upon an overweening self-confidence and self-love'.

THE VISIBLE TEMPLE

'Whether is greater, the gold, or the temple that sanctifieth the gold?'—Matthew xxiii. 17.

A Temple there has been upon earth, a spiritual Temple, made up of living stones, a Temple, as I may say, composed of souls; a Temple with God for its Light, and Christ for the High Priest, with wings of angels for its arches, with saints and teachers for its pillars, and with worshippers for its pavement; such a Temple has been on earth ever since the Gospel was first preached. This unseen, secret, mysterious, spiritual Temple exists everywhere, throughout the kingdom of Christ, in all places, as perfect in one place as if it were not in another. Wherever there is faith and love, this Temple is; faith and love, with the name of Christ, are as heavenly charms and spells, to make present to us this Divine Temple, in every part of Christ's kingdom. This Temple is invisible, but it is perfect and real because it is invisible, and gains nothing in perfection by possessing visible tokens. There needs no outward building to meet the eye in order to make it more of a Temple than it already is in itself. God, and Christ, and angels, and souls, are not these a heavenly court, all perfect, to which this world can add nothing? Though faithful Christians worship without splendour, without show, in a homely and rude way, still their worship is as acceptable to God, as excellent, as holy, as though they worshipped in the public view of men, and with all the glory and riches of the world. . . .

King's palaces are poor, whether in architecture or in decoration, compared with the shrines which have been reared to Him. The invisible Temple has become visible. As on a misty day the gloom gradually melts, and the sun brightens, so have the glories of the spiritual world lit up this world below. The dull and cold earth is penetrated by the rays. All around we see glimpses or reflections of those heavenly things which the elect of God shall one day see face to face. The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ; 'the Temple has sanctified the gold,' and the prophecies made to the Church have been fulfilled to the letter.—J. H. Newman.

Reference.—XXIII. 19.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xiv. No. 831.

THE DETAILS OF LIFE

'These ye ought to have done, and not to have left the other undone.'—Matthew xxiii. 23 (R.V.).

I. The efficiency of some great men has been seriously impaired by their neglect of the uninteresting parts of life and duty. Disraeli confessed of himself, 'I want energy in those little affairs of which life greatly consists'. This hatred of the trivial, even in cases where detail was of the essence of statesmanship, was acknowledged by his friends to be a cause of his weakness as a minister. On the other side, the greatest men who brought their work to splendid perfection, and whose lives were veritable triumphs, considered no detail of their task too trivial, no uninteresting portions of it too insipid, the truth being, the modest and monotonous details were so scrupulously wrought out that glorious success seemed to flower magically.

II. Life cannot be all interesting; much that it involves is necessarily stale and flat. In this contempt of triviality we suffer loss. We miss the essential discipline of the trivial, and missing that are not prepared for the greater situations and seasons; ignoring the grandeur of the minute, we defraud ourselves of one of the chief delights of existence; and having neglected insignificant particulars, we have certainly more or less marred the whole result in character and destiny, which is made up of insignificant particulars.

III. Detail is of the essence of life, and he is great and shall be great who knows it. There is teaching, discipline, and blessing of the highest order in faithfulness in monotonous days and things. 'And the hand of the Lord was there upon me; and He said unto me, Arise, go forth into the plain, and I will there talk with thee. Then I arose, and went forth into the plain: and, behold, the glory of the Lord stood there' (Ezek. iii. 22, 23). On the flat, dull, monotonous stretches of life does God speak with men and show them His glory.—W. L. Watkinson, *Themes for Hours of Meditation*, p. 185.

THE DOCTRINE OF PROPORTION

'The weightier matters.'—MATTHEW XXIII. 23.

THIS is the doctrine of proportion, perspective, relativity, in things spiritual, religious, pious, and practically good. One matter is of so much consequence, and the other matter is of so much less consequence; they are both important, but one is lighter than the other—and ye have omitted the weightier matters.

I. Here are men who are deeply concerned about a *creed*. Are they concerned about the right thing? Only a man of superficial mind would speak disrespectfully of forms of faith. They are useful, helpful, sometimes they approach the very point of essential necessity. What is greater than creed? Faith, faith is larger in all its inclusiveness and suggestiveness than any creed can ever be. Many men cannot put faith within the limits of credal form. Are we then to make infidels of them? Shall we not recognize that they are attending to the weightier matters of the law, and approach them, and recognize what measure of sincerity and earnestness may be obvious in all their spirit and action.

II. This line of reasoning might be fitly applied to the *Bible* itself. No man is going to be so fatuous and impious as to deny the great importance of many aspects of the controversy raging around the Bible; let us, however, be careful that we do not diminish the authority of the Bible by misunderstanding the purpose of the Bible itself. How did Jesus Christ Himself use the Bible? By the Bible, of course, I mean the Old Testament. His will be the right way. What did He go to the Old Testament for? For Himself, this is the whole necessity: to find the Son of God should be the object of every Biblical student and reader.

III. Apply the matter to the question of the *Sabbath*. Here are men who believe that the Sabbath begins at twilight of one day and goes on to evening twilight of another day. They keep Sabbath by the clock: up to five minutes within the time they can be buying and selling and getting gain, but now it is Sabbath Day, because a bell has been struck. Another man says, 'I go the length of admitting that one in seven should be a day of rest'. That is the weightier matter; he is a Sabbatarian, in the truest, widest, noblest sense of the term.

IV. Apply this also to *service*. Some men can render one kind of service and some another; let every man be distinctive in his mission, and be most himself because he attends to the weightier matters which he is peculiarly constituted to carry out to completeness of fruition.—JOSEPH PARKER, *The Gospel of Jesus Christ*, p. 28.

Illustration.—I go to the Great Northern Railway to go to Scotland. The man who is in charge of the place insists on being fundamental; he is a man of culture. When I approach him, he says, 'Let us begin at the beginning,' my reply is, 'I want to go to Edinburgh'. 'By no means begin at that end of the business,' he will reply; 'let us be at once elementary, fundamental, and complete.' I look at the man with a feeling of vacuity, for either he is out of his head or I am. He says, 'This is the Great Northern Railway'. I reply, 'I never doubted that'. 'But do you understand it?' 'I think so.' 'Let me explain it to you,' he continues. 'Consider the importance of the word "the," a little word, an article, and a definite one; in all languages the article plays a most important part. "Great," a word you might apply to kings, to empires, to the heavens themselves. "Northern," not North-Eastern—mark that; and not North-Western, be on your guard; this is an age of sophistry; not the North-Western. Not the Southern, but the Northern. Stand in front of a map, where is the North? At the top—mark that.' I thank him for his lecture, and feel that it must have cost him a great many hours of anxiety to prepare it, and I say now to a porter, 'Where is the train to Edinburgh'? He says, 'It is gone, sir!' Gone! Will this man who has been lecturing to me on the Great Northern bring it back? Never; he has befooled me. So it will be with many at the last. Whilst you have been talking about matters of absolutely insignificant importance, or of merely relative importance, the train will have gone.—JOSEPH PARKER, *The Gospel of Jesus Christ*, p. 41.

'These ye ought to have done, and not to have left the other undone.'—MATTHEW XXIII. 23.

WRITING in 1826 upon the prospects of reform within the Church of England, Dr. Arnold, of Rugby, observes: 'The difficulty will always be practically, who is to reform it? For the clergy have a horror of the House of Commons, and Parliament and the country will never trust the matter to the clergy. If we had our general assembly, there might be some chance; but, as it is, I know no more hopeless prospect, and every year I live, this is to me more painful. If half the energy and resources which have been turned to Bible societies and missions, had steadily been applied to the reform of our own institutions, and the enforcing the principles of the Gospel among ourselves, I cannot think but that we should have been fulfilling a higher duty, and with the blessing of God might have produced more satisfactory fruit. 'These things ye ought to have done, and not to have left the other undone.'

REFERENCES.—XXIII. 23.—W. J. Butler, *What is Our Present Danger, Sermons*, 1870-93. J. Parker, *The Gospel of Jesus Christ*, p. 32. F. B. Cowl, *Straight Tracks*, p. 13. XXIII. 23, 24.—H. Hensley Henson, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lx. 1901, p. 360. D. Fraser, *Metaphors in the Gospels*, p. 181.

MISTAKEN MAGNITUDES

'Ye blind guides, which strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel.'—MATTHEW XXIII. 24.

IT was one great complaint of our Lord against the Pharisees, that they had lost the relative magnitude of things.

I. One of the great arts of worthy living is to see things in their relative importance. It is a great thing to know a trifle when you meet it. It is equally great, when the decisive moment comes, to seize it

and use it with every power of manhood. It is such swift distinguishing between the great and little, such vision of the relative magnitude of things, that is one secret of a quiet and conquering life.

1. The failure to see things in their true proportions is often seen in relation to our *grievances*. When a man has a grievance he is almost certain to have distorted vision. You can block out the sun by the smallest coin if you hold the coin near enough to the eye. And we have a way of dwelling on our grievances, till we lose sight of the blue heaven above us.

2. Of course, I am aware that the failure to see things in their true proportions has sometimes got physical and not moral roots. We are so apt to be jaundiced and think bitter things, when all that we want is a little rest and sunshine.

Of all the secondary ministries of God for helping us to see things as they are, there is none quite so wonderful as sleep. We go to rest troubled, perplexed, despondent. We cannot see how we shall get through at all. But when we waken, how different things are! Jesus loved to speak of death as sleep. Our 'death,' for Christ, was sleep, and sleep is the passage to a glad awaking. There will be no mistaken magnitudes in heaven. There will be no errors in proportion there. We shall no longer be blind to the relative importance of things that confused us when we fell asleep.

II. What are the Gospel powers that help a man to see things as they are?

1. Remember that the Gospel which we preach puts love at the very centre of our life. When anything else than love is at the centre, the gnats and camels are certain to get mixed. For love alone sees purely, clearly, deeply. Take away God, and things are chaos to me. And without love, I never can know God. You understand, then, the wisdom of Jesus Christ in putting love at the centre of our life. It focuses everything. It links the little and the great with the Creator, and brings things to their relative importance.

2. And then the Gospel takes our threescore years and ten and lays them against the background of eternity. It is because Christ has brought immortality to light that the Christian sees things in their true proportions. The efforts and strivings of our threescore years are not adjusted to the scale of seventy, they are adjusted to the scale of immortality.

3. And then the Gospel brings us into fellowship with Christ, and that is our last great lesson in proportion. The heart that takes its measurements from Jesus is likely to be pretty near the truth.—G. H. Morrison, *Sun-Rise*, p. 32.

Illustration.—Mr. Froude, in his *Spanish Story of the Armada*, makes a significant remark about the Spanish king. He is showing the incompetence of Philip II, and he says: 'The smallest thing and the largest seemed to occupy him equally'. That was one mark of Philip the Second's incompetence. That gave the worst of all possible starts to the Armada. And for the equipping of nobler vessels than these galleons, and the fighting of sterner battles than they fought, that spirit spells incompetency still.—G. H. Morrison, *Sun-Rise*, p. 33.

FORMALISM

'Woe unto you, scribes!'—Matthew xxiii. 25.

I. What is the explanation of this unwonted severity of our Blessed Lord? Why was the whole tone of His ordinary addresses so entirely altered? The answer is given in the words of the text. In that solemn sentence the verdict of God Almighty is recorded upon the whole race of Pharisees, 'Ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter'. The heart of these professors was not right with God. They responded to the calls of public charity, but no true love for God and man reigned in their souls.

From this hypocrisy our Lord revolted with the united strength of His human and Divine nature. He made one last effort to save them from themselves, to reveal the truth to their blinded hearts, to snatch them back from the abyss which was already opening to receive them.

II. How was it that these Pharisees could descend to such depths of iniquity?

There was, no doubt, a time in the lives of these Pharisees when they were conscious of heavenly aspirations—a blessed spring-tide of the soul when refreshing showers descended from on high to quicken the good seed which had been sown in their hearts. They shrank, however, from the sacrifices by which real holiness could be attained. They held back from the free surrender of their heart to God. They were afraid of the answer which might be returned if they inquired of their Father in heaven, 'Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?' So Satan took advantage of their indecision, and suggested an easier method by which the favour of heaven could be attained. Under the guidance of this master-teacher of deceit they renounced the rugged pathway of inward self-denial, and turned into the smoother road of external obedience.

III. The temptation of compounding for inward sin by correctness of outward conduct will press most heavily upon those who, without any real change of heart, have come to be considered religious. They have great doubts whether they are really religious, whether they are ready to die and appear before the judgment seat of Christ. Yet they shrink from so humbling themselves as to acknowledge the false foundation on which their spiritual fabric has been raised. Their character for godliness is too precious a possession to be lightly abandoned. So, instead of falling down on their knees and praying God Almighty to create in them a clean heart and renew a right spirit within them, they direct all their efforts to preserving the appearance of goodness, are mere miserable counterfeits, so the process goes on very easily and very surely under the crafty guidance of the master-spirit of deceit. Conscience is soothed, the still small voice is silenced, and unless the Spirit of God arrest their downward course they become at last like whited sepulchres—all is well on the outside;

they are fair and spotless in the eye of man. But within there is no love for God, no warmth of self-sacrifice, no sorrow for sin, no enthusiasm for their Lord, no growing religious life—only the cold chill of death, the second death—the death of the soul!—Bishop G. H. Wilkinson, *The Invisible Glory*, p. 62.

Illustration.—Just as in some foreign capital the crown and the sword of a giant king are preserved, though for centuries no head has been found large enough to wear the crown, no hand of strength sufficient to wield the sword, so was it with those poor Pharisees. In the thronged street, the crown of righteousness was borne before them, and men cried 'Rabbi, Rabbi'—but theirs were not the heads on which its jewels were first intended to sparkle, they were not the Godlike heroes for whom its massive robes had been moulded.

On their foreheads and on the folds of each gorgeous robe might be observed the texts of Scripture ostentatiously displayed, but their puny hands were powerless to wield that sword of the spirit, their feeble wills were impotent to wage a Godlike warfare against man's triple foe—the world, the flesh, the devil. In this alone had they succeeded—that they had made clean the outside of the cup and of the platter.—Bishop G. H. Wilkinson, *The Invisible Glory*, p. 66.

'Thou blind Pharisee! cleanse first the inside of the cup, that the outside may be clean also.'—Matthew xxiii. 26.

'This,' says Matthew Arnold, 'was the very ground-principle in Jesus Christ's teaching. Instead of attending so much to your outward acts, attend, He said, first of all to your inward thoughts, to the state of your heart and feelings. This doctrine has perhaps been overstrained and misapplied by certain people since; but it was the lesson which at that time was above all needed. It is a great progress beyond even that advanced maxim of pious Jews: "To do justice and judgment is more acceptable than sacrifice". For to do justice and judgment is still, as we have remarked, something external, and may leave the feelings untouched, uncleared, dead. What was wanted was to plough up, clear, and quicken the feelings themselves. And this is what Jesus did.'

RESPECTABLE SIN

'Ye are like unto whited sepulchres.'—Matthew xxiii. 27.

The imagery of this denunciation would appeal powerfully to a Jewish audience. These whited sepulchres, gleaming in the sun, were a familiar feature in the landscape. You are not to think of them as separate buildings, like the mausoleums of the Romans. They were just caverns cut in the limestone rock, with a great stone set up to close the opening. And once a year these stones were whitewashed, not for the purpose of making them look beautiful, but to warn people that a grave was there, lest they should touch it, and touching, be defiled. Many a time our Lord had wondered at them, when He rambled among the hills at Nazareth. You know how the darkness and the dead men's bones would stir the imagination of a boy. And now in the glow of His anger at the Pharisees, He sees again that haunting of His youth, 'Ye are like unto these whited sepulchres, beautiful outwardly, but full of all uncleanness'.

Now we cannot have a moment's doubt as to the spiritual meaning of that figure. That figure is enshrined in common speech as perfectly expressive of the hypocrite. The man who is one thing inwardly, another outwardly—who is not really what he seems to be—of such hypocrisy in its most general aspect, I might textually speak to-night. But I want to get nearer to the text even than that; to seize upon its characteristic feature; to show how it stands apart amid the many figures of the hypocrite. Now this, I think, is the emphatic thing here—that the Pharisee never shocked nor startled people. He never outraged the feelings of society; never broke through its unwritten laws. Whatever he might be in the sight of God, in the sight of men there was no fault to find. The Pharisee was eminently guilty: he was also respectable. I want then to speak upon the subject of respectable sin.

I. Respectable sin is not just secret sin. I do not mean by respectable sin that sin of which others have got no suspicion. It is true that so long as a man's sin is secret, he may still keep the respect of the community. If he is cunning enough to hide his shame, he may still pass as a reputable citizen. But the point to note is that that respectability depends upon the keeping of the secret. The moment the sin is trumpeted abroad, the man becomes an alien and an outcast. It is not such sin that is respectable. It is sin that, when known, carries no social stigma. It is sin that a man may openly commit, and yet not forfeit his place in the community. It is sin that is tolerated in general opinion; that is not visited with social ostracism; that does not shut the door in a man's face of the society in which he loves to move.

II. Now when we study the earthly life of Jesus, there is one thing that we soon come to see. It is with what terrible and dread severity He judged those sins we call respectable. There is often an element of unexpectedness in the moral judgments of our Saviour. He is sometimes severe where we should have been lenient; He is often lenient where we should be severe. And nowhere is this more remarkable than in His attitude towards actual sins, as He saw them in the streets of Galilee, and in the homes and in the market-place. All sin was hateful to Jesus Christ, because all sin was rebellion against God. He never condoned sin in any form; never thought of it as the other side of goodness. And yet undoubtedly the sins that stirred Him most were not the sins of passion or of weakness. They were the cold and calculating sins which masqueraded as respectable. Think for example of the Temple traders. Did anyone think the less of them for trading so? Was not that traffic a general convenience, acquiesced in by society without protest? Yet never in all his life was Christ so angry—so filled with a passion of

tumultuous scorn—as when He knit His scourge, and drove them forth, and hurled the charge of robber in their teeth. It was not in that way that He spoke to Peter. It was not thus that He had addressed the Magdalene. Towards them, in the whole conduct of the Saviour, there is the throb of unutterable tenderness. But towards the Pharisees and towards the traders I look for any such tenderness in vain. Christ hurled His bitterest and sternest judgments upon the sins of respectability.

III. Sin that is respectable has an unequalled power of deadening the conscience. In the mirror of the society he moves in, a man sees nothing to alarm or terrify.

Is this not true of respectable sin, that of all sin it is most pernicious in its influence? I think that Jesus Christ condemned it so, because He was the lover of mankind. He saw its untold power to allure. He saw how mightily it would appeal to natures that would turn in loathing from coarse vice. And therefore did He terribly denounce it, out of His great love for foolish men, who are so ready to think that anything is right when they can do it without social censure. —G. H. Morrison, *The Return of the Angels*, p. 77.

'Ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness.'—Matthew xxiii. 27.

Compare the sentences inserted by Charlotte Brontë in her preface to the second edition of *Jane Eyre*: 'Conventionality is not morality. Self-righteousness is not religion. To attack the first is not to assail the second. To pluck the mask from the face of the Pharisee, is not to lift an impious hand to the Crown of Thorns. . . . The world may not like to see these ideas dissevered, for it has been accustomed to blend them; finding it convenient to make external show pass for sterling worth—to let whitewashed walls vouch for clean shrines. It may hate him who dares to scrutinize and expose—to rase the gilding and show base metal underneath it, to penetrate the sepulchre and reveal charnel relics; but hate as it will, it is indebted to him.'

How much among us might be likened to a whited sepulchre; outwardly, all pomp and strength; but inwardly full of horror and despair and dead men's bones! Iron highways, with their wains fire-winged, are uniting all ends of the firm Land; quays and moles, with their innumerable stately fleets, tame the ocean into our pliant bearer of burdens; Labour's thousand arms, of sinew and of metal, all-conquering everywhere, from the tops of the mountain down to the depths of the mine and the caverns of the sea, ply unweariedly for the service of man: yet man remains unserved. . . . Countries are rich, prosperous, in all manner of increase, beyond example; but the Men of those countries are poor, needier than ever of all sustenance outward and inward; of Belief, of Knowledge, of Money, of Food.—Carlyle.

References.—XXIII. 27, 28.—D. Fraser, *Metaphors in the Gospels*, p. 191. XXIII. 27-39.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—St. Matthew XVIII.-XXVIII.* p. 139.

'Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! because ye build the tombs of the prophets, and garnish the sepulchres of the righteous, and say, if we had been in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets.'—Matthew xxiii. 29, 30.

I saw the state of those, both priests and people, who, in reading the Scriptures, cry out much against Cain, Esau, and Judas, and other wicked men of former times, mentioned in the Holy Scriptures; but do not see the nature of Cain, of Esau, of Judas, and those others in themselves. These said, it was they, they, they, they, that were the bad people; putting it all from themselves; but when some of them came, with the light and spirit of truth, to see into themselves, then they came to say I, I, I, it is I myself, that have been the Ishmael, and the Esau, etc.—George Fox.

'It is trite,' says Professor Seeley, 'that an original man is persecuted in his lifetime and idolized after his death, but it is a less familiar truth that the posthumous idolaters are the legitimate successors and representatives of the contemporary persecutors. . . . The second half of the original man's destiny is really worse than the first, and his failure is written more legibly in the blind veneration of succeeding ages than in the blind hostility of his own. He broke the chains by which men were bound; he threw open to them the doors leading into the boundless freedom of nature and truth. But in the next generation *he* is idolized, and nature and truth are as much forgotten as ever; if he could return to earth, he would find that the crowbars and files with which he made his way out of the prison-house have been forged into the bolts and chains of a new prison called by his own name. And who are those who idolize his memory? Who are found building his sepulchre? Precisely the same party which resisted his reform; those who are born for routine and can accommodate themselves to everything but freedom; those who in clinging to the wisdom of the past suppose they love wisdom, but in fact love only the past, and love the past only because they hate the living present.'

Speaking of adherents of theological creeds, the late Mr. R. H. Hutton once observed that 'the greater the glow of trust with which they formerly held possession of their past, the more sullenly do they fortify the empty sepulchres. . . . It was a saying of Luther's that the very people who, in his lifetime, would not touch the kernel of his teaching, would be greedy after the husks of it when he was once dead.'

The only valuable criticism is that which turns what is latent in the thought of a great writer against what is explicit, and thereby makes his works a stepping-stone to results which he did not himself attain. It was those who stoned the Prophets that built their sepulchres. Those who really reverenced them, showed it by following the spirit derived from them to new issues.—E. Caird, preface to *Philosophy of Kant*.

And, while we fools
Are making courtesies and brave compliments
To our rare century, and courtierly
Swaddling our strength in trammels of soft silk,
The rotten depths grow rottener.
—Augusta Webster.

References.—XXIII. 29-32. A. Orrock Johnston, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xl. 1891, p. 420. XXIII. 29-39.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xl. No. 2381. XXIII. 33.—J. Baldwin Brown, *The Divine Treatment of Sin*, p. 155.

'I send unto you prophets, and wise men, and scribes: and some of them ye shall kill and crucify; and some of them shall ye scourge in your synagogues, and persecute them from city to city.'—Matthew xxiii. 34.

Generation after generation of insurgent Poles, or Italians, or what-not, may bleed and die, and seem to leave nothing to show for it all. But who are we that we should presume to judge how much expenditure of blood the keeping alive of an idea is worth?—*Memoirs of Henry Holbeach.*

References.—XXIII. 34.—H. C. G. Moule, *Christ's Witness to the Life to Come*, p. 120. XXIII. 34, 35.—R. E. Hutton, *The Crown of Christ*, vol. ii. p. 329. XXIII. 37.—A. G. Mortimer, *The Church's Lessons for the Christian Year*, part iv. p. 203. 'Plain Sermons' by contributors to the *Tracts for the Times*, vol. viii. p. 151. John Watson, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xlviii. 1895, p. 56. J. M. Neale, *Sermons Preached in Sackville College Chapel*, vol. ii. p. 243. C. Stamford, *Symbols of Christ*, p. 263. D. Fraser, *Metaphors in the Gospels*, p. 209. C. Jerdan, *Pastures of Tender Grass*, p. 360. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xl. No. 2381; vol. xlv. No. 2630. XXIII. 37, 38.—E. E. Smith, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lix. 1901, p. 228. XXIII. 38.—C. Jerdan, *Pastures of Tender Grass*, p. 110. XXIII. 41.—H. P. Liddon, *Some Elements of Religion*, p. 201. XXIV. 1-21.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xlix. No. 2381. XXIV. 1-35.—R. W. Dale, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xlviii. 1895, pp. 60, 104. XXIV. 3.—D. Heagle, *That Blessed Hope*, p. 62. S. H. Kellogg, *The Past a Prophecy of the Future*, pp. 321, 339. XXIV. 6.—J. Addison Alexander, *The Gospel of Jesus Christ*, p. 275. XXIV. 6, 14.—H. Scott Holland, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lx. 1901, p. 216. XXIV. 7.—F. E. Paget, *The Redemption of War*, p. 1. J. B. Mozley, *Sermons Preached Before the University of Oxford*, p. 97. H. J. Coleridge, *The Return of the King*, p. 116. XXIV. 11.—G. St. Clair, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xl. 1891, p. 339.

THE INTRUSION OF THE WORLD

'Because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold.'—Matthew xxiv. 12.

No doubt this referred originally to the great crash of the fall of Jerusalem. But one cannot help seeing that the whole prophecy describes rather the constantly recurring features of all epochs of great change affecting the kingdom of heaven than the details of special circumstances attaching to some one event.

I. Observe that it is more inside the Church that iniquity is said to abound. There may be a fair amount of morality and obedience in the Church. But it is the outside world, the mass of the people who are not Christians in any real sense, in whom a low tone of morality abounds. And the Church of course ought to be the antagonist of this, to curb it and overcome it. If it has failed to be so, then the world is leavening the Church. The two powers are always in existence and in operation; perhaps there is always action and reaction, but there are periods when the forces of the Church are evidently the stronger, and others when the world evidently is.

II. I want to urge that as a truth not only about communities, but about individuals. Either you are salting the world or the world is putrefying you. There cannot be a severance of relations. You must either be actively giving out or passively receiving.

In what are the bulk of professing Christians different from the world? They are like them in their views of things, in their amusements, in their pursuits, in their ambitions, in their loves and fears. That no doubt partly comes from the more obvious parts of Christian morality having permeated to a considerable extent the classes of society to which most of us belong. But that will not explain it all. There should be a distinct difference of tone, a higher standard of self-sacrifice. It all comes to this, are we trying to be the salt, or are we letting the evil around us conquer unchecked?

III. *The Cure.* Honestly bring your hearts under the influence of the love that will kindle them. Our love as Christians is eminently reasonable. It rests upon a believed fact. It is the echo of Christ's love to us. It is not then to be produced by willing only or by effort, but mainly by laying our hearts in sunshine that makes them warm. Then let the practical discipline of life go to cultivate that love, and to suppress what wars against it. Make an effort to keep Christ's love in mind, and practice the fruits of love, and guard against the intrusion of the world.—A. Maclaren.

Reference.—XXIV. 12.—H. J. Coleridge, *The Return of the King*, p. 89.

'He that endureth to the end, the same shall be saved.'—Matthew xxiv. 13.

This is one of those great notes which sound through Scripture, the necessity of continuance, of not stopping before the end. Love is tried by continuance, by going on with what we have begun.—Mozley.

References.—XXIV. 13.—Stopford A. Brooke, *Short Sermons*, p. 41. J. Lewis Paton, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxxi. 1907, p. 406. 'Plain Sermons' by contributors to the *Tracts for the Times*, vol. i. p. 318. A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—St. Matthew XVIII.-XXVIII.* p. 148. H. P. Liddon, *Sermons on Some Words of Christ*, p. 113. XXIV. 14.—D. Heagle, *That Blessed Hope*, p. 90. S. Baring-Gould, *Village Preaching for a Year* (2nd Series), vol. i. p. 1. T. F. Lockyer, *The Inspirations of the Christian Life*, p. 99. G. F. Maclear, *The Evidential Value of the Continuity of Missionary Enterprise*, p. 1. XXIV. 15.—H. J. Coleridge, *The Return of the King*, p. 142. R. E. Hutton, *The Crown of Christ*, vol. i. p. 37.

'If any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there; believe it not.'—Matthew xxiv. 23.

Nothing doth so much keepe Men out of the Church, and drive Men out of the Church, as Breach of *Unity:* and therefore, whensoever it cometh to that passe, that one saith, *Ecce in deserto;* Another saith, *Ecce in penetralibus;* That is, when some Men

seeke Christ, in the conventicles of Heretikes, and others in an outward face of a church, that voice had need continually to sound in Men's eares, *Nolite exire, Goe not out.*—Bacon.

References.—XXIV. 24.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. vi. No. 324. J. B. Wilkinson, *Plain Preaching for a Year*, p. 191. XXIV. 24-26.—Alfred Rowland, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xlii. 1892, p. 71. XXIV. 25.—S. H. Kellogg, *The Past a Prophecy of the Future*, p. 308.

LIGHTNING

'For as the lightning cometh forth from the east, and is seen even unto the west; so shall the presence of the Son of Man be.'—Matthew xxiv. 27 (R.V. margin).

The presence of the Divine Humanity is likened to a flash of lightning; not, I imagine, to the destructive zig-zag forked lightning of the thunderstorm—that metaphor was appropriated by our Lord Himself to evil personified when He said: 'Behold, I saw Satan, like lightning, fall from heaven'—but rather to that harmless beautiful illumination which we call summer lightning, or sheet lightning.

I. What, then, is this sheet lightning, and in what sense can it be an analogy of the presence of the Divine Humanity, the light of the world? Sheet lightning is the flashing into manifestation of an atmospheric power, always present everywhere but not always manifested. No man can define electricity, and yet it has been scientifically demonstrated to be the combining agent of matter, and without it the million million atoms of the material world would be disintegrated.

The Incarnation is God manifest, as the lightning-flash is electricity manifest. His presence on earth is the coming into visibility of a Divine, world-creating, world-sustaining presence, always everywhere diffused and operative; always everywhere the life, the spirit; but impersonal and unknowable to the finite minds of men, except as revealed under some limitation that man's eye can see and man's intelligence apprehend.

II. These eyes of the soul are greatly in our own power. The faculty of spiritual discernment, though it may be withered from non-use, is the hereditary possession of every human being. Eyes must be blind indeed that cannot see a lightning-flash. The Christ is the lightning-flash that reveals the nature of the Father Who loves us. Act as though it were true. Let the solemn mystery of that presence challenge you and subdue you.

III. Obviously, in a very special and influential manner, is that same presence shrouded in every guaranteed act of the Church. At the supreme moment of earnest, faithful communion, the veil between the two worlds is very thin; the spirits of the departed are very near; the soul is strengthened by a bath of heaven's sunshine from the presence of the glorified Redeemer—God's lightning-flash illuminating the darkness of the world.—Basil Wilberforce, *Speaking Good of His Name*, p. 17.

'As the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of Man be.' —Matthew xxiv. 27.

In her *Life of Edward Irving*, Mrs. Oliphant quotes a reminiscence of his preaching at Perth by a Scottish minister. 'His text was taken from the twenty-fourth chapter of Matthew, regarding the coming of the Son of Man. I remember nothing of the sermon, save its general subject; but one thing I can never forget. While he was engaged in unfolding his subject, from out of a dark cloud, which obscured the Church, there came forth a bright blaze of lightning and a crash of thunder. There was deep stillness in the audience. The preacher paused; and from the stillness and the gloom, his powerful voice, clothed with increased solemnity, pronounced these words: *For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall the coming of the Son of Man be.* You can imagine the effect.'

References.—XXIV. 27.—Sir G. R. Fetherston, Bart., *A Garden Eastward*, p. 26. D. Fraser, *Metaphors in the Gospels*, p. 221.

THE CARRION AND THE VULTURES

'Wheresoever the carcase is, there will the eagles be gathered together.'—Matthew xxiv. 28.

This grim parable has, of course, a strong Eastern colouring. It is best appreciated by dwellers in those lands. They tell us that no sooner is some sickly animal dead, or some piece of carrion thrown out by the way, than the vultures—for the eagle does not prey upon carrion—appear. And so, says Christ, wherever there is a rotting, dead society, a carcass hopelessly corrupt and evil, down upon it, as if drawn by some unerring attraction, will come the angel, the vulture of the Divine judgment.

I. The first thing in these most true and solemn words is this, that they are to us a revelation of a law which operates with unerring certainty through all the force of the world's history.

We cannot tell, but God can, when evil has become incurable; or when, in the language of my text, the man or the community has become a carcass. There may be flickerings of life, all unseen by our eyes, or there may be death, all unsuspected by our shallow vision. So long as there is a possibility of amendment, 'sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily'; and God dams back, as it were, the flow of His retributive judgment; 'not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to the knowledge of the truth'. But when He sees that all is vain, that no longer is restoration or recovery possible, then He lets loose the flood; or, in the language of my text, when the thing has become a carcass, then the vultures, God's scavengers, come and clear it away from off the face of the earth.

Let us see to it that we do our little part to be the salt of the earth which shall keep it from rotting, and so drive away the vultures of judgment.

II. We have here a law which shall have a far more tremendous accomplishment in the future.

Jesus Christ is to come in bodily form as He went

away. All men are to be judged by Him. That judgment is to be the destruction of opposing forces, the sweeping away of the carrion of moral evil.

III. This is a law which need never touch you, nor you know anything about but by the hearing of the ear. 'There is no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus.' If we trust in that great Saviour we shall be quickened from the death of sin and so shall not be food for the vultures of judgment. The hand Whose touch healed the leper will heal us, and our flesh will come again as the flesh of a little child. Christ has bared His breast to the Divine judgments against sin, and if by faith we shelter ourselves in Him, we shall never know the terrors of that awful day.—A. Maclaren, *Christ in the Heart*, p. 105.

References.—XXIV. 28.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—St. Matthew XVIII.-XXVIII.* p. 157; see also *British Weekly Pulpit*, vol. ii. p. 417. H. J. Coleridge, *The Return of the King*, p. 214. W. H. Simcox, *The Cessation of Prophecy*, p. 188. C. Jerdan, *Pastures of Tender Grass*, p. 104. W. Alexander, *The Great Question*, p. 257. H. D. Rawnsley, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lvi. 1899, p. 180. D. Fraser, *Metaphors in the Gospels*, p. 232. J. Service, *Sermons*, p. 48. XXIV. 29, 30.—Bishop E. C. S. Gibson, *The Old Testament in the New*, p. 79.

THE CROSS BLAZONED ON THE SKIES

'And then shall appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven.'
—Matthew xxiv. 30.

The Saviour declared that at the end of the present age, and on the verge of His Second Coming, a strange, mystic sign would appear upon the firmament.

What is that tremendous sign to be? I believe, with Dean Alford, that 'no sign completely answers the conditions but the *Cross*.

I. Consider: **Him to Whom the Sign Appertains.**—He calls Himself 'the Son of Man'. He adopts a phrase of Daniel the Prophet and gives it a definite and rich signification. Who is this Son of Man? Evidently He stands in close relationship to humanity. He is human in His nature and experience and sympathy.

But does not the very term suggest that He was more than man? So unique a relation to humanity must imply Divinity. It is noteworthy that in this solemn discourse from which our text is taken, whilst He calls Himself the Son of Man He unequivocally calls Himself by names which none but a Divine Being dare apply to Himself.

II. Mark: **The Wonderfulness of the Sign.**—The emblazoned Cross is the sign of *human sin*. Never will the tribes of the earth realize fully the horror of sin till 'shall appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven'.

The Cross burning on the forehead of the heavens is the sign of *the guilt of sin*.

The Cross ardent on those resplendent heights is the sign of *full and complete atonement*. Can we be surprised that the Cross has, therefore, always been the supreme symbol of the Christian religion?

The Cross kindled on the skies is the sign of *character*. The ideal of Christian excellence is in the Cross, which also supplies the motive for striving after the ideal and the power to achieve the ideal.

The Cross blazing in the skies is also the sign of *the reward of the believer*. Such as have trusted the Redeeming Cross will know assuredly then that they have not believed in vain.

III. Let us seek to appreciate **the Momentousness of the Appearance of this Sign.**

Note carefully the time-point of my text, 'And *then* shall appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven'. The appearance of the flaming Cross is to synchronize with astounding phenomena.

In the Cross of Christ I glory
Towering o'er the wrecks of time.

That is the proclamation of a literal circumstance, the Cross shall survive all things, even as (in God's gracious purpose) it did antedate all things. One wonders if the Cross will be a gospel to a world of sinners in that awful hour.

The Cross when it appears in heaven will *give universal compunction*. The Lord saith that 'then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn'.

When the Cross appears *Jesus will speedily return as Lord*. The 'sign' will, as Matthew Henry puts it, 'dash infidelity quite out of countenance'.

When the Cross appears *the full salvation of believers shall be declared*.

Finally: the Cross when it appears *will reveal what shall be the glory of saints for ever*.—Dinsdale T. Young, *The Travels of the Heart*, p. 19.

References.—XXIV. 30.—Bishop E. C. S. Gibson, *The Old Testament in the New*, p. 95. J. B. Wilkinson, *Plain Preaching for a Year*, vol. i. p. 276. XXIV. 30, 31.—F. E. Paget, *Helps and Hindrances to the Christian Life*, vol. i. p. 128. W. B. Trevelyan, *Sermons for the People* (2nd Series), vol. ii. p. 120. XXIV. 31.—Bishop E. C. S. Gibson, *The Old Testament in the* New, p. 109.

THE PROPHET MAY

'When his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh.'—Matthew xxiv. 32.

Transposing the words of an American preacher, we may say that what Isaiah is among the books of the Bible, that May is among the months of the year. When we come out on it from a cruel and lingering winter to behold the glory of the forest and the grace of flowers—to mark the delicate beauty of

Primroses and daises bright,
And everything that loves the light—

hope touches our hearts once more. If a hand lies fast in ours that threatened to slip, if we still find ourselves together on the narrow road that leads by the great precipice, it is with a graver and deeper joy that we turn over the Divine pages of the Book of the Prophet May.

I. May is very fitly the season in which Christian workers meet to review their labours. Some of them come to tell of reaping as well as sowing. They are happy because they have seen the promise of the kingdom, because they have felt the flush and

warmth of the approaching summer. For those to whom they carried the message the accepted day has risen. The Divine Spirit, almost before their very eyes, has renewed the souls of men. Their hearts are open to the teaching of the companies of prophets on the hill-sides and in the fields. But others receive it unreadily. They have sown in a gusty day. The clouds have been low in the sky. Nothing is apparent, nothing can be put into speech or print which does not speak of going back. It seems to them as if all were to end in misery, vanity, and enfeeblement. God rebukes them by His May. There are long winters in grace, but the renewal never fails.

II. For the rest St. Paul urges them to be steadfast, to be always abounding in the work of the Lord, by turning their thoughts to the field of death. That above all others is in the charge of Christ. Yet of visible proof that it is so there is next to none. No missionary, however despondent, sees such irresponsiveness. But when the Hope of all the harvest fell into the ground and died, He knew what would come of it. He rose again, and thereby 'made the dying deathless'. St. Paul argues it out very calmly. What sense sees is to faith the seed changing. It is a redeemed thing as much as the soul that waits it in the cloister of the Church expectant.

Therefore, looking at the iron rigour that holds and has held so long the field which the Lord has blessed! be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, and trusting in His prophecy.

III. What is true on the great scale is equally true for the individual. Life in Christ is not history—it is prophecy. If it were history it would be nothing, for what could the dim, vexed beginning of eternity count for when time was no more? But eternity is nothing but the unfolding and explaining of time. All that is not of Christ will pass; we go loosed from it as from our sins in the Blood of the Lamb. But how much remains! The companionship that made life a holy and happy thing was cut short just at the opening. The plans with which the eager heart teemed all came to nothing. What forces of thought and love we have seemed to spend in vain! Are there wounds that cannot be healed, losses that cannot be made good, griefs that cannot be forgotten? The answer is in the prophecy of May—of everlasting spring and unwithering flowers.—W. Robertson Nicoll, *Ten Minute Sermons*, p. 59.

References.—XXIV. 32.—C. Silvester Horne, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxix. 1906, p. 198. XXIV. 32, 33.—D. Heagle, *That Blessed Hope*, p. 44. XXIV. 34-36.—Bishop E. C. S. Gibson, *The Old Testament in the New*, p. 63. XXIV. 35.—S. H. Kellogg, *The Past a Prophecy of the Future*, p. 237. H. P. Liddon, *Sermons on Some Words of Christ*, p. 1. C. Jerdan, *Pastures of Tender Grass*, p. 77. J. Orr, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lvii. p. 81. XXIV. 36.—D. Heagle, *That Blessed Hope*, p. 44.

'As it was in the days of Noe.'—Matthew xxiv. 37.

In his biography of William Morris, Mr. J. W. Mackail points out (II. pp. 144 f.) the poet's firm belief in a catastrophe impending over modern civilization, a sort of twilight of the gods, a dying before regeneration, a sudden and complete avalanche of barbarism leading to some re-birth of man. 'I have more faith,' said Morris once, 'than a grain of mustard seed in the future history of "civilization," which I *know* now is doomed to destruction, and probably before very long; what a joy it is to think of! and how often it consoles me to think of barbarism once more flooding the world, and real feelings and passions, however rudimentary, taking the place of our wretched hypocrisies. With this thought in my mind all the history of the past is lighted up and lives again to me. I used really to despair once because I thought what the idiots of our day call progress would go on perfecting itself; happily I know now that all that will have a sudden check—sudden in appearance, I mean—"as it was in the days of Noe".'

References.—XXIV. 37.—A. N. Obbard, *Plain Sermons*, p. 53. XXIV. 39.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xiv. No. 823.

'Then shall two men be in the field; one is taken and one is left.'—Matthew xxiv. 40.

We are told that there shall be two in the field, that the one shall be taken and the other left. But we have yet to learn why, in our limited vision, the choice seems invariably to be mistaken. We have yet to learn why he who is doing good work is taken from the field, leaving there the man whose tastes are urban.—H. Seton Merriman.

I have read of a remarkable Welshman, of whom it was said, when the grave closed over him, that he could frame a harp and play it; build a ship and sail it; compose an ode and set it to music. A brave fellow, that son of Wales—but I had once a brother who could do more and better than this, but the grave has closed over him, as over the gallant Welshman of yore; there are now but two that remember him—the one who bore him, and the being who was nurtured at the same breast. He was taken, and I was left!—Truly the ways of Providence are inscrutable. —Borrow in *Lavengro*.

References.—XXIV. 40-42.—'Plain Sermons' by contributors to the *Tracts for the Times*, vol. iii. p. 49.

'Watch therefore.'—Matthew xxiv. 42.

The art of life resembles the art of the wrestler rather than of the dancer, inasmuch as man must stand ready and steady to meet sudden and unlooked-for attacks. —Marcus Aurelius.

References.—XXIV. 42.—E. Aldom French, *God's Message Through Modern Doubt*, p. 225. 'Plain Sermons' by contributors to the *Tracts for the Times*, vol. vii. p. 277. XXIV. 42-44.—T. B. Dover, *Some Quiet Lenten Thoughts*, p. 87. XXIV. 42-51. — A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture — St. Matthew XVIII.-XXVIII.* p. 166. D. Fraser, *Metaphors in the Gospels*, p. 244. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xlv. No. 2642. XXIV. 44.—R. D. B. Rawnsley, *Village Sermons* (3rd Series), p. 1. W. Hay M. H. Aitken, *Mission Sermons* (2nd Series), p. 247. XXV.—R. Winterbotham, *The Kingdom of Heaven*, p. 145.

THE SUBSTANCE OF THE KINGDOM—THE DIVINE NATURE

'The kingdom of heaven.'—MATTHEW XXV. 1.

THE way by which a human soul born in sin becomes a kingdom of heaven, is the way of the New Birth, wherein God takes away our sin by the cleansing of the Precious Blood of Christ, and makes us by the power of His Holy Spirit partakers of the Divine nature.

I. God being the germ of every true human character, if we want to know that true human nature is, we must know first what is the character of God, Who is its ideal, and the root out of which it grows. That character is summed up by St. John in the phrase 'God is love,' and that love is the mutual love of the Three Blessed Persons of the Undivided Trinity.

God being what in the life of our Lord Jesus Christ, and in all His works, we recognize Him to be, is the image in which you were formed, the type you are intended to grow up to. Nothing mean, sad, discouraging in all your experience, is what He made you for; as Christ was not made for the tortures of the Cross, but for the sacrifice, the love, the victory of the Cross.

We are not necessarily wrong in having joy of any created good. The wrongness begins only when we begin to be satisfied with any created good, and stop in that which is the mere sketch and faintest outline of good, instead of going on through it to God Who is the substance of all good.

II. And then God Himself, the Archetype, comes to you in the Word and Sacraments. And now the aspiration after holiness is no longer a vain longing; but your soul draws nigh to God, and is possessed by Him, and as you persevere in this prayer you learn how the dedicated soul may be conformed to God, and become God's kingdom.

III. But who ever practically reaches this glory? Is not the essence and abiding characteristic of human life vanity—misery? No, it has never been so absolutely. Every man bears within himself a reflection of the Divine goodness in his desire of good.

And consider that you feed upon God in the Sacraments, not in order to possess Him for yourself alone. You are to interpret, to reflect God to all who live round you.

This is the secret of the influence upon the human race of such a character as St. Francis of Assisi. In that homely, poor, and gentle lover we recognize the Eternal Love, and are kindled and inexpressibly cheered and enlightened.

Our salvation is not in knowing all the finest moral distinctions, but in God Himself, Who comes in all the radiancy of His holiness to live, and build His Kingdom in us.—G. CONGREVE, *The Parable of the Ten Virgins*, p. 11.

THE EXPECTANCY OF FAITH

(*Advent Season*)

Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom.'—MATTHEW XXV. 1.

THE typical company in the parable represents the vaster company of the kingdom of God, the number 'ten' being of no spiritual significance, but yet frequently used as denoting a typical company; the kingdom of God in the language of the Gospels meaning the visible Church of Christ. We understand therefore that these ten virgins are a representative company waiting for the coming of the heavenly Bridegroom, and looking forward to final beatitude in the home which our Lord has formed for His chosen ones.

There are two points to consider: expectancy, as a distinguishing mark of the life of the Church on earth; secondly, the going forth to meet the Messiah, as the chosen state of life of the individual members of His Church.

I. As to *expectancy*, our state should be a continual looking out for the dawn of the manifestation of Christ. The Christian mind is bent on the hope that we shall see the land that is far off, and follow in the triumphal march of the Bridegroom, and carry our standard safely in the midst of the glory and beauty of the mystical company.

II. These virgins were *going forth* to meet the Bridegroom. Under this idea is contained the whole life of the individual members of the Mystical Body. It is a 'going forth' to meet Him as He comes; true life is a going onward and upward, an animating quickening of the soul which has such expectancy. Our souls are gifted in various degrees, all lawful callings are part of a Divine purpose to be carried on in His kingdom. Our Lord would have them carried out with energy and skill and varied powers. For this purpose our gifts are infinitely various; but in one respect all are alike. The virgins all had one purpose: all were waiting for the coming of the Bridegroom; all were longing to see Him; and the image of the Bridegroom ever dwelt in their minds. And all who are faithful bear that image in their soul as a perpetual power, an ever-prompting influence. We are so made as to form visions in our minds, and these have great influence over us.

And such visions ever have practical teachings, telling us of duties to others; that each is but one of a company, with ever-constant calls of helpfulness, of relative duties, each demanding of us some effort for the forwarding of God's purpose, all and each acting together, even as He himself lived and lives for others, carrying on in heaven the work of love manifested on earth.—T. T. CARTER, *The Spirit of Watchfulness*, p. 8.

REFERENCES.—XXV. 1.—Henry Alford, *Advent Sermons*, p. 99. H. Scott Holland, *Logic and Life*, p. 305. E. Fowle, *Plain Preaching to Poor People* (2nd Series), p. 129. W. Lee, *University Sermons*, p. 124. XXV. 1-12.—T. De Witt Talmage, *Sermons*, p. 24. Rayner Winterbotham, *The Kingdom of Heaven*, p. 25. XXV. 1-13.—T. Guthrie, *Parables of Our Lord*, p. 166. Cosmo Gordon Lang, *Thoughts on Some of the Parables of Jesus*, p. 83. R. Stewart, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxxvii. 1890, p. 392. A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—St. Matthew XVIII.-XXVIII.* p. 175. B. W. Maturin, *Practical Studies on the Parables of Our Lord*, p. 138. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xlv. No. 2618, vol. xlv. No. 2642.

THE TEN VIRGINS

(*Advent*)

Five of them were wise, and five were foolish.'—MATTHEW XXV. 2.

I. OUR Lord seems to be drawing attention to the combination of outward resemblances and inward differences in the lives of men: the similarity of *circumstances* which so often conceals dissimilarity of *characters*.

1. It is, for instance, an obvious fact that *respectability* often, indeed usually, tends to resemble *goodness*—all the virgins had their lamps burning. You cannot at first tell, or perhaps even at last tell, which are the really good men, and which are the merely respectable ones. Yet in spite of resemblances between them, there is really a distinction as vital as we can conceive. For respectability is simply a regard for appearances—a regard for man; goodness is a regard for realities—a regard for God.

2. In apparent weaknesses there is also very frequently a resemblance—'They all slumbered and slept'. So *calm* is apt to look very much like indifference. But these superficial judgments count for very little. Absence of noise may mean absence of water, the dry and parched channel; or it may mean the stillness, the silence of a tide which 'moving seems asleep, too full for sound or foam'.

But the teaching of our Lord is that 'whatsoever is covered shall be revealed'; that the secret distinctions of character, unobserved now, shall be made visible. In the parable of the Ten Virgins we see the truth illustrated.

II. It is not in quiet and untroubled times, when the lamp of life seems to burn gaily without any effort of our own, while in peace and security men 'slumber and sleep'—it is not in the 'seasons of calm weather' that the true man, the character of the man, is made manifest, but in the sudden awakening call—the midnight cries—the crises of life, that what has been 'hidden' is 'revealed'. These comings of the Bridegroom, these solemn crises, these revealing moments, are, according to our Lord, but the foreshadowing and premonition of one other greater than all; and the last judgment is to be the final revelation of character.

III. Take two practical thoughts suggested by the subject:—

1. The thought of the supreme value of character, and therefore the supreme value of the individual soul. One of our commonest dangers is that of always trying to judge men and women by groups or classes, i.e. by circumstances instead of character.

2. Though none may see the depths of our souls, yet there is One who even now is never deceived by appearances—One who knows the true drift and tendency of our lives, who beholds us not only as we are, but as we are becoming—as we are to be. He knows the Virgins who, even when they sleep, are ready.—H. R. GAMBLE, *The Ten Virgins*, p. 3.

GOODNESS NOT GOOD ENOUGH

'. . . And five were foolish.'—MATTHEW XXV. 2.

THESE five foolish virgins were in some sense friends of the Bridegroom. And they stand here not exactly as representative of the base, but of the good, although there was something seriously the matter with their goodness—that is the point.

The goodness that is not good enough! What is that? Let us say you have here five foolish virgins, and they shall stand for five distinct types of defective goodness.

I. Ecclesiasticism Without Righteousness.—There is one great type of a goodness that is not good enough—formalism without character.

II. Morality Without Godliness.—It is always an advantage for a man to be moral; but, beyond all, it is an infinite advantage for his morality to be founded upon the deep rock.

In South Africa they sometimes come across yellow diamonds. They are really diamonds, but no king would ever put one of them into his crown. And there is many a man to-day who is a yellow diamond. His is the morality of the surface, the morality of society, the morality of etiquette, but he has not been transformed in mind and spirit, and he does not walk in the fear of God, and, therefore, God will never know him in the day when He makes up His jewels.

III. Sentiment Without Sacrifice.—Take care of your poetry, but mind it is the poetry of life. For, if at the last our religion has been imagination, romance, poetry, æstheticism, it is the goodness that is not good enough, it is the light that fails.

IV. Knowledge Without Obedience.—A man never knows enough until he has cried 'God be merciful to me a sinner'. A man never knows enough until he knows that he is a new creature in Christ Jesus. A man is not saved by what he knows, but by what he brings to bear on his daily life and action. Thank God for your knowledge. It is a golden lamp. But mind there is in it the oil of grace, the light of truth, and that your life is a life of obedience and sacrifice.

V. Enthusiasm Without Perseverance.—Goodness is a conviction, a passion, a habit. And the light that you want is the light that does not fail; the light that will burn steadily on through the years, and brightest at the last.—W. L. WATKINSON, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. LXVII. 1905, p. 36.

REFERENCES.—XXV. 2.—C. Gore, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lviii. 1900, p. 385. C. Silvester Horne, *ibid.* vol. lxviii. 1905, p. 187.

THE SPIRIT OF PREPARATION

(*Advent Season*)

'And five of them were wise, and five were foolish. They that were foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them. But the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps.'—MATTHEW XXV. 2-4.

Two great lines of thought are here brought before us:—

I. The Individuality of the Elect.

II. The Interior life of the Elect.

I. The Individuality; the contrast between the company and the several virgin members of whom it is composed. The company has a life of its own, and moves on irrespective of its numbers, and is received into the open doors, following the Bridegroom, while yet certain members of that chosen company may have lost their place, not keeping true to the standard of the sacred fellowship.

Here we have the representation, first of the Mystical Body, as a whole; secondly, of the members of that Body. The greatest wonder that we can believe is the continual existence of the Church, advancing on, as the Ark upon the waters, unassailable, sustained by higher powers.

While this progress of the body continues ever, the individual, taken up into it may fail, as each is tried—each shaping his own destiny, each standing or falling as the higher life prevails or dies. This truth is shown in the parable, certain of the virgins failing to hold their place in the mystic company. And here is one of the greatest difficulties of faith, how to realize the separateness of each separate soul.

II. And all depends on the *interior condition of the soul.* All forms of external activity spring from the life growing within—each showing its principles in deeds and words, the centre of each life ever giving out the powers of the individual soul.

This truth appears in the parable as symbolized by the oil, which gives its power to the kindled lamp, for the oil is the inner source that feeds it. And this our Lord would bring out when He represents the foolish virgins as saying to the wise, 'Give us of your oil,' and the reply, 'Go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves'. For the interior life cannot be given by one individual to another.

Of the oil, some have thought that it means one, some another, virtue; some have interpreted it as the Holy Spirit Himself. We may rather suppose that it represents both the Giver and the Gift. We cannot separate them. The Spirit goes forth in His Gift, and the Gift can live only as it abides in the Giver. The true spirit in us is kindled by the Holy Spirit according to the calling of God, through His indwelling, and each soul has an individual destiny, a special history. And this individuality depends on the foundations of the life within; the issues of life and death depending on what passes for good or evil within each soul.—T. T. Carter, *The Spirit of Watchfulness.*

Reference.—XXV. 2-4.—Henry Alford, *Advent Sermons*, p. 121.

'The wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps.'—Matthew xxv. 4.

Here lies the sole difference between the wise and the foolish: the wise had private additional store of oil hid away in their own little vessels, so that the lamp lighted for them may be trimmed and refilled by their own peculiar oil. The common inheritance of grace brought down to us by a catholic church—this is the beginning of salvation. But this cannot carry us through, unless deep in our own secret heart of hearts we have stored up the hidden oil of expectant love . . . the thoughtful, anxious, careful love, that does not rest in its own vague impulses and shallow fancies, but makes itself ready with given grace of God.—Canon Scott Holland.

THE PATIENT WAITING

(*Advent Season*)

'While the bridegroom tarried they all slumbered and slept.'—Matthew xxv. 5.

There have been different interpretations of this verse. One ancient Father has spoken of it as 'the rest or repose of faith'.

Let us consider what we may thus learn as to the cause of the failure of the foolish virgins.

I. The repose of faith implies an imagery corresponding with one of the beautiful antiphons of the Advent season, where St. Paul refers to our mortal life as the night, 'The night is far spent, the day is at hand,' the night meaning this period of our mortal life.

Another passage in the Canticles explains more tersely the cause of the failure of the unready virgins. The Bride says, 'I sleep, but my heart waketh'. Within the slumber and the depth of sleep there may yet be the awakened heart, the earnest preparation for anticipatory joy. The heart may be thus far awake in sleep, the throbbing fullness of the light glowing within the soul implying the repose of faith. The absence of oil in the foolish virgins showed the loss of this tendency of the soul.

II. There are, speaking generally, two causes of failure even among the faithful—the want of a true foundation, the want of forethought.

1. It is needful to look closely at the foundations of one's life to see how far one's will is moved in conformity with the Divine call; how far the stability of one's inward resolves rests on faith unfailing and love unquenched.

2. There is the difficulty of waiting—the need of patience. In a long illness, the first prostration seems not difficult to bear; let it continue, and the trial grows. It is the bearing of such continuous strain which is the test of patience. It is the same in all the trials of life, its burdens, its responsibilities—with the questions of doubt and hopelessness. The real character is shown by the way in which one endures a lengthened period of such trial. And for such endurance we need forethought.

III. We are told in this time of waiting to prepare to meet our God, to be patient, and to hope on, not to let the heart shrink back from what it has resolved. We are fed with the food of immortality washed in the cleansing Blood. Our faithful prayer is never counted vain. We are surrounded with companions in the race, and each year sets before us examples with a halo of truest witness. But all will depend on the waking heart. We are all together, seemingly one, till the end comes, and then the distinction of

one from another will be seen in that awful light.—T. T. Carter, *The Spirit of Watchfulness*, p. 23.

OF DISCIPLINE.

'While the bridegroom tarried.'—Matthew xxv. 5.

Our Lord coming into the world taught us that the value of the human nature which He assumed is not the value of the bodily power, or of the bare intelligence, but primarily of the *spirit*, which loves and chooses the highest, which rules all the other powers, and presents them to God. So when the Divine Word took our nature, His first movement in it was the giving of its whole value to God by the offering of *His will*—the faculty of loving and choosing the highest.

I. Christ gives to each of His members, by the Sacraments, the virtue of His Sacrifice, of His free self-giving to the Father in love. By the Eternal Spirit He offered Himself, and He gives us the same power and means of offering ourselves; and this is the reason for the tarrying of the Bridegroom; He is giving us time to learn the one business of life—discipline to train the human heart and will in the exercise of the grace of Christ, in the virtue of Sacrifice, in the self-giving to God. Naturally every fallen soul lives in itself, for itself. God saves it by giving to it a new nature. Christ Incarnate comes to be in it a new principle, a new life. But the will of each Christian has to assimilate that principle—to give itself up to that new life; and that requires time—time to learn to exercise its new movements, methods, mysteries, powers.

II. God sows in us the seed of the life of His dear Son, and gives us opportunities of exerting it, so that it may grow in us. This heavenly life sets us on our feet looking up to heaven, giving us a new upward impulse, to start us on our way to heaven. And at our first movement in that way we find at once *something that opposes*—difficulties within and without. Sometimes it is perplexing to a Christian to conceive why his way to God should be made so thorny, so dry and bare of sympathies and encouragements; at last he learns that those difficulties are not obstacles at all, but the very way and the only way for him to God; for it is those difficulties that teach him to look to God Himself as his end—and to God, not to any created means, as his only power of attaining God.

III. Our relation to God in Christ is the basis of Christian discipline. Acts of common courtesy need never be left to unreality; when they are done for Christ's sake they become *discipline*, they purify us from the selfishness of fallen nature, and nourish in us the nature of Christ on the throne of God.

The testing of love by delay and disappointment is the supreme test. Every experience of weariness will awaken a loyal will to look up, expect, and prepare for the coming of the Bridegroom.—G. Congreve, *The Parable of the Ten Virgins*, p. 88.

References.—XXV. 5.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons Preached in a Religious House*, vol. ii. p. 608. XXV. 5-8.—C. G. Lang, *Church Times*, vol. liii. 1905, p. 183. XXV. 5-9.—Henry Alford, *Advent Sermons*, p. 143. XXV. 6.—Henry Alford, *Quebec Chapel Sermons*, vol. ii. p. 93. Stopford A. Brooke, *Short Sermons*, p. 306. W. J. Knox-Little, *Manchester Sermons*, p. 105.

THE CRY OF THE AWAKENED SOUL

'Give us of your oil; for our lamps are gone out.'—Matthew xxv. 8.

That is the cry of the awakened soul as it rises to understand at a time of great need that all the resources that God has given it are wasted and spent. And the pathos of the cry is this, that many of these men in times of need call to their fellow-men, as the virgins in the parable did, thinking that out of the abundance of their lives their own wasted resources can be repaired.

I. The Cry.—In many ways that cry reaches our ears to-day. The man looks up at his friend and he says, 'You with your certainty of hope, you with your simplicity, you with your assurance, give me of that assurance, of that simplicity'. Or another says, 'I think of my own life harassed with its anxieties, oppressed with all its perplexities, and I ask you to give me of your calmness, of your peace'. Or we think again of some man who holds the faith of Jesus Christ in a narrow, in a hard, in an unloving spirit, and he comes to us and says, 'Give me of that power, and of that zeal; my faith has no power, my ideal no driving force. For the oil of the Spirit is being spent.'

II. The Refusal.—The pathos of it all is this, that this cry of our fellow-men must meet with a simple and blank refusal. For the cry is not from the men who do not believe, who have not been taught. They look up to the enthusiasm of Christ's Church, and they say, 'This we once had; can you not give it us back?' And our Lord says, and the experience of all life goes to show, that this cannot be done. 'Go and buy for yourselves.' The faith of Jesus Christ is not a thing which a man can believe on the word of a friend. The peace of Jesus Christ can never be gained by the mere infection of another's peace. Only as we buy these things for ourselves shall we find the peace of God 'which passeth all understanding,' the oil of the Spirit which never faileth.

III. What must the Church do?—And so in the face of this cry which reaches us from many quarters let us ask ourselves what the Church has got to do. We of the Church have got to make the light that God has given us glow with such clear and distinct force that men shall realize that what is possible for us is possible also for them. Our human nature is meant to be a lamp through which the light of the Spirit shall gleam upon the darkness of the earth—not the lurid light of passion or the chill disturbed flicker of selfishness, but the steady clear flame of the Holy Spirit. What was it that stirred men as they watched the life of Jesus Christ on earth? It was a possibility which they had never suspected before—the possibility of a pure and untainted humanity through which, as from a lamp, streamed out the light of God. And I, too, must make my lamp so

transcendently pure that the man whose faith is dying will say, 'That which you have, tell me where I can get it, so that I may get it for myself'.

References.—XXV. 8.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—St. Matthew XVIII.-XXVIII.* p. 181. J. Henderson, *Sermons*, p. 311. A. G. Mortimer, *The Church's Lessons for the Christian Year*, vol. iv. p. 214.

'But the wise answered, Not so; lest there be not enough for us and you.'—Matthew xxv. 9.

All experienced wrestlers with fate and fortune know well that success has often, at the critical time, depended upon some very trifling advantage which the slightest diminution of power would have lost to them. No one knows the full immensity of the difference between having power enough to make a little headway against obstacles, and just falling short of the power which is necessary at the time. In every great intellectual career there are situations like that of a steamer with a storm-wind directly against her and an iron-bound coast behind. If the engines are strong enough to gain an inch an hour she is safe, but if they lose there is no hope.—P. G. Hamerton, *The Intellectual Life*, p. 22.

'And the door was shut.'—Matthew xxv. 10.

Compare Tennyson's well-known song, 'Late, late so late,' in 'Guinevere'.

It is a matter of frequent remark, that bad systems are destroyed, not when they are at their worst, but when they are in the process of an attempted reform. Witness the French monarchy at the Revolution, compared with its state under Louis XV. The reason of this seems to be that the reform is forced on by a change in public opinion which goes forward at an accelerated rate, faster than the reform can be effected. If the improvement could be made freely from within, it might still be in time. There is the same difference in the individual between a forced restitution which has no merit in it, and a genuine, spontaneous, repentance. Some have concluded that it is better not to reform, since Providence and history seem against it; but the true lesson is, Reform in time; Providence and history have their 'Too late.'—Dr. Ker, *Thoughts for Heart and Life*, p. 41.

References.—XXV. 10.—H. P. Liddon, *Advent in St. Paul's*, p. 460. A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—St. Matthew XVIII.-XXVIII.* p. 189. XXV. 10-13.—Henry Alford, *Advent Sermons*, p. 166. XXV. 11.—C. Perren, *Revival Sermons in Outline*, p. 288. XXV. 11-13.—Gordon Calthrop, *Penny Pulpit*, vol. xii. No. 686, p. 161. XXV. 13.—Stopford A. Brooke, *Short Sermons*, p. 299. Phillips Brooks, *The Law of Growth*, p. 39. F. Y. Leggatt, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxx. 1906, p. 280.

THE USE OF TALENTS

'The kingdom of heaven is as a man travelling into a far country, who called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods. And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one; to every man according to his several ability; and straightway took his journey.'—Matthew xxv. 14, 15.

Here is a parable of our blessed Lord's which has practically added a word to human language, and furnished a living protest against human self-sufficiency. A talented man is not so much the man who is largely equipped for self-display, as one to whom much is given, and of whom much will be required.

I. Notice that this parable, although tending to the same end, is different to the parable of the Virgins, wherewith it is closely associated. There, we are allowed to see certain difficulties which beset those who wait for their Lord; here, we have to consider the responsibilities of those who work for Him.

What a real lesson we should have learned if we could realize that life is a vocation, not a scramble for prizes, that we are called to God, not merely to work, that so much health, so much time, so much resource, so much wisdom, so much money, yes, so much ill-health, so much want of money, so to speak, so much distress, are all put into our hands by God for the development of His work. Then we should be able to understand that feeling which prompted Archbishop Benson to say to a friend, who was knocking off with his stick the luxuriant brambles which were running over the top of the green hedge in the country lane, 'Don't do that, it is breaking the third commandment'. For all the green things of the earth belong to God.

And we do well to notice that the talents as they came from God were unequally distributed; once more the good things of this life are not a rich prize in which all ought to have an equal share, but one work has to be done by many agents, each equipped for the particular department which falls to his lot. True it is that each man receives his endowment according to his capacity. Some of these inequalities of capacity came from God Himself, some are brought about by human neglect, for some the man is himself responsible.

II. We gather further from this parable that the talents which God distributes are not like precious curiosities to be kept in a museum and presented to Him again intact, but there is a mention of trading and bankers and interest, which all point to a continual and profitable investment of Divine endowments.

There are many bankers ready to trade with the five talents and the two, and to develop them and even to double them, but not in the currency of heaven, or in schemes which the Lord when He comes will recognize. It will be a sad thing, if we find that the intellect which was given us that we might develop the world for God, and prepare the way for Christ, has been spent in rearing up the love of self in self-advancement. It is so hard to remember God, and to balance this sense of proprietorship which belongs to 'My own,' with the sense of responsibility which belongs to 'His goods'. Hence we see the practical value of religion, to warn us and remind us of an absent Master.

III. But the main interest of the teaching of the parable centres after all on the man who had received one talent, and miserably failed in his duty of trading with it.

We all know the careless possessor of one talent, who absolutely does no good in the world, who eats and drinks and does his monotonous drudgery without life or interest, who comes into the world unknown, who passes through it unnoticed, and dies undesired, angry with God, grumbling at circumstances, dissatisfied with himself. What little work he has done has ended in this, in sullenness, in gloom, in selfishness, in sensuality, in despair: he has been engaged all his life in burying his one talent. And when his Lord comes he stands empty and barehanded before Him.

And yet what a gift it is, this one talent, which he so thanklessly misuses. What a privilege it is even to live at all, what a privilege to be a Christian, what a privilege to have opportunities of being useful to one single being in God's universe.—W. C. E. Newbolt, *Words of Exhortation*, p. 181.

Illustration.—In building a great cathedral there is some master-mind, and then are employed variously endowed craftsmen, down to the day-labourer, all equally necessary to the completion of the design. We do not need artists to dig foundations, nor masons to do the work of carvers. Some have five talents, some have two, and some have one, but all work at one design.—W. C. E. Newbolt, *Words of Exhortation*, p. 186.

USEFUL MEDIOCRITY

(*The Parable of the Talents*)

Matthew xxv. 14-30.

Taking a man's talents to represent the sum of his abilities, opportunities, and privileges, let us see what we can learn from a consideration of the character and work of the man who had two talents. The servants who had one and five talents bestowed upon them could doubtless teach us much; each is a typical and representative character. But it will suffice now if we limit our meditation to the servant who was entrusted with two talents. He is the man who stands between the highest and the lowest. He was not so liberally dealt with as the man above him with five talents; but on the other hand, he has twice as much granted to him as the man below him with only one talent. This servant with the two talents stands as the representative of the mediocre man, the man whose abilities and opportunities are neither so many as some others enjoy, nor so few as multitudes have to be contented with. Such a man's character and work are worthy of study.

Consider:—

I. The Numerousness of men with two talents. They constitute the majority of mankind. This is true as regards the possession of *intellectual gifts*. Men of distinct genius are few. Five talents in this respect have been granted but now and then, here and there. Shakespeare in literature, Raphael in art, Chrysostom in the pulpit, Newton in science, Edison in invention—such as these are five-talented men, and how rarely such brilliant stars appear in the crowded firmament of life!

> For few may wield the power
> Whose spells uplift or thrill;
> The barrier, fixed yet fine,
> We may not cross at will.

And on the other hand, among normal men and women, the one-talented are comparatively few.

So again in regard to *opportunities*. Take, for example, opportunities of influencing others. A few people have wide scope and weighty chances. The popular preacher who attracts a congregation numbered by thousands; the statesman who, when he speaks, addresses a listening empire; the successful writer whose books march out of publishers' establishments in battalions—such as these are men of five talents, so far as influence is concerned; and they are not a multitude. Contrasting with them are the people whose circle of associates is limited. The lonely settler in a new colony who scarce sees a neighbour's face once in a month; the sailor who can meet only the same dozen shipmates each day during a long voyage; the invalid imprisoned in the sickroom—all such have but one talent in the way of influence. But the mass of mankind come under none of these categories. They are ordinary human beings, meeting with and influencing an average number of people; in this respect they have two talents.

Take again the matter of *advantages*. We think naturally of the advantage of wealth, and the same truth holds good. Millionaires—men of five talents in regard to wealth—are rare. To most men Agur's desire has been granted; they have neither poverty nor riches. The great middle class, people of two talents in the matter of wealth, are the strength of the nation and of the Church. So in regard to the advantage of education. A small number are privileged to go through a university career, and not many nowadays are absolutely illiterate. Most people have just two talents, so far as educational advantages are concerned. And in every department and sphere of life the same truth can be demonstrated; two-talented men constitute by far the largest section of humanity.

Consider:—

II. The Temptations of the two-talented man. Now, to test and try his servants was the evident purpose of the 'lord' who distributed the talents; and the testing for the man with two talents would come both from the servant above him, with five talents, and the servant below him with one. The two-talented servant would be tempted to be envious of the man with five talents. And it is this temptation to envy and covetousness to which the mediocre man is always exposed. He is tempted to murmur as he looks around him: 'If only I had A's intellectual gifts, what would I not do! If only I had B's opportunities! If only I had C's wealth! In a word, if only I had five talents instead of these contemptible two—what a furore I would make in the world!' Now, all such cankering envy must be resolutely evicted from the mind of the two-talented man. The last commandment of the decalogue has an application for all who are thus moderately endowed. Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's—*talents*

III. The Value of the man with two talents. Such verily are the backbone of the Church and society.

Let the army of the two-talented, therefore, do their duty and exercise their gifts, even if they are conscious that theirs are only mediocre powers; for it would be disastrous, indeed, if such withdrew from service and hid their Lord's money. 'Occupy till I come,' is the Master's word.—Herbert Windross, *The Life Victorious*, p. 97.

References.—XXV. 14, 15.—Lyman Abbott, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xlix. 1896, p. 99. Eugene Bersier, *Sermons*, p. 1. B. W. Randolph, *Church Times*, vol. liv. 1905, p. 188. XXV. 14, 30.—C. Gordon Lang, *Thoughts on Some of the Parables of Jesus*, p. 103. B. W. Maturin, *Practical Studies on the Parables of Our Lord*, p. 156. A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—St. Matthew XVIII.-XXVIII.* p. 195. G. Philip, *Home in the World Beyond*, p. 19. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xlv. No. 2643. XXV. 16-18.—Eugene Bersier, *Sermons*, p. 11.

'He that had received one went and digged in the earth, and hid his lord's money.'—Matthew xxv. 18.

When Sir Philip Sidney was frittering away his powers in vain dreams and court life, his noble old friend, Languet, strove to recall him to the responsibilities of statesmanship for which he was so singularly fitted. 'Think not that God endowed you with parts so excellent to the end that you should let them rot in leisure. Rather hold firmly that He requires more from you than from those to whom He has been less liberal of talents. . . . Nature has adorned you with the richest gifts of mind and body; fortune with noble blood and wealth and splendid family connexions; and you from your first boyhood have cultivated your intellect by those studies which are most helpful to men in their struggle after virtue. Will you then refuse your energies to your country, when it demands them? Will you bury that distinguished talent God has given you?'

'After a long time the lord of those servants cometh, and reckoneth with them.'—Matthew xxv. 19.

The more we advance in knowledge, the more we shall come to judge men in the spirit of the parable of the talents; that is by the net result of their lives, by their essential unselfishness, by the degree in which they employ and the objects to which they direct their capacities and opportunities.—W. E. H. Lecky.

With all sublunary entities, this is the question of questions. What talent is born to you? How do you employ that?—Carlyle.

References.—XXV. 19.—C. Gore, *Church Times*, vol. xlii. 1899, p. 693; see also *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lviii. 1900, p. 371.

'He that had received five talents came and brought other five talents.'—Matthew xxv. 20.

Compare the fifth chapter of Law's *Serious Call*.

THE FACT OF FAITHFULNESS

'Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things. I will make thee ruler over many things; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.'—Matthew xxv. 21.

According to the measurements of Jesus, we are face to face here with a test of character. It is in faithfulness that men are great; it is in unfaithfulness that they are weak.

One of the latest critics of Shakespeare, Professor Bradley, insists upon the faithfulness of Shakespeare. It is the fidelity of Shakespeare, in a mind of extraordinary power, he says, that has really made Shakespeare what he is.

I. Our Lord Recognizes that Faithfulness Calls for Courage.—It is significant that the man who hid his talent said to his lord, 'I was afraid'. In trading there was a certain risk, as in all commerce, I suppose there is a certain risk, and the man with the one talent was unfaithful because he had not the courage for that venture.

II. Our Lord Makes Faithfulness the Road to Power.—'Because thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee a ruler over many things.' God's rewards grow out of the struggle that we wage, as the fruit of the autumn grows from the flower of spring. 'Because thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things.' It is because one is the outflow of the other, as is the burn of the spring among the heather. It is because, as flower from the bud, influence blossoms from fidelity.

III. Christ Associates Faithfulness With Joy.—To the faithful servant came this benediction: 'Enter thou into the joy of Thy Lord'. It is not success and joy, it is not fame and joy; it is not these that are joined in our Lord's teaching, but faithfulness and joy. These are the bride and bridegroom and the marriage mystical of our Lord.

Then look at the doom of the unfaithful servant; it is outer darkness and wailing and gnashing of teeth. A man who is unfaithful is always moving nightwards. He has been false to the light God gave him for his journey; and the man who has been unfaithful, when the day is done, what can he look for but remorse and tears?—G. H. Morrison, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxxiv. p. 373.

THE GIFT OF RULE

'I will make thee ruler.'—Matthew xxv. 21.

This is the word of Christ to the good and faithful servants who at last behold His face in righteousness. He does not say, 'I will give thee many things; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord'. The promise is, 'I will make thee ruler,' and the joy of our Lord is not in possessing, but in governing.

I. It must be premised that the New Jerusalem—that is, perfect blessedness—lies beyond death. With many social reformers all that is needed would seem to be a steady, universal *bien-être*, always to be dependent and relied upon. But this could only become happiness if the affections were deadened. Christianity quickens them for the very purpose of revealing man's true nature—of delivering him from a base serfdom to the actual and the material. Were it otherwise, his dignity would be ignobly misprized, for the measure of a man is the measure of an angel.

Over against mere possession Christ sets the great

idea of rulership. Take leisure, for example. We are in the thick of a righteous movement for shorter hours. But suppose the day is reduced to half an hour, what profit is there if the man is not ruler over his leisure? Multitudes possess leisure; very few of them rule it. The idler wakens to wonder how his day is to be got through, and the answer often comes from beneath. The general dullness and listlessness of men with no occupation has passed into a proverb. Even generous natures often become selfish under this trial. It will be an evil day if working men learn to despise labour. The great safeguard for nearly all of us is to be found in almost unrelaxed industry. It is pernicious also to despise certain forms of labour. Utopia itself will need scavengers. But 'I will make thee ruler over leisure' is a great promise to be perfectly fulfilled on high, where endless service means endless rest.

II. What is to be sought is not possession but rulership, and that can be gained only by faithfulness over a few things.

'Faithful over a few things.' In a sense this describes truly the life which began in the manger and ended on the cross. It is still the schooling, and the only schooling, by which men learn to rule their own spirits and all kingdoms whose thrones they climb.

The fulfilment of the promise takes various forms. We are familiar with it in this life. We see men go on from strength to strength, receiving more and more, and remaining unmastered by their possession. But before Christ all earthly life, even the most victorious, is but a passage from a 'few things' to a 'few things'. The distinctions we make here may but pain Him; but 'if *that* life is life, this is but a breath'.

Inasmuch as no misdoing robs us of all, a man may begin faithfulness at the lowest point of poverty and shame, and be made ruler at last. Our God is the God of Resurrection, and He can revive men and nations of men from seemingly utter death.—W. Robertson Nicoll, *Ten Minute Sermons*, p. 267.

WHAT IS THE JOY OF OUR LORD?

'Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.'—Matthew xxv. 21.

We know what His sorrow was. 'How often would I have gathered thy children . . . and ye would not.' What was His joy? When in the end He welcomes those who have been faithful to their trust, He says, 'Well done . . . enter thou into the joy of thy Lord'. His praise has been generously bestowed through the failures of this life, and even in the humblest judgment the redeemed soul ever passed on itself, it has not been without a trembling consciousness of His broader love. Nor have His people—even when they saw Him not—been left without joy, joy unspeakable and full of glory. But He speaks of a joy after death to which they had hitherto been strangers, a joy into which they would enter as into a home, and which would fold itself around them. It was to be His own joy. Anything He did not share would be nothing to them. How poor the promise would be, 'He that overcometh shall inherit all things,' if it ended there. The possession of many things leaves the heart empty; how should the possession of all things enrich it? But when it goes on, 'And I will be his God, and he shall be My son,' the words fall upon the soul like a shower of strength.

What then is that joy which is the last guerdon of the ransomed? He explains it Himself. 'I will make thee ruler over many things.' It is the joy of ruling. 'To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with Me on My throne.' In these and in many words like them, He answers a deep instinct and craving by imparting the sweet and wonderful secret of His purpose.

I. It was His own joy in the world. When He leant back upon God and communed with His own heart, He said, 'The Father loveth the Son, and *hath given all things into His hand*'. Power is the special gift of love, and He had received it. 'Thou sayest that I am a king.' For a certain misnamed kingship He did not seek. He would have none of it. When they sought to make Him a king by force, He departed into a mountain Himself alone. Rank and rule in this world He rejected; He would suffer neither men, nor even His twelve legions of angels, to crown Him on an earthly throne. The only kingdom He cared to rule over was a kingdom of kings, and He gives His subjects the promise of a throne.

II. This joy of our Lord is reserved in its fullness for the other life. Here His people fight the battle within themselves. With the great simplicity of revelation, St. James tells us the source of all disquiet, from the meanest brawl to world-shaking war. 'From whence come wars and fightings among you? Come they not hence, even of the lusts that war in your members?' The soul is peaceless till the will rules every other power, and till that will is Christ within. The true kings unto God have known this so well that they have hardly asked for any other dominion. And so they have often for the time been obscure, and apparently without influence. They have been thwarted and enclosed. As McLeod Campbell said of his friend A. J. Scott, 'How mysteriously God seemed to be at the same time increasing his light and withholding from placing it on a candlestick'. But our Lord said, 'Your time is always ready; My time is not yet come.'

III. The saints marvel when the kingdom comes to them. 'When saw we Thee an hungered, and gave Thee meat?' Yet in this way—the old and perfect way which Christ has taught His own—they arrive at their dominion. The meek *shall* inherit the earth. It must be so. Meekness wears everything else out, and is as meek at last in its triumph as when stripped and dispossessed. There is a magic in gentleness of which even the heathen dreamt when they imagined Osiris going forth to conquer the world, not with chariots and horses, but with music. Love which has not vaunted herself, has not sought her own; love which has borne all things, believed all things, hoped all things, must in the end inherit all things.

The saints shall reign with Christ and be partakers of His kingly joy. Little as they may dwell on it,

the thought passes often through their hearts like a song in the night. For the promise means that one day their light will be all clear; that it will be set on high till its last ray travels to its period; that there will be nothing to limit or obscure its force.—W. Robertson Nicoll, *Ten Minute Sermons*, p. 145.

'I will make thee ruler over many things.'—Matthew xxv. 21.

'My idea of heaven,' said Tennyson, 'is the perpetual ministry of one soul to another.'

In his Christmas paper for 1711 (*Spectator*, No. 257), Addison closes a discussion on praise and fame with the reminder that God alone can fitly reward our virtues. Then he adds: 'Let the ambitious man therefore turn all his desire of fame this way; and, that he may prepare to himself a fame worthy of his ambition, let him consider that if he employs his abilities to the best advantage, the time will come when the Supreme Governor of the world, the great Judge of mankind, who sees every degree of perfection in others, and possesses all possible perfection in Himself, shall proclaim his work before men and angels, and pronounce to him in the presence of the whole creation that best and most significant of applauses: *Well done, thou good and faithful servant, enter thou into thy Master's joy.*'

Macaulay describes a conversation he once had with Lady Holland, in which the word *talents* was mentioned. 'I said that it had first appeared in theological writing, that it was a metaphor taken from the parable in the New Testament, that it had gradually passed from the vocabulary of Divinity into common use. I challenged her to find it in any classical writer on general subjects before the Restoration, or even before the year 1700. I believe that I might safely have gone down later. She seemed surprised by this theory, never having, so far as I could judge, heard of the parable of the Talents. I did not tell her, though I might have done so, that a person who professes to be a critic in the delicacies of the English language ought to have the Bible at his fingers' ends.'

References.—XXV. 21.—H. C. G. Moule, *The Secret of the Presence*, p. 194. J. H. Jowett, *Meditations for Quiet Moments*, p. 98. S. Martin, *Comfort in Trouble*, p. 215. J. Guinness Rogers, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xli. 1892, p. 65. G. G. Bradley, *ibid.* vol. lix. 1901, p. 68. J. M. Neale, *Sermons Preached in Sackville College Chapel*, vol. i. p. 301. T. Sadler, *Sunday Thoughts*, p. 165. Ch. New, *The Baptism of the Spirit*, p. 289. M. R. Vincent, *God and Bread*, p. 117. XXV. 22, 23.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. iv. No. 175.

THE DIVINE ACCEPTANCE

'Well done, good and faithful servant; . . . enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.'—Matthew xxv. 23.

I. In every period or crisis of life the imperative claims of God, of righteousness, of truth, are forced upon us. God calls us in a way that can only be answered in self-dedication and earnest work. Obedience is shown as the salvation of life. In self-surrender we find God and live.

If our souls are awake, faithful, and loving, 'all that we experience is a communication' of God's will, which is His love for us, ever reaching out to draw us to Himself, to guide, to control us.

Life under the cheering control of this love of God is full of powers for work, for sacrifice, for learning; it is full of a deeply contenting encouragement at every turn, in every development of life; for God's approval becomes at once the reason and the reward of what we try to do, a fact that sustains courage, a felt benediction that will keep us calm and steadfast in days of conflict.

'Apart from Me ye can do nothing.' All that we do is a part of the mighty working of the Incarnate life of Jesus.

II. The call of God, obedience in self-dedication and in work, the sacrifice of self—we cannot understand these or be ready for them, they will seem but a mistake, an illusion, a folly, unless the reality of the Divine acceptance be, as it were, their interpretation, their sanction, their inspiration. In other words, the love of God must satisfy the soul that it claims, must inspire the obedience that it commands, it must prepare and accept the sacrifice that it requires, it must fill the life that is emptied for its sake. And it does all this. For love is constituted the beginning and the end, the law and the interpretation, the principle and the fulfilment of life in relation to God.

III. The great reality of love, to be felt and understood in all thought and work, through every act of faith and will, is the life of Jesus in us.

If thus you live, realizing manifoldly the life of the Christ in you, all you do will bear healthfully on the lives of others; from you they will learn their needed lessons of truth; through your influence will be ministered grace which they have scarcely learned to desire or to ask. Therefore act towards them in the consciousness of the love of God, reflect the light in which you live, by letting the peace and the love of God rule in your hearts always. Without this consciousness of relation to Him life must be a failure. With it, life is glad, fruitful and blessed.—G. Brett, *Fellowship With God*, p. 44.

'Well done, good and faithful servant.'—Matthew xxv. 23.

The noblest thing a man can do is first humbly to receive, and then to go amongst others and give. I've not been able to give much. It's because I have received so little. And if there is anything in which I would be inclined to contradict Him, it would be if I heard Him say, 'Well done, good and faithful servant'.—Dr. John Duncan.

'Youth,' says Mr. Stevenson in his essay on *Old Mortality*, 'cannot bear to have come for so little, and to go again so wholly. He cannot bear, above all, in that brief scene, to be still idle, and by way of cure, neglects the little that he has to do. The parable of the talents is the brief epitome of youth. To believe in immortality is one thing, but it is first needful to believe in life.'

References.—XXV. 23.—H. E. Ryle, *On Holy Scripture and Criticism*, p. 139. Eugene Bersier, *Sermons*, p. 285.

WHY THE TALENT WAS BURIED

'Then he which had received the one talent came and said, Lord, I knew Thee that Thou art an hard man, reaping where Thou hast not sown, and gathering where Thou hast not strawed: and I was afraid, and went and hid Thy talent in the earth.'—MATTHEW XXV. 24, 25.

I. CONSIDER the slander here and the truth that contradicts it.

'I knew Thee that Thou art an hard man,' says he, 'reaping where Thou hast not sown' (and he was standing with the unused talent in his hand all the while), 'and gathering where Thou hast not strawed.' That is to say, deep down in many a heart, that has never said as much to itself, there lies this black drop of gall—a conception of the Divine character rather as demanding than as giving, a thought of Him as exacting.

It is not difficult to understand why such a thought of God should rise in a heart which has no delight in Him nor in His service. There is a side to the truth as to God's relations to man which gives a colour of plausibility to the slander. Grave and stringent requirements are made by the Divine law upon each of us; and our consciences tell us that they have not been kept. Therefore, we seek to persuade ourselves that they are too severe.

What is the truth that smites this slander to death? That God is perfect, pure, unmingled, infinite love. And what is love? The infinite desire to impart itself. The Cross of Christ is the answer to the slander, and the revelation of the giving God.

II. Mark here the fear that dogs such a thought, and the love that casts out the fear.

'I was afraid!' If a man is not a fool, his emotions follow his thoughts, and his thoughts ought to shape his emotions. And wherever there is the twilight of uncertainty upon the great lesson that the Cross of Jesus Christ has taught us, there there will be, however masked and however modified by other thoughts, deep in the human heart a perhaps unspoken but not, therefore, ineffectual dread of God. Some of you remember the awful words in one of Shakespeare's plays: 'Now I, to comfort him, bid him he should not think of God. I hoped there was no need to trouble himself with any such thoughts yet.' What does that teach us? 'I knew Thee that Thou art an hard man; and I was afraid.'

The only way to get perfect love that casts out fear is to be quite sure of the Father-love in heaven that begets it. And the only way to be sure of the Infinite love in the heavens that kindles some little spark of love in our hearts here is to go to Christ and learn the lesson that He reveals to us at His Cross.

III. Mark the torpor of fear and the activity of love. 'I was afraid, and I went and hid Thy talent in the earth.'

Fear paralyses service, cuts the nerves of activity, makes a man refuse obedience to God. Love moves to action, fear paralyses into indolence.—A. MACLAREN, *The Unchanging Christ*, p. 72.

REFERENCES.—XXV. 24.—J. T. Parr, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. liv. 1898, p. 185. XXV. 24, 25.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—St. Matthew XVIII.-XXVIII.* p. 205. T. G. Selby, *The Holy Spirit and Christian Privilege*, p. 251. Stopford A. Brooke, *Short Sermons*, p. 182. XXV. 24, 25, 26.—H. Scott Holland, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. l. 1896, p. 168. XXV. 24-27.—C. G. Lang, *Church Times*, vol. liii. 1905, p. 286.

'I was afraid.'—MATTHEW XXV. 25.

You see I am dying, but I am not despondent; the Lord will set down that to my credit. I have bothered Him, the Most Gracious One, with jests only, never with moans and complaints! . . . Know this, not he is holy who hides himself from sin and lies calm. With cowardice you cannot defend yourself against sin; thus also says the parable of the Talents.—MAXIM GORKY, *The Man who was Afraid*, chap. XIII.

BETTER to try all things and find all empty, than to try nothing and leave your life a blank. To do this is to commit the sin of him who buried his talent in a napkin—despicable sluggard.—CHARLOTTE BRONTË, *Shirley*, chap. XXIII.

ONE of Dr. Johnson's own prayers in early life, as he began the second volume of his Dictionary, was: 'O God, who hast hitherto supported me, enable me to proceed in this labour, and in the whole task of my present state; that when I shall render up at the last day an account of the talent committed to me, I may receive pardon, for the sake of Jesus Christ.'

UNLESS the unsophisticated instincts of mankind are very far astray, our deepest gratitude is due not to the pure and sinless, but to the greatly daring and the strongly-doing—not to the monk in his convent or the ascetic on his pillar, but to the warrior in a good cause, to the adventurer in a grand enterprise, to the labourer in a noble work. 'I cannot' (says Milton) 'praise a fugitive and cloistered virtue that never sallies out and sees its adversary, but slinks out of the race where the immortal garland is to be run for—not without dust and heat.' A greater than Milton has comforted us by the assurance that much is forgiven to those who love much; that the active service of men (which is charity) covers a multitude of sins, and is more and loftier than creeds; and that the talent laid up in a white napkin and so scrupulously kept out of harm's way, reaps no praise and bears no fruit; while the talent that is made to fructify in commerce, in administration, or otherwise, earns wealth first and recompense and honour afterwards.—W. RATHBONE GREG.

REFERENCES.—XXV. 25.—J. H. Jowett, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xlv. 1894, p. 120. 'Plain Sermons' by contributors to the *Tracts for the Times*, vol. ii. p. 181.

'Thou knowest that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I have not strawed.—MATTHEW XXV. 26.

THE meaning of the parable, heard with ears unbesotted, is this: '*You*, among hard and unjust men, yet suffer their claim to the return of what they never gave; you suffer *them* to reap, where they

have not strawed. But to me the Just Lord of your life—whose is the breath in your nostrils, whose the fire in your blood, who gave you light and thought, and the fruit of earth and the dew of heaven—to me, of all this gift, will you return no fruit but only the dust of your bodies, and the wreck of your souls?'—Ruskin, *Fors Clavigera*, LIII.

In R. L. Stevenson's address to the Samoan chiefs, on the occasion of the opening of the road they had made, out of gratitude to him, he referred to this parable of the Talents, asking them what they had done with their island, and reminding them that 'God has both sown and strawed for you here in Samoa; He has given you a rich soil, a splendid sun, copious rain; all is ready to your hand, half done, and I repeat to you that thing which is sure; if you do not occupy and use your country, others will. It will not continue to be yours and your children's if you occupy it for nothing. You and your children will in that case be cast out into outer darkness, where shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth; for that is the law of God, which passeth not away. I who speak to you have seen these things. I have seen them with my eyes, these judgments of God.' After referring to Ireland and Hawaii, the speaker went on to urge the use of their opportunities. 'Now is the time for the true champions of Samoa to stand forth. And who is the true champion of Samoa? It is not the man who blackens his face, and cuts down trees, and kills pigs and wounded men. It is the man who makes roads, who plants good trees, who gathers harvests, and is a profitable servant before the Lord, using and improving that great talent that has been given him in trust.'

References.—XXV. 27.—M. R. Vincent, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. li. 1897, p. 236. XXV. 28, 29.—H. Scott Holland, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. l. 1896, p. 184.

THE LAW OF THE LIFE OF GRACE

'Unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath.'—Matthew xxv. 29.

'Unto him that hath, to him shall be given,' faith to the faithful, strength to the strong.

I. When the parable of the Sower had been spoken, it seemed that the listening multitude had not quite understood it. Their spiritual faculties were not developed as they might have been, had they been duly exercised on the revelation that had already been given. And so, although the kingdom of God was among them, they saw it not. Nor were they forced to see it. For God reveals Himself to men by degrees only as they are able to respond to His grace. The higher gift is only given to those by whom the lower gift has been used.

Slowly must the secret be learnt, but it can be learnt still. 'To him that hath, to him is given.' Those who survive and profit by discipline are those by whom the discipline is gladly embraced. It is not only in the kingdom of nature, not only in the course of human society, that the adaptation of self to surroundings, the quick seizing of opportunity, the tenacious grasp of each new faculty as it is gained, are necessary conditions of growth, progress, survival; this is also true of the kingdom of grace.

If we find within ourselves no response to the higher truths of the Christian creeds, it may well be because we have not appropriated or lived by the plain words of Jesus Christ.

II. 'From strength to strength.' That is in our text too. For the Lord applied the words of the text, not only to the reception of spiritual truth, but to the use of opportunity in all the details of life. They concern practice as well as theory. The words follow the parable of the Sower; they also sum up the lesson of the parable of the Talents. There is such a thing as over-confidence in the spiritual life. But diffidence, too, may be a sin, if it be the source of neglect of duty. It was a saying of Archbishop Whately that the two things often go together. Most men are inclined to over-estimate their own natural gifts, their talents, but at the same time to under-estimate their opportunities, their influence for good or for evil.

Use of opportunity brings increased power; its neglect ends in loss of power. That is the law of the spiritual as of the physical world; and the parable of the Talents seems to warn us that the consequences of such use or neglect are not confined to this side of the grave.—J. H. Bernard, *Via Domini*, p. 251.

THE TENURE OF TRUTH

'Unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath.'—Matthew xxv. 29.

I. The first half of the verse asserts that unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance, or in other words that in the case of every man who has, his property shall not remain stationary, but certainly grow. As this is not a result that follows as a matter of course from the mere fact of possession, it is evident the solution of the saying depends on the sort of possession described by the word 'hath'. Everything is held by a tenure corresponding to itself.

It is evident we cannot be said to have made a truth our own till we have made it part of ourselves. Otherwise it remains separate from us, and our connexion with it is uncertain and precarious. A man whose sincerity is assumed or put on, and not an integral portion of himself, may very probably put it off, and act deceitfully under the pressure of some passing temptation.

In order to bring about such an assimilation or fusion of one thing with another, there must be at least a potential likeness or congeniality of character between them. Religion is invested with a new character, because it is pervaded by a new purpose—its purpose being to bring us into sympathy with Christ, and to make that sympathy so powerful and complete that it shall bring our whole lives into unison with His.

The second characteristic of spiritual possession is that whatsoever a man has in this way he uses. This is plainly set forth in the parable to which my text is appended. The man who has the truth is the man who has made it one with himself, and gives evidence of this by acting it out or using it in his daily life. Anyone else has only the semblance of possession.

II. Consider the consequences that follow from this 'having' and 'not having' respectively.

It is a law of nature as well as of grace that whoever makes a thing work—that is, uses it according to its nature—will get out of it an ample compensation and reward for his pains. So then, if you have the truth it will multiply itself in your hands. Do not be disappointed that you cannot always measure your progress, nor see the store you have in hand growing visibly under your eyes. Disappointments are but the rough places in the road that leads on to fulfilment.

In the last words of the verse our Lord refers to a process which is exactly the reverse of that which I have been describing. It is the experience of the man who 'hath not,' or as St. Luke puts it, only 'seemeth to have,' and eventually loses his possession. This refers to those who have never received or used the truth, however familiar they may be with its terms. If you persist in refusing obedience to Christ now, you are surely rendering yourself less and less capable of ever yielding it at any time. The whole array of motions that act upon the will must gradually lose their intensity. Finally, you will become stiffened into a fixed posture of unbelief. Not that you will have openly dismissed the thought of redemption from your mind, or withdrawn your recognition of the Divinity of Christ, but you will have made yourself morally incapable of accepting Him and the vast revolution which that would imply over the whole region of inveterate habit.—C. Moinet, *The Great Alternative*, p. 85.

References.—XXV. 29.—M. G. Glazebrook, *Prospice*, p. 11. A. MacRae, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxv. 1904, p. 69. XXV. 31, 32.—'Plain Sermons' by contributors to the *Tracts for the Times*, vol. ix. p. 157. B. F. Westcott, *The Historic Faith*, p. 87. XXV. 31, 33.—George Salmon, *Gnosticism and Agnosticism*, p. 311. H. J. Coleridge, *The Return of the King*, p. 302. XXV. 31-36.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xli. No. 671. XXV. 31-46.—R. W. Dale, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xlviii. 1895, p. 132. R. Winterbotham, *The Kingdom of Heaven*, p. 181. A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—St. Matthew XVIII.-XXVIII.* p. 213.

'And He shall separate the nations one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats.'—Matthew xxv. 32.

'I've got a religion of my own,' says an American Methodist woman in Mr. Harold Frederic's *Illumination*, 'and it's got just one plank in it, and that is, that the time to separate the sheep from the goats is on Judgment Day, and that it can't be done a minute before.'

'That is a passage,' says Zachariah Coleman in *The Revolution in Tanner's Lane*, 'that I never could quite understand. I never, hardly, see a pure-breed, either of goat or sheep. I never see anybody who deserves to go straight to heaven or who deserves to go straight to hell. When the Judgment Day comes, it will be a difficult task.'

Reference.—XXV. 32.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxi. No. 1234.

'He shall set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left.'—Matthew xxv. 33.

Johnson: A man may have such a degree of hope as to keep him quiet. You see I am not quiet, from the vehemence with which I talk; but I do not despair. Mrs. Adams: You seem, sir, to forget the merits of our Redeemer. Johnson: Madam, I do not forget the merits of our Redeemer; but my Redeemer has said that He will set some on His right hand and some on His left.—Boswell's *Life of Johnson*.

'Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you.'—Matthew xxv. 34.

Every word full of life and joy. 'Come':—this is the holding forth of the golden sceptre to warrant our approach unto this glory. Come, now, as near as you will. This is not such a 'come' as we were wont to hear, 'Come, take up your cross, and follow Me'. Though that was sweet, yet this much more.—Richard Baxter.

References.—XXV. 34.—J. Stalker, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xlviii. 1895, p. 81. F. E. Paget, *The Living and the Dead*, p. 325. XXV. 35.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxx. No. 1757. XXV. 37.—John Watson, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxiv. 1903, p. 273.

'Lord, when saw we Thee an hungred, and fed Thee? . . . Lord, when saw we Thee an hungred, and did not minister unto Thee?'—Matthew xxv. 37, 44.

The elect will be ignorant of their virtues, and the reprobate of the greatness of their crimes.—Pascal.

It is noticeable how Christian morals differ from the morals of Christ, that we continually hear, as if of a specially meritorious thing, of 'seeing Christ' in the poor. But Christ Himself represents the blessed as being extremely surprised when He identifies Himself with the poor. Clearly these 'blessed of the Father' had helped the poor for the poor's sake, not for any others' sake.—F. P. Cobbe.

In *Miriam's Schooling*, Mr. Hale White describes how the heroine's brother fell ill in London lodgings, and required incessant nursing. 'To her surprise, her landlady instantly offered to share the duty with her. A rude, stout, hard person she was, who stood in the shop all day long, winter and summer, amidst the potatoes and firewood, with a woollen shawl round her neck and over her shoulders. A rude, stout, hard person, we say, was Mrs. Joll, fond of her beer, rather grimy, given to quarrel a little with her husband, could use strong language at times, had the defects which might be supposed to arise from constant traffic with the inhabitants of the Borough, and was utterly unintelligent so far as book learning went. Nevertheless, she was well read in depart-

ments more important perhaps than books in the conduct of human life, and in her there was the one thing needful—the one thing which, if ever there is to be a Judgment Day, will put her on the right hand; when all sorts of scientific people, religious people, students of poetry, people with exquisite emotions, will go on the left and be damned everlastingly.'

Compare also Dr. Guthrie's account of how 'John Pounds, a cobbler in Portsmouth, taking pity on the multitude of poor ragged children left by ministers and magistrates, and ladies and gentlemen, to go to ruin on the streets—how, like a good shepherd, he gathered in these wretched outcasts—how he had trained them to God and to the world; and how, while earning his daily bread by the sweat of his brow, he had rescued from misery and saved to society not less than five hundred of these children. . . . When the day comes when honour will be done to whom honour is due, I can fancy the crowd of those whose fame poets have sung, and to whose memory monuments have been raised, dividing like the wave, and, passing the great and the noble and the mighty of the land, this poor, obscure old man stepping forward and receiving the especial notice of Him who said, "Inasmuch as ye did it to one of the least of these, ye did it also to Me".'

THE SOLIDARITY OF MAN AND GOD

'Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me.'—Matthew xxv. 40.

It is frequently pointed out that the sense of sin is decreasing, and for this charge there is considerable evidence. Confession to God has not the former accent of self-abasement and of personal guilt. Side by side, however, with this decay in the consciousness of personal offence against God, there is a sense of obligation towards our neighbour which is distinctly in advance of anything known to our fathers.

I. Are we not apt to isolate these two moral facts—the decay of the sense of sin against God, and the increase of the sense of sin against man? At least, we forget to correlate them; we assume that there is no unity in the religious life. Ought we not to believe that God is within this creation so that one cannot separate any part of it from Him in whom every part lives and moves and has its being. Is not the hem of His garment within reach of us all? Can we injure a little child and not injure Him? Can we help a man in the straits of life and not help Him?

Ought we to hesitate which idea of God to accept as our working principle in life? Is not the distant God a mechanical conception, and an obsolete deism? Is not the indwelling God a convincing idea and the religion of Jesus? Within the sphere of Christian thought there is only one life, one love, one faith, one sin. We speak of the solidarity of man: since the Incarnation we should speak of the solidarity of man and God.

All service, as well as all injury, ends in God, and is done to God.

II. This truth should bring liberty to two opposite people, and the first is a believer, with a scrupulous conscience. There are Christians who are afraid of letting their heart go, and pouring forth their affection upon those they love, lest they should be giving to the creature what ought to be reserved for God. God is no watchful rival, demanding the lion's share of our heart. He is content if we love, for all the love we give to those whom we see we are giving to God whom we cannot see. And every stream of love finds its way at last into the eternal ocean of His heart from which first it rose.

This truth should also be liberty to the unbeliever with an honest mind. There are many persons in the land to-day, and within the Church, who hesitate to call themselves Christians because, as they confess, they have not what they judge to be a right mind towards God. And yet this non-religious man, who has made no profession of faith, and counts himself unworthy to approach the Sacrament, may be the most loyal of husbands and the most self-sacrificing of fathers, as well as a charitable citizen and a reliable friend. But God—in this matter, if you please, a jealous and grasping Master—claims every act as done to Him. He has not known God, so my friend says, which is a serious loss of comfort. But there is something more important and decisive—God has known him, God is loving him, and in a day to come God is going to reward him.—J. Watson (Ian Maclaren), *The Inspiration of Our Faith*, p. 286.

Illustration.—The truth that if you sin against man you sin against God is impressively stated in the most intense hymn of penitence ever written, the fifty-first Psalm. Whoever the writer was he had committed some great sin—a sin red with blood and black with lust. He was ashamed of himself and was broken-hearted. Some fellow-creature had suffered cruelly at his hands, but when he went to the root of the matter he realized that his sin had touched God Himself, and that no creature could be insulted without wounding its Creator. 'Against Thee,' he said, 'against Thee only have I sinned.' If this be true, then it follows on the other side that if any one helps a human being in body or in soul, that person has helped God. If only the Psalmist had dealt righteously by that man or that woman, he had been able to say, 'Thee only have I served'.—J. Watson (Ian Maclaren), *The Inspiration of Our Faith*, p. 292.

ONE OF THE LEAST

'One of the least of these.'—Matthew xxv. 40.

Christ never despised little folks, little things, little occasions, little duties; Jesus never turned away from the small and the lame, the halt and the blind. Why was this? It was because He was Jesus. No man a mere man could have afforded to attend to us little creatures, persons of no consequence; it required God to stoop low enough to come down to us. The Deity is in the stoop, not in the grammar. He

who holds a grammatical God has no God to hold. The Deity of the Lord Jesus Christ is in His pity, care, tears, mercy, His coming out after us in the dark times, in the stormy nights, sure that if we are to be found at all we must be found in the wilderness. That is His Deity; not some variable preposition or difficult word to construe with some other verbal difficulty.

I. When the Lord looks upon the services which people render, He often stops beside a cup of cold water, lifts it up, and smiles it into wine that makes glad the heart of God and man. That was all that the giver could give; being all that the giver could give, it became valuable, precious, priceless. Jesus Christ will not have it that any man can give Him anything except from the Cross, His own Cross, and the man's cross cut out of it; that is giving; the last bronze from the till—that is giving.

This alters our whole conception of Jesus Christ's thought, as we have misunderstood it. We thought He would be very careful about legions of stars, and He seems to be more careful of the poor man's one tallow candle that is set in the window on wintry nights to show the prodigal the way home. He will not allow that candle to sway in the storm; He guards it and keeps it steadily towards the window if mayhap the strayed girl or the prodigal boy may want to come home some night cold, and that candle is there, an evangel, a gospel, a luminous welcome.

II. All through the Bible there is a wonderful care of little things; God noticing them, God caring for them, and God bringing them to perfectness of meaning. Said Jesus Christ on one occasion the most remarkable thing out of the beatitudes, and it is the beatitude that crowns the rest, 'The very hairs of your head are all numbered'. That is greatness. 'He putteth my tears in His bottle;' that is condescension. 'None of his steps shall slide,' as if He numbered step by step all the going of His people. These are God's condescensions: sweeping the house diligently until He find the piece that was lost; leaving the ninety-nine in the wilderness, and going out after that which had strayed, and not returning until He had found it. This Shepherd undertakes no vain errands; He brings back the wanderer and completes the flock.

III. We must not make any mistake about this littleness. If we do little when we could do much, then the little goes for nothing. That is where your sixpence went! It was absolutely lost in ungrateful oblivion. Perhaps it was not wholly your blame, because you had the two coins in the same pocket, the half-sovereign and the half-shilling, and it was just by an accident that you took out the white one.

It may be so—may it, may it be so? If the little is all I can do, my Lord takes a few grass-blades as if I had brought Him a whole paradise. But if I could have brought Him rich flowers, and only plucked a weed out of the hedgerow, He will not take my gift. He who can stoop low will not stoop to be insulted when I offer Him a hedgerow weed when I might have given Him a garden of orchids.—Joseph Parker, *City Temple Pulpit*, vol. II. p. 22.

'Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me.'—Matthew xxv. 40.

No works shall find acceptance in that day
When all disguises shall be rent away
That square not truly with the Scripture plan,
Nor spring from love to God or love to man.
—Cowper.

'If one looks at the way of the world,' said William Law, 'one would hardly think that Christians had ever read this part of Scripture (i.e. Matt. xxv. 31-46).

References.—XXV. 40.—A. F. Winnington Ingram, *The Men Who Crucify Christ*, p. 11. G. E. Ford, *Religion in Common Life*, p. 72. J. Service, *Sermons*, p. 216. E. Aldom French, *God's Message Through Modern Doubt*, p. 75. J. Parker, *City Temple Pulpit*, vol. ii. p. 22. J. Oswald Dykes, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xli. 1892, p. 383. H. R. Heywood, *Sermons and Addresses*, p. 214.

'Depart from Me, ye cursed.'—Matthew xxv. 41.

Pere Pacheu writes on the words, 'Discedite a me, maledicti': 'Can this be the same Jesus who passed through the villages of Palestine, inviting the multitudes, by His miracles, by His doctrines, by His welcome which charmed men by its gentleness and touched them by its delicacy? Is this He who said, "Come unto Me and I will refresh you"? Is it He who said in presence of the hungry crowd, "I have pity on this multitude"? Yes, it is He. The hour of mercy is past; the earth and the heavens are silent, angels adore Him, millions of human beings are bent before His word, trembling with love or terror, like the tall ears of wheat which tremble in the wind of the plain, awaiting the reaper's scythe. "Depart," He says. How often did I invite you, how often did My word call you; in public, in the secret place of the heart, by the voice of My angels, by the voice of My priests, by the counsels, the exhortations, the examples, of your family, of your friends. I called you to the observance of the commandments, to the practice of prayer, to the festival of My sacraments—and you would not. You said no to conscience, you said no to your Christian friends, you said no to the Church. . . . Now, depart, *discedite*, go away? . . . At the court of Philip II nobles who were favoured with the attention of the prince had to suffer through it. One of them, who was driven from the king's presence because he held loosely to the Church, died the same evening. But here. *Maledicti!* They are cursed by Justice and repelled by her, for they have broken her laws. *Maledicti!* They are cursed by Mercy, for they have despised her calls and her grace.'—*Psychologie des Mystiques Chrétiens*, pp. 77-79 (1909).

References.—XXV. 41.—R. Winterbotham, *Sermons and Expositions*, p. 155. XXV. 44.—H. Harris, *Short Sermons*, p. 225. XXV. 46.—G. F. Holden, *Church Times*, vol. lvi. 1906, p. 815. R. Winterbotham, *Sermons and Expositions*, p. 164. R. J. Campbell, *Sermons Addressed to Individuals*, p. 129. W. Leighton Grane, *Hard Sayings of Jesus Christ*, p. 179.

XXVI. 1-16.—J. Laidlaw, *Studies in the Parables*, p. 161. XXVI. 2.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xliii. No. 2522.

NAME AND SURNAME

'Simon the Leper.'—Matthew xxvi. 6.

Why these surnames? We do not want them, we do not like them; but there they are. Why not say 'Simon,' and let his identification be established by other means than by recalling the loathsomeness of the disease? Why these expansions of names, why these fringes and attachments? Why not identify men by something better than leprosy, or evil deed, or red shame of any kind?

We fall here upon a very profitable scene of investigation and instruction. There seems to be some policy in this way of naming men; this is no bare accident.

I. Let us take instances. 'Matthew the publican.' Why remind a man that he was a publican or tax-gatherer? Why remind a man of days that he wants to forget? Is a man always to be reminded that he was once a blasphemer? He ought to remind himself of that; there may be some greatness and wealthy fortune in the very reminiscences that we would gladly get rid of. Remember the hole, recall the mire, set up an image of the pit in your gayest parlour, to remind you that you did not come down from heaven, though by the grace of God you may be going up into it. You were once Simon the leper; remember it, and be kind to all lepers; 'such were some of you'. You were once Matthew the publican, the hard-natured, close-fisted tax-gatherer, felt to be an oppressor in the neighbourhood; remember, and be gentle.

The Lord was always talking thus to the people whom He made dear to His heart. He was saying to them every day almost, Remember thou also wast a stranger; bethink thee of the bondage days of old Egypt; recall the time when thou wouldst have been thankful for a mouthful of bread and a night's hospitable lodging; remember. There are men round thee to whom thou mayest show kindness for David's sake, for Jonathan's sake, for thy father's sake, for thy mother's sake, for auld lang syne's sake. The past will follow thee with name, and the intention of such pursuit is thy chastening, humbling; not a contemptuous humbling, but a stimulating and comforting humbling, so that thou mayest get rid of the old rags and put on the garments of duty. There must be a policy in this.

II. Take another instance, 'Rahab the harlot'. Why torment the woman by such memories? Was it not enough to call her 'Rahab who received the spies'? Why is her sin to be even blackened and deepened and thrust in her face as a present-day memory and almost a present-day fact, so hot the breath, so damning the recollection? But this is the way; there must be a purpose in it. We cannot be satisfied until we find out the way into the heart of that purpose: always reminding a man that he was born blind, always refreshing his memory with the fact that once he had to beg his bread even at the beautiful gate of the temple; always reminding the soul that it was just as bad once as any other soul ever could be. Why these painful, shocking, heart-cutting reminiscences and reminders? She was saved by faith, yet she was Rahab the harlot. Again and again it is forced upon us that there must be some meaning in all this, that a certain process has not yet been completed. Regeneration has been completed, blessed be God, but resurrection has yet to begin; regeneration is completed, consummated, crowned by resurrection, the old foul body left with the worms, and the new body, that is to say, the heavenly and the spiritual, has assumed the wedding garment, made fit for the wedding feast.

III. We must take the case in both its aspects. Simon the leper, Paul the Apostle, this is the woman out of whom the seven devils were cast. Oh, do not talk always about the seven devils, they are gone; she is the temple of the Holy Ghost. Do not torment yourselves by too morbid a reference to and brooding on the melancholy past.

If we turn over a few pages of the New Testament we shall find that God gives His people a new name. He gives some of them a name which no man can read but the bearer thereof. Sometimes He will give us a name that will have no evil associations attaching to it. The name 'sinner' will be forgotten, and no man will say to another in the city celestial, Is not this he that sat and begged? No; in that great home city there shall be no such reminder, for the former things are passed away. Neither shall there be any limiting names. We take no leprous garment into heaven, our evil deeds we leave far behind us—behind the back of God. Said the gracious Lord to His sinning but penitent Israel, 'I will cast thy transgressions behind Me,' and no line has been found that can measure the distance indicated by that word 'behind'. Then let us hope for liberation or redemption, full, complete.—Joseph Parker, *City Temple Pulpit*, vol. iv. p. 223.

References.—XXVI. 6, 7.—A. G. Mortimer, *The Church's Lessons for the Christian Year*, part ii. p. 318. XXVI. 6-13.—F. D. Maurice, *Christmas Day and Other Sermons*, p. 184. W. Landels, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. li. 1897, p. 72. XXVI. 6-16.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—St. Matthew XVIII.-XXVIII.* p. 221. XXVI. 6-30.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xl. No. 2350.

'There came unto Him a woman having an alabaster box of very precious ointment, and poured it on His head, as He sat at meat.'—Matthew xxvi. 7.

The best part of a woman's love is worship; but it is hard to her to be sent away with her precious spikenard rejected, and her long tresses, too, that were let fall ready to soothe the wearied feet.—George Eliot.

When Mary anointed our Lord's feet, the act was a transient one; it was done *for His burial:* the holy feet which she anointed ceased soon after to walk on earth. Yet He declared that *wheresoever His gospel was preached in the whole world, that*

act should also be told as a memorial of her. So has it ever been with what has been given to God, even though it were blindly and erringly. While all other things have perished, this has endured.—Julius Hare.

'To what purpose is this waste?'—Matthew xxvi. 8.

There are more ways of doing good than almsgiving. All heavenly charity is not to be bound up in bags of flour. . . . And the form which God has given to the world we live in is in harmony with this judgment. The earth is not constructed merely on the principle of producing so much food for man's bodily wants. It has its cornfields, but it has also its wild-flowers on hill and moorland to give us the sense of a touching and simple beauty; it has its precipices, and wastes, and seas, to inspire us with a feeling of the sublime and infinite. The utilitarian looking on this side of things may say, and has said, 'To what purpose is this waste? It might have been given to the poor.' But the world was made by One who had in view not merely the physical wants of man but his intellectual and spiritual nature, and Who has constructed His dwelling-place so as to train that nature above the animal and earthly. The golden glory of the furze that brought tears to the eyes of Linnæus is as true a gift of God as the joy of the harvest, and it is a most Christian endeavour to make the poor partakers of both. There is a 'life which is more than meat,' and herein lies part of the significance of this incident in the house of Bethany.—Dr. John Ker, *Thoughts for Heart and Life.*

References.—XXVI. 8. G. H. Morrison, *Flood-Tide*, p. 92.—F. R. M. Hitchcock, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. liv. 1898, p. 324. J. A. Bain, *Questions Answered by Christ*, p. 81. T. Teignmouth Shore, *The Life of the World to Come*, p. 83. A. N. Obbard, *Plain Sermons*, p. 34. XXVI. 8, 9, 10.—H. P. Liddon, *Passion-Tide Sermons*, p. 227.

'His disciples had indignation. . . . Why trouble ye the woman?'—Matthew xxvi. 8, 10.

We men are always so ready and anxious to keep women right, like the wretched creature Laertes in 'Hamlet,' who reads his sister such a lesson on her maidenly duties, but declines almost with contempt to listen to a word from her as to any co-relative obligations on his side!—George Macdonald.

References.—XXVI. 10.—A. W. Potts, *School Sermons*, p. 102. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxxvi. No. 2126.

'The poor ye have always with you.'—Matthew xxvi. 11.

Who is the beggar? The beggar is a man forced by fate to remind us of Christ: he is a brother of Christ; he is the bell of the Lord, and he rings in life to rouse our conscience, to arouse the satiety of the flesh of man. He stands by the window and sings out: 'For the sake of Christ!' and by his singing he reminds us of Christ, of this holy commandment to help the neighbour.—Maxim Gorky, *The Man who was Afraid*, chap. iv.

He is rich who hath enough to be charitable; and it is hard to be so poor that a noble mind may not find a way to this price of goodness. 'He that giveth to the poor lendeth to the Lord;' there is more rhetorick in that one sentence than in a library of sermons. Upon this motive only I cannot behold a beggar without relieving his necessities with my purse, or his soul with my prayers. These scenical and accidental differences between us cannot make me forget that common and untouched part of us both; there is under these centres and miserable outsides, those mutilate and semi bodies, a soul of the same alloy with our own, whose genealogy is God as well as ours, and in as fair a way to salvation as ourselves. Statists that labour to contrive a commonwealth without poverty take away the object of our charity; not understanding only the commonwealth of a Christian but forgetting the prophecy of Christ.—Sir Thomas Browne ('The prophecy of Christ' being, of course, the above-quoted words, *the poor ye shall have always with you*).

In *Dreamthorp* Alexander Smith observes that at Christmas 'there is more charity than at any other time. The heart warms as the frost increases. Poverty, scant clothing, and fireless grates come home at this season to the bosoms of the rich, and they give of their abundance. The Master's words, "The poor ye have always with you," wear at this season a deep significance.'

References.—XXVI. 12.—James Vaughan, *Fifty Sermons* (9th Series), p. 301. XXVI. 12, 13.—W. H. Hutchings, *Sermon-Sketches*, p. 100. XXVI. 13.—W. E. Blomfield, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxviii. 1905, p. 24. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. vi. No. 286. XXVI. 14, 15.—J. Wright, *The Guarded Gate*, p. 147. XXVI. 14-45.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. liii. No. 3033.

THE BETRAYAL

'What will ye give me, and I will deliver Him unto you?'—Matthew xxvi. 15.

I. Three times, in the Gospel narrative, is Judas said to have been, in some special sense, the devil's instrument. And the first occasion was a year before the actual betrayal. 'Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil?' What did it mean? Already, to the eye of Christ, there was seen the line of moral cleavage between the one and the eleven. Even in despondency, and almost despair, they are ready to fling away the cherished hope of ambition, of personal gain, and cling to Him they loved. And yet not all. One has in secret made a different choice. He is still in external union with them. But he had fought for his own hand, when he joined what he thought the winning side, and he will fight for his own hand now that he foresees its failure—not openly, but secretly; in outward friendship and companionship, but with secret alienation of heart. He was amongst the disciples, but, though perhaps they did not know it, he is no longer one of them.

So the old sin of Paradise is repeated. The act, which at heart all sin is, the self-love which separates man from God and makes him try to live and stand alone.

II. Twice, we are told, 'Satan entered into Judas,' and, in each case, the occasion was of some gracious

act of love and condescension for the Lord he professed to serve. (1) Once when, as Mary's loving hand poured precious ointment on the sacred feet, and He to Whom she ministered, accepted and interpreted her gift ('she did it for My burial'), and checked the words of him whose petty covetousness found fault with the 'waste'. Then, first, the treachery, which was hidden in the heart of Judas, took shape, and he bargained for his price: 'What will ye give me?' (2) Then, at the Last Supper, once more Satan entered into the traitor, and claimed him as his own. The Master had washed the traitor's feet. Judas had heard his treachery foretold, 'One of you shall betray Me,' as if in that last hour the appeal of love must be made; and he answered with the hypocritical 'Is it I?' Then came those awful words, which left the sinner to his sin, 'That thou doest, do quickly'. And he went out into the darkness. Then, in quick succession, we recall the garden meeting, the traitorous kiss, the remorseful 'I have sinned, for I have betrayed!' and the scornful 'See thou to that!' And Judas the traitor *stood alone*. And in his ears those words keep ringing, 'What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world?' What shall it profit? And forth he rushes into the darkness, to hide himself from himself, away across the Valley of Hinnom, to the Field of Blood. And that weird solitude witnessed the last act of him whom after-times look back upon as the hypocrite, the thief, the traitor, the suicide!

III. And it almost seems as if, in our day, Christ was leading His Church through the same description of disappointment through which He led His disciples. We are told from outside that Christianity has failed. And, if we accept and apply the world's test of what failure is, we must admit that it is true. Christianity has not introduced a golden age. Have we, any of us, who are signed with the Cross, and have received the seal of the Lord, nay, who have been brought into closest, truest union with Him in the Sacrament of His love, been sometimes disquieted, sometimes despondent, at the failure of Christianity? If so, what then? For it is here that we come to the dividing of the ways, the line which separates the followers of the Crucified from those who would be Christians without the Cross.

Christ has many open enemies; but it is amongst the baptized that the traitors are found, and the darkest treachery is that of those who have been brought very near their Lord. Therefore 'let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall'. Let us therefore *fear*. The beginning of treachery is that which we know so well, and fear so little—*unreality* in religion; and the beginning of unreality is the separation of faith from life, or faith from thought. A faith which no longer shows itself in a holy life, a faith which we keep hidden away apart from all that appeals to our rational nature, is a faith to which we are already false—which, when the occasion offers, we shall be ready to betray.—Aubrey L. Moore, *Some Aspects of Sin*, p. 105.

Illustration.—'Nowhere,' says St. Bernard, 'are pilgrims in perfect safety. Not in heaven, for Lucifer fell from thence; not in Paradise, for Adam was driven from thence; much less in the world, since Judas perished in the school of Christ.'—Aubrey L. Moore, *Some Aspects of Sin*, p. 115.

References.—XXVI. 15-17.—E. B. Pusey, *Parochial Sermons*, vol. ii. p. 283. XXVI. 17-30.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—St. Matthew XVIII.-XXVIII.* p. 225. XXVI. 17-30.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xliv. No. 2595; vol. xlvi. No. 2699; vol. l. No. 2865.

SELF-EXAMINATION

'Now when the even was come, He sat down with the twelve.'
—Matthew xxvi. 20.

Imagine the situation. The hour which they had so eagerly expected had come. The peace of evening had fallen round them. The joyful recollection of the annual festival had no doubt taken possession of the little party. They were alone with their Master, Who had reassured them of His love with the most touching signs, and although there hung over them the sense of an impending danger, yet at any rate to-night there was nothing to disturb them. There all were friends, and all were dear to Him, and He was with them.

As they were eating, He said, 'Verily I say unto you, That one of you shall betray Me'. One of them! The disciples looked upon one another, doubting of whom He spoke. And they began to say unto Him, every one, 'Is it I, Lord? is it, surely it cannot be, I'.

I. Was it Hard that such a Subject should be Mentioned at such a Time?—'One of you shall betray Me.' They would know the truth soon enough. Might they not be spared the intrusion of such a thought in that peaceful hour? Is that what we think as we hear the story once again? But surely this is all of a piece with our Lord's compassion for human souls. This is the last appeal to the man who was most conscious of guilt, to pause and consider before it became too late. Surely this is the kindness of the surgeon who cuts deep that he may save. It was not too late for Judas to repent.

II. The Sweep of that Word Reached Further than the Conscience of Judas.—They began to say unto Him, every one, 'Is it I, Lord?' It was a word which forced every one of them to search his conscience. A flood of light, as it were, is poured into the most secret recesses of their heart, and there they saw all the things which men are only too anxious to forget. There was that in them which did not make it so impossible, but that each of them might prove a traitor to his Lord. Do we not know those searching words of our Lord which every now and then spring up from the pages of the Gospel and tear through all the coverings that we wrap round our secret life and disposition, till they have laid bare those roots of evil which will ruin the whole nature if they are not exposed? Yes, the words flash out again and again, and haunt us.

III. The Word of the Lord Forced the Disciples to Look Closely Within, and should not we ask ourselves serious questions? The first stage in our progress is to know ourselves. Judas the traitor refused to allow the light to penetrate his soul, and the darkness flooded it instead, and one has seen lives break up into bits because men and women would not deal faithfully with themselves, would not look at their faults or look for them. Do not let us put this aside as though it were a tedious task, or just a matter of obligation. It is a matter of life and death to us, that we should be always searching to see what there is within us, for the evil weeds grow quickly in the garden of our souls. It does not seem to me to matter much what method of self-examination we pursue, so long as it is done, so long as it is honest, real, and painstaking. Let every one do what is best and most natural to them, but let no one stop until they get to the root of all that may be wrong with them, for remember that all the time our lives are open to the Lord Jesus.

References.—XXVI. 20-30.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. lii. No. 2982. XXVI. 22.—C. Stanford, *The Evening of the Lord's Ministry*, p. 36. XXVI. 22, 25.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—St. Matthew XVIII.-XXVIII.* p. 232.

'He that dippeth his hand with Me in the dish, the same shall betray Me.'—Matthew xxvi. 23.

There can be no treason, where is not some trust.—Bishop Hall.

'The Son of Man goeth as it is written of him: but woe unto that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed!'—Matthew xxvi. 24.

At the close of his essay on *The Civil Disabilities of the Jews*, Macaulay protests against 'the practice of confounding prophecy with precept, of setting up predictions which are often obscure against a morality which is always clear. If actions are to be considered as just and good merely because they have been predicted, what action was ever more laudable than that crime which our bigots are now, at the end of eighteen centuries, urging us to avenge on the Jews, that crime which made the earth shake and blotted out the sun from heaven? The same reasoning which is now employed to vindicate the disabilities imposed on our Hebrew countrymen will equally vindicate the kiss of Judas and the judgment of Pilate. "The Son of Man goeth as it is written of him: but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed." And woe to those who, in any age or in any country, disobey His benevolent commands under pretence of accomplishing His predictions.'

References.—XXVI. 24.—Hugh Black, *University Sermons*, p. 4. S. A. Tipple, *The Admiring Guest*, p. 182. W. H. Simcox, *The Cessation of Prophecy*, p. 269. H. P. Liddon, *Passion-Tide Sermons*, p. 210. Archer Butler, *Sermons* (1st Series), p. 75. Spurgeon, *Sermon Notes on New Testament*, p. 33. J. H. Thom, *Laws of Life After the Mind of Christ* (1st Series), p. 251. A. K. H. B., *Graver Thoughts of a Country Parson*, p. 268. *New Outlines on New Testament*, p. 47. Parker, *Hidden Springs*, p. 61; *Inner Life of Christ*, vol. iii. p. 11. In *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. i. p. 61 (Berg); vol. ii. p. 177 (Parker); vol. ii. p. 331 (Beecher); vol. v. p. 102 (Barfield); vol. viii. p. 37 (Hubbard); vol. viii. p. 305 (David Thomas, also in *Pulpit Memorials*, p. 417); vol. ii. p. 311 (Bantain); vol. xii. p. 394 (Beecher); vol. xv. p. 316 (Higgins); vol. xviii. p. 151 (Hird); vol. xx. p. 202 (Beecher); vol. xxvi. p. 102 (Tuck); vol. xxix. p. 90 (Beecher). *Selections from Pusey*, p. 326. Winterbotham, *Sermons*, p. 360. Aitken's *Mission Sermons* (2nd Series), p. 121.

THE REAL PRESENCE OF CHRIST JESUS IN THE HOLY EUCHARIST

'This is My Body.'—Matthew xxvi. 26.

There are two classes of difficulties which keep men from the Sacrament of the Altar. One class is intellectual and the other moral. The first is met by faith and the second by repentance. The one comes from want of appreciation of Divine mysteries and from the consequent absence of experimental self-surrender to those mysteries. The other comes from sin which, through self-indulgence, is unrepented of.

I. Let us be sure that there is something mysterious about our Eucharist, whatever that mystery may be. Christ's words, which are repeated at every celebration, 'This is My Body'—'This is My Blood,' are undoubtedly mysterious, but yet quite patent of a literal sense, and as Hooker says, 'I hold it for a most infallible rule in expositions of Sacred Scripture that where a literal construction will stand, the farthest from the letter is commonly the worst'. The Primitive Church, again, witnesses to the Real Presence of Christ in the Holy Eucharist. St. Augustine says: 'It seemed good to the Holy Ghost that the Lord's Body should be the first food to enter the Christian's mouth, in order that due honour should be shown to so great a Sacrament, and this custom is observed throughout the world'. Again, the Church of England not only explicitly receives the testimony of the early Church as an authoritative interpretation of Scripture, but she also unmistakably declares her own belief in the Real Presence of her Lord. She speaks of Christ's Body being '*given*, taken, and received,' of Its being 'verily and indeed taken and received,' where 'verily and indeed' point not to a logical certainty, but to a real presence and real communion: she speaks of 'holy mysteries,' of our 'eating the flesh of Christ and drinking His blood,' of Christ being 'veiled under the forms of bread and wine'.

II. Some considerations drawn from allied truths may help us to accept more unreservedly, and to use more thankfully, the great gift associated with the altar.

1. In the first place, Sacraments are not isolated phenomena in the dispensation of the Spirit. Christianity is itself Sacramental. The Son of God took to Himself the whole of man's nature, and joined it to His own nature in indissoluble union. The two natures found their unity in the one Person of the Eternal Word. This is the Sacrament of the Incarnation, the mystery which reveals the most ancient of all mysteries, that of the Blessed Trinity. Throughout the earthly life of the Son of God the Godhead which was concealed within was ever manifesting

forth its glory by words and deeds of power. But yet to most men the inward part of the Sacrament of the Incarnation was hidden. The Son of Man was known of every passer-by as one having no form nor comeliness; the Son of God was recognized by few. Others, however, found that virtue went out of Him at the touch of faith. Then, as now in the Sacrament of the Altar, to touch His outermost robe was to find His manhood beneath, and to realize that that manhood was the channel through which there flowed the power of the Godhead.

Again, is not the mystical body of Christ, the Church, a great Sacrament? Its outward part is formed of all who are baptized into the name of the Blessed Trinity. Some are good and some are evil, and the evil is at all times so prevalent that the face of the Bride of Christ, like that of her Spouse, is so marred that, when men see it, there is no beauty in it that they should desire it. Yet is she holy because of the indwelling of the Spirit of holiness who is her life and soul. This is her 'inward part,' that with which she is anointed; but it is hidden, except for those whose eyes are open to spiritual realities.

2. A second truth which bears closely on the Sacrament of the Altar is that of the nature of our Lord's Resurrection Body. It is that spiritual Body, a Body 'invisible, indivisible,' and not subject to the laws of physics, which is now sacramentally present at our altars. The mode of its existence is beyond our ken, the laws according to which it works are not revealed to us in consciousness. It is a spiritual Body, and Christ's presence is, therefore, a spiritual presence. It is this spiritual nature of Christ's Body which enables it to be sacramentally present with us.

3. A third fact may be brought forward to help us to realize better the mysterious Presence of Christ. He took our human nature, when He was made man, in its entirety. Man, St. Paul says, consists of body, soul, and spirit. The Word of God, therefore, assumed each of these three. The spirit of man is that highest part of his being, of which the most that can be said is that it exists; beyond this we are in almost utter ignorance about it. The soul is that spiritual part of man in which the spirit manifests itself intellectually and morally. The body is in its essence, that is, when stripped of all accidents, the name given to a force, or collection of forces, which act as the power within our constitution, which lays hold of and moulds to its purposes the outside world of matter. There is a great difference between the organism of a living man and a corpse.

4. A fourth fact may be finally brought forward. All creatures live by external support. The angels have their nourishment directly through contemplation of the Word of God. Man is spoken of, it appears, as the food of the evil one, so far as he becomes like his tempter. To the one was said, 'Earth thou art,' and to the other, 'Earth shalt thou eat'. The bodily life of man, again, is supported from without by food taken within. But nothing that has not lived will serve as food for him. Either vegetable or animal life must be sacrificed for his needs. In other words, it is only a substance of kindred nature that will sustain man's bodily frame. Similarly, the food that is the support of man's soul is of kindred nature to it. 'The bread that I will give is My flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.' That is, it is the human nature of Christ Jesus which is given us in the Blessed Sacrament. That nature is consubstantial with us and fitted, therefore, for the support of our souls. But that nature is united to the Divine, and hence in Holy Communion man approaches more nearly than anywhere else on earth to the Being of God Himself, and we realize in it something of St. Peter's assertion that we are made partakers of the Divine Nature.

III. Such are one or two truths which throw sidelights on the mysterious Presence. But after all we can go but a short way towards comprehending it. A mystery it will still remain, and as a mystery faith will receive it. The true knowledge of Christ's presence comes from that experiment which faith makes in a sure trust in God's mercy. To have been with Jesus, to be conscious of the sweetness of His presence, to find Him as a guest within, to hold silent colloquy with Him, this is evidence that cannot be gainsaid. Even if He so manifested Himself but once, and then withdrew for years, it would be testimony sufficient, the heart would stand up and answer 'I have felt; "My Beloved is mine and I am His; He feedeth among the lilies".' Such experience will not care to inquire too curiously into the mystery. It is dark with excess of light; the more earnestly we gaze the more are we dazzled.—W. F. Cobb, *Church Times*, vol. xxviii. p. 304, 31 March, 1890.

References.—XXVI. 26.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xl. No. 2350. J. M. Neale, *Sermons on the Blessed Sacrament*, p. 179. XXVI. 26-28.—W. C. Wheeler, *Sermons and Addresses*, p. 138. G. Salmon, *Non-Miraculous Christianity*, p. 174. XXVI. 26-30.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxxviii. No. 2268. XXVI. 27, 28.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—St. Matthew XVIII.-XXVIII.* p. 243. XXVI. 28.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxxiii. No. 1971; see also *Twelve Sermons on the Atonement*, p. 373. E. B. Pusey, *The Holy Eucharist a Comfort to the Penitent*, p. 1. XXVI. 29.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—St. Matthew XVIII.-XXVIII.* p. 252. XXVI. 30.—J. Guinness Rogers, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. liv. 1898, p. 280. B. D. Johns, *Pulpit Notes*, p. 145. C. J. Ridgeway, *Plain Instructive Sermons on Holy Communion*, p. 20. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. lii. No. 2982. XXVI. 31-35.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xlviii. No. 2771. XXVI. 32.—R. Winterbotham, *Sermons Preached in Holy Trinity Church, Edinburgh*, p. 241.

'Peter said unto Him, Though all men shall be offended because of Thee, yet will I never be offended. . . . Peter said unto Him, Though I should die with Thee, yet will I not deny Thee.'—Matthew xxvi. 33 f.

'Tis not the many oaths that make the truth,
But the plain single vow, that is vowed true.
—Shakespeare.

References.—XXVI. 33.—C. Wordsworth, *Primary Witness to the Truth of the Gospel*, p. 138. XXVI. 35.—S. D. McConnell, *A Year's Sermons*, p. 67. XXVI. 35, 40.—E. Griffith Jones, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lviii. 1900,

p. 133. XXVI. 36.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xii. No. 693. J. Halsey, *The Spirit of Truth*, p. 133. H. J. Wilmot-Buxton, *Sunday Sermonettes for a Year*, p. 199. A. Whyte, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxiii. 1903, p. 375. C. Stanford, *The Evening of the Lord's Ministry*, p. 171. XXVI. 36-46.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xl. No. 2376. T. Binney, *Sermons Preached in the King's Weigh-House Chapel*, p. 150. J. Laidlaw, *Studies in the Parables*, p. 177. A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—St. Matthew XVIII.-XXVIII.* p. 261. XXVI. 38.—E. Fowle, *Plain Preaching to Poor People* (1st Series), p. 15. V. R. Lennard, *Passion-Tide and Easter*, p. 73. T. T. Carter, *Lent Lectures*, 1860-66, p. 115. W. P. Balfern, *Glimpses of Jesus*, p. 237. XXVI. 38-46.—*Selected Sermons of Schleiermacher*, p. 38.

CHRIST SHRINKING FROM THE CROSS

'Let this cup pass from Me.'—Matthew xxvi. 39.

Why did Jesus so shrink from His cross? The answer cannot be given in a single confident word or two. Only as we realize what Christ was, and is, and shall be; only as we understand what He came to be and to do; and only as we see the part which the Cross filled in His life, and has filled in the life of the race, shall we realize the elements of bitterness in the cup from which Jesus shrank.

I. The first element in the cup was **His Mortal Pain.**—Christ passed through His dying hours in complete self-control. He made His cross a place of counsel, of blessing, and prayer. But there was a peculiar horror at the death of the cross. It had for men of finely strung nature, and of sensitive organization, an almost unbearable agony. The scourging before the crucifixion, the driving in of the nails, the uplifting of the beam, the long, slow, fiery agony of the wounds, the horror of the thirst—all of these were vividly realized by Jesus and bore in on His mind. 'He became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross,' said the Apostle, recalling its mortal pain.

II. **The Loneliness of its Shame.**—The very thought of the cross brought a loneliness into Christ's spirit. He never made a movement towards it without finding Himself going forward alone. He saw that what men would desert Him for was its shame. There are three kinds of loneliness. There is the loneliness of solitude—tonic, calming, strengthening. There is the loneliness of character. A man may find himself in a community, or in a society, or even in a home very greatly alone. Jesus knew both these lonelinesses. He sought the solitude of the seashore and of the mountain-top and of the olive garden. He accepted the loneliness of His character, saying even among His disciples, 'I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now'. But this third loneliness of shame He shrank from, as all men shrink from it. 'I was sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not,' said Jesus in His parable, declaring the loneliness of shame. 'I have trodden the winepress alone; and of the people there was none with Me.' An element in the cup was the loneliness of its shame.

III. **Its Mental Anguish.**—The Cross of Christ shall never cease to be a tragedy. But we can see it now, in the light of centuries of Christian experience, Christian history and Christian thought, to be a splendid triumph. But was it all clear to Christ? He had, no doubt, an anticipation of such an issue throughout His whole ministry. But now, as He stands at the foot of the cross, and as He faces the actual deed, there is given Him a keen mental anguish. Was this the hour? Was this the way? Could this be the will of God?

When we think that Christ always found it easy to know God's will we do greatly err. With us the greater difficulty is the doing of the will of God. With Christ the problem was to know that will. As soon as God's will became clear to Him He went forward to it with animation of spirit. Here in Gethsemane He suffered mental anguish both as to the knowledge of God's will and obedience to it. When the light fell clearly on the path, and He saw the cross as the inevitable duty, the mental anguish is over. You can hear the calm of His spirit in His words, 'Rise up, let us be going'.

IV. **His Desolation of Soul.**—What causes desolation of soul? What gives us the sense that God is no longer near, no longer mindful, no longer loving? Why are all children natural believers and all older hearts prone to doubt? What gives desolation of soul is, in a single word—sin. It may be, it commonly is, our own sin. But in a pure heart desolation of soul may be caused not only by one's own sin but by the sin of others. In this way the sin of man desolated the soul of Christ. He was willing to be sundered from God, to have His name blotted out, to be accursed from God, to go out into the desolation of a forsaken soul, if He could redeem man from the desolation which is eternal. That was the agony of the garden. Out of it He passed in tranquillity to go to His cross.

'Let this cup pass from Me,' prayed Jesus. Yet He drank it.—W. M. Clow, *The Cross in Christian Experience*, p. 65.

GETHSEMANE

'O My Father! if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me: nevertheless, not as I will, but as Thou wilt.'—Matthew xxvi. 39.

I. To Christian hearts no name is so sacred as Gethsemane. In Gethsemane Jesus was in anguish. The heart is awed at the sight of the Son of God on His knees in the garden.

This was the temptation of the life of Jesus. The cup of human guilt was held out to Him. He trembled to stretch out His hand to take the cup. He longed to avoid the ordeal.

Having the redemptive love, Jesus saw that the cup was inevitable. To save, He must die. To find, He must lose. In His distress He prayed, and His prayer was a cry. 'O My Father! if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me: nevertheless: not as I will, but as Thou wilt.' A second time He prayed, and in the interval He had seen more clearly that the cup was unavoidable. 'O My Father! if

this cup may not pass from Me, except I drink it, Thy will be done.' A third time He prayed, using the same words.

That prayer stamps Jesus as the world's religious leader. It is religion epitomized. It is spirituality in a word.

II. There are Gethsemanes in human life. Life for the most part is on the path of the commonplace, but, ever and anon, we pass into the garden of gloom.

Death is the common gate into Gethsemane. Gethsemane may be a home where sickness lingers. Gethsemane may be a lonely life. Gethsemane may be a wilderness of impoverishment. Sometimes Gethsemane is long foreseen. Jesus had the prescience of His Gethsemane for years, and it is the sign of His high courage that He stepped forward to meet it. But sometimes we plunge into it unexpectedly. The soul is always alone in Gethsemane. Jesus was alone. All that the soul can do in Gethsemane is to pray. Jesus prayed. Prayers in Gethsemane are always broken. But those who have prayed in Gethsemane never doubt the blessedness of prayer.

III. The most precious truth in Gethsemane is that of the Divine Fatherhood. 'O My Father!' was the cry of Jesus. The soul can only pray when God is known as Father. When we think of God as our Father, then we assume our true relationship. It is the filial He seeks in us.

We can exercise every freedom in our speech with our Father. Jesus did. He showed His fear to His Father. 'If it be possible, let this cup pass from Me.' The intenser our assurance of His Fatherliness, the freer our confessions will be.

True religion is the reverent acceptance of the Father's will. The deep religion of the soul of Jesus is shown in this. He was prepared to abide His Father's will.—J. G. Bowran, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxxii. 1907, p. 347.

References. — XXVI. 39.—G. Tyrrell, *Oil and Wine*, p. 251. S. Baring-Gould, *Village Preaching for a Year*, vol. i. p. 260. E. L. Hull, *Sermons Preached at King's Lynn* (3rd Series), p. 58. W. Baker, *Penny Pulpit*, vol. xii. No. 707. p. 325. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xl. No. 2376; vol. xlvii. No. 2715. XXVI. 39-42.—C. J. Vaughan, *Last Words in the Parish Church of Doncaster*, p. 165. XXVI. 40, 41.—Mandell Creighton, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xlv. 1894, p. 219. XXVI. 41.—F. W. Farrar, *Everyday Christian Life*, p. 159. E. Meyrick Goulburn, *Three Counsels of the Divine Master*, vol. i. p. 133. XXVI. 43.—A. F. W. Ingram, *Addresses in Holy Week*, 1902, p. 41. XXVI. 45.—R. Rainy, *Sojourning With God*, p. 95. XXVI. 45, 46.—J. Percival, *Some Helps for School Life*, p. 146. XXVI. 46.—J. Halsey, *The Spirit of Truth*, p. 65. XXVI. 47.—J. G. Stevenson. *The Judges of Jesus*, p. 11. James Moffatt, *The Second Things of Life*, p. 70.

JUDAS ISCARIOT

'And forthwith he came to Jesus, and said, Hail, Master; and kissed Him.'—Matthew xxvi. 49.

We have all of us one human heart. The blackest criminal is a man of like passions with ourselves. His crime comes from the yielding to tendencies which are in us all, and his nature grows to be capable of it by slow degrees. We never need to remember this more than in thinking of that man who is gibbeted for ever as 'Judas Iscariot, who also betrayed Him'.

I. Consider First His Gradual Downward Progress, and note:—

1. How it illustrates the power of one sinful tendency to overgrow and destroy the whole soul. His fault was one the love of money. It grew and increased in his soul till it swallowed up everything.

2. The conflict of Divine love and human sinful will. Christ chose him for an Apostle not for his badness, but for what he might have been. He gave him all His teaching. At the last He tried to win him back, giving him the sop in loving familiarity, making a last appeal to his heart. Striking hard on conscience, by letting him see he was known, 'That thou doest,' and by urging him as a last request to do it 'at once'. Then the tenderness, the firmness, the absence of all rebuke, 'Friend, wherefore art thou come?'

And so with us all. It is the awful mystery of human will that it can and does turn itself against all Divine appeals, and annihilates and thwarts the loving purposes and mercy of Jesus Christ.

II. The Actual Crime.—Remember that his knowledge of Christ's higher nature was dim and vague. He did not fully know what he was doing.

This illustrates, (1) the essential character of all sin, as blinding a man to the true nature of what he is doing. (2) The real nature of all sin is preferring self to Christ. (3) The real aggravation of sin, ingratitude. The form may differ but the substance is the same.

III. The End. — Immediate remorse. 'I have sinned.' Judas goes to the priests, and flings down the money—then his suicide.

This brings out, (1) The unprofitableness of sin. Judas gets his reward, and with it a bitter conscience. (2) The remorse which leads to desperation. His crime was not unpardonable. Suppose he had gone to the cross, and cried there, 'I have sinned,' would He Who forgave them all, not have forgiven him? His condemnation was not his betrayal of Christ, but his own non-acceptance of pardon for his betrayal. So the last lesson is that the only thing which binds sin upon a man and leads to death is unbelief. And we who have betrayed, denied, crucified Christ, may have all pardoned.—A. Maclaren.

References.—XXVI. 50.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture — St. Matthew XVIII.-XXVIII.* p. 270. XXVI. 51-56.—W. M. Taylor, *The Miracles of Our Saviour*, p. 426.

'They that take the sword shall perish with the sword.'—Matthew xxvi. 52.

The grace of God shall never want champions, for by her own almighty power she makes them for herself. She requires hearts pure and disengaged; and she herself purifies and disengages them from worldly interests incompatible with the truths of the Gospel. —Pascal.

REFERENCE.—XXVI. 52.—H. J. Wilmot-Buxton, *The Sheathed Sword*, p. 14.

HOLY ANGELS

(*Feast of St. Michael and All Angels*)

'Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to My Father, and He shall presently give Me more than twelve legions of angels?'
—MATTHEW XXVI. 53.

THE unprayed prayer of the Lord Jesus, in the Garden of Gethsemane, is not only a standing marvel of self-sacrificing love, and an example of the voluntary endurance of educative pain, it is also a revelation that the earthly lives of God's children are enfolded by intelligences invisible, who, under the command of God, act as ministers and protectors. And this is true of all, because, 'as He is, so are we in this world'.

I. Do not ask me to define an angel; I have never seen one. But every painstaking thinker knows that those forces in the universe, that never have been seen and never can be seen, are the mightiest. Christian history, apart from Christian legend, is as much a history of the angels as it is a history of God and man. The works of Christian writers teem with allusions to the angels. The monuments of Christian cities testify to the ever-existing realization of the office of the angels. The written Word from first to last is full of the holy angels. It begins with angels, and it ends with angels.

II. This gaze into the spirit sphere on St. Michael's Day should help us to realize the true dignity of humanity, and stimulate us to lift our lives to the standard of our privileges. The inference is not the dignity of angels, but the dignity of men. These ethereal intelligences are our ministering attendants. Our fellowship is not with them, but with their Master; they are our ministers and His. It gives the real man—the man who honours himself because he knows his essential nature is God's essential nature—no pleasure to be highly praised by men; rather will self-knowledge turn such praise into gall for him. But he will honour himself, 'because of the angels'. And he will remember also that some of these heavenly beings are described as not having kept their first estate, and, therefore, that the common, coarse temptations of the flesh are not necessarily the most dangerous; and he will strive to guard himself against spiritual sins—angels' sins—self-love, self-will, love of praise, abuse of intellectual superiority, substitution of self for God. Moreover, he will shape his service according to the pattern of these ministering spirits, and when he prays, 'Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven,' he will see that his work for God possesses the characteristics of the angels' service, which are, (1) intellectual submission, together with intellectual aspiration—'they desire' to learn the mysteries. (2) Obedience. Amen! Alleluia! obedience before praise. (3) It is work consciously in the Divine presence, and, therefore, full of noble Godlike purpose, for they 'do always behold the face of My Father, which is in heaven'.

III. The unprayed prayer in Gethsemane teaches us that our communion with angels is not to be direct, but by prayer to the Father. 'I can pray to My Father, and He shall give.'

It provides the authority for the beautiful Collect for St. Michael's Day. We need the ministry of angels in life; we shall doubly need it in death.—BASIL WILBERFORCE, *Following on to Know the Lord*, p. 157.

Illustration.—I have stood, as have countless thousands, on the bridge which spans the Tiber by Hadrian's tomb in the City of Rome, and there the eye is at once arrested by a colossal statue of St. Michael, the Prince of the Angels, surmounting the armed battlements of the Castle of St. Angelo. It is an impressive scene, calculated to promote that condition of mind in which holy sentiment comes to deepen faith. More than a thousand years ago, upon that memorable spot, there knelt in prayer and fasting one of Christendom's greatest bishops, pleading with God for the removal of the pestilence which was desolating the city that he loved, and there seemed to pass before his eyes, dim with fasting, weary with prayer and watching, a vision of the mighty Prince of the Angels, alighting on the summit of the tomb of Hadrian, and sheathing a blood-stained sword, and from that moment the pestilence was stayed.—BASIL WILBERFORCE, *Following on to Know the Lord*, p. 160.

REFERENCES.—XXVI. 53.—W. L. Watkinson, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxiii. 1903, p. 136. S. Cox, *Expositions*, p. 362. XXVI. 53, 54.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxxiii. No. 1955.

THE DESERTION

'Then all the disciples forsook Him, and fled.'—MATTHEW XXVI. 56.

I. SURELY that appeal must be heard—'My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death. Tarry ye here, and watch with Me!' But the disciples' eyes were heavy, and their hearts were sad, and hope had gone, and dull, helpless resignation had settled down upon their souls. And when the Master returned He found them sleeping. Yet there is no word of censure, only something of sadness—may we not say, of disappointment? 'What, could ye not watch *with Me one hour?* Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation.' Again, and a third time, He comes and finds them sleeping still. They have been tried, and failed. They could not watch. 'Sleep on now, and take your rest.' It sounds almost like the echo of those words to Judas, 'What thou doest do quickly'. The moment of trial is past. It is all over. The only one of the twelve who was wakeful on that night was Judas the betrayer, who watched, but didn't love. The betrayer is near; and the disciples, who loved, but could not watch, saw their Master taken; and they who, in the strength of enthusiastic hope, once 'forsook all, and followed Him,' now, all in panic fear, 'forsook Him, and fled'. It was but for a little while. There was no thought of treachery or disloyalty in their hearts, only the cowardice and faint-heartedness which comes of despondency and sloth.

II. Can we not see here a true picture of ourselves? What of the cowardly, despondent, faint-hearted Christians? Are they few amongst ourselves? What of the slothful ones who cannot 'watch,' cannot 'endure hardness,' who have committed themselves to Christianity as if it were a sort of 'forlorn hope' for the world, but have not the heart to fight for it and believe in it as a conquering power?

In our day there are few arguments more common in the mouth of the enemies of this faith than the reproach that Christianity is a failure. And has not it sometimes, even while we resented it and put it away from us, reacted on our belief, and made us sad and half-hearted and hopeless?

III. And, on the other hand, faith and effort react on one another, as do despondency and sloth. Is not it so in the service of man? When we hear of all the misery and wretchedness and vice of some great city, it seems so hopeless, we are ready to fold our hands and let things go; but if, in some little corner of the great field of work, we bestir ourselves to do what little we may, is not it wonderful how, with that effort, faith and hope and love grow strong and strengthen one another?

Surely sloth and unwillingness to make the effort, intellectual and moral, which is necessary for a real hold of truth, is largely to blame for what is vaguely called unbelief, in these days of ours.

Can we better gather up our thoughts on this desertion of Christ than in those words of His to them in the garden, 'Watch and pray'? If the moral struggle is what it ever was for those who would live the Christlike life, the intellectual struggle was never keener than it is for us now. And we are quite wrong to suppose that the battle can be fought out for us. Every thinking man and woman must take his part or hers, must fight for Christ, or, like the slothful sleepers in the garden, look on while the traitor betrays, and the enemies assail the Master they claim to love.—Aubrey L. Moore, *Some Aspects of Sin*, p. 117.

FORSAKING CHRIST

'Then all the disciples forsook Him, and fled.'—Matthew xxvi. 56.

In a great piece of music a composer strikes the note in his prelude which is to be recurring and dominant—the keynote of his message. This grave and saddening line is the keynote of the story of the day of the cross. It was a sign, as Jesus had foreteld, that His hour had come. It was His first step down into the waters of His baptism of sorrow. It was His first draught of the cup. To be forsaken by all turned His pre-vision of the cross into an experience.

With the story of the garden before us, let us look into this forsaking of Christ. Let us see the reasons why men are disloyal to Him, and mark how we may be safeguarded against the sin.

I. Men Forsake Christ Through Fear.—We understand at a glance the fear of these men. They were Galilean fishermen and strangers in a large city. They were surprised at night in the depths of an olive garden. The sudden Roman faces, with Judas at their head, the flashing lamps and gleaming spears, the rough and insolent soldiery, Christ captive, submissive, seemingly helpless in the soldiers' hands, death menacing themselves in the rude gestures of their assailants, shook their nerve and blanched their courage, and they forsook Him, and fled.

II. Men Forsake Christ Through Weariness.—These disciples were disloyal not only through fear, but their temptation assailed them in an hour of extreme weariness. They had walked as Passover pilgrims from Capernaum to Jerusalem. They were guests in strange homes, and that is always a straining experience. They had spent a week of unusual and exhausting excitement. Since they had entered Jerusalem with Jesus to the shouting of Hosanna they had lived out a full round of six long and eventful days. They had been stinted of rest and robbed of sleep. Even while they were witnesses of Christ's agony in the garden and listeners to His prayers they fell asleep in sheer weariness. It was when worn, spent, drained of energy both of mind and of body that they forsook Him, and fled.

We all understand these sad experiences. It was when we were weary, at the close of a long day, in our hour of failure, in the month when some great hope had been finally quenched, in the mood of discouragement and of despair, when the unexpected misfortune had overwhelmed us, as it overwhelmed the disciples in the garden, that we took that step, and did that deed, in which we forsook Christ, and fled.

III. Men Forsake Christ Through Spiritual Reaction.—Behind their fear and their weariness there lay a deeper cause of failure. That was spiritual reaction. We sometimes forget how intense had been the life which these men had lived, and how dazzling had been the light in which they had rejbiced. Transforming and illumining as had been their years of fellowship with Jesus, these last days in Jerusalem had brought them into a religious wonderland. They had companied with the Lord Jesus, and beheld His glory. They had heard the great parables spoken in the Temple. They had sat at Martha's feast in Bethany and looked on Lazarus risen from the dead. On the last day of the feast they had passed into the Holy of Holies. They had spent the early hours of the evening in the Upper Room, and at the supper table which Christian men and women consider their holiest memorial. They had listened to Jesus when He had unlocked His heart in counsel and in prophecy. All religious experiences are costly and exhausting. Every excitement exacts its toll of energy. The human spirit cannot sustain any rapture without times of relief. But the most exhausting of all emotion is an elating spiritual experience. It always has its after hours of dull and jaded mood. To have lived with Christ through this holy week must have set the spiritual fervour of these men of religious genius on fire. Then came the reaction of the night and the darkness, and the sudden peril of the garden, and then they forsook Him, and fled.

IV. There are two counsels which may safeguard us against our forsaking Christ.

1. The first of these is to be found in that word with which Christ sought to safeguard His disciples against their hour of trial—the word 'Watch'.

2. The second counsel we shall take from one who was loyal to Christ in a day when many were tempted to forsake Him. It is the counsel given as his message after the recital of the deeds of the cloud of witnesses who seldom faltered in their loyalty to God. That counsel is—'Looking unto Jesus'.—W. M. Clow, *The Day of the Cross*, p. 57.

DESERTION

'Then all the disciples forsook Him, and fled.'—Matthew xxvi. 56.

I. Whom? Not an enemy; nor a faithless leader; but their best friend.

Sometimes we are justified in forsaking people; the fuller our acquaintance with them, the less desirable it appears. But the more Christ was known, the better He was loved.

II. When?

1. At a time of peculiar peril and sorrow.
2. After many proofs of His Messiahship.
3. After receiving many favours.
4. After strong professions of attachment.
5. After expressing indignation at the treachery of another.

III. Why?—Because they were:—

1. Timid.
2. Selfish.
3. Impulsive.
4. Unbelieving.

See how one man influences another; *all* forsook Him.

Let us take heed to our company.

Let us take heed to ourselves.—F. J. Austin, *Seeds and Saplings*, p. 41.

CAIAPHAS

'And they that had laid hold on Jesus led Him away to Caiaphas the high priest.'—Matthew xxvi. 57.

The leader of the Sadducees was Caiaphas. He was the High Priest that same—that fateful year. The high priesthood had been the petty gift of all the foreign rulers of Judæa, bestowing it as their pleasure or their passion prompted. Caiaphas held the office for the long period of eighteen years, from the year A.D. 18 to the year A.D. 36. It was this High Priest and leader of the Sadducees who was the chief agent in the Crucifixion of Christ.

Caiaphas stands out so clearly upon the page of Scripture that we cannot mistake his character. His unflinching and implacable enmity imprinted itself indelibly on the minds of the Apostles. In scene after scene he is distinctively drawn. We see him in the Council with the note of scorn in his speech, his easy mastery of the moods and fears of men, his bold, definite counsel. We see him in the interview with Jesus, rending his robes with histrionic fervour, in a finely simulated horror at the blasphemy of Christ. We see him playing his game with Pilate, and using that able Roman as his tool. We see him when Judas, torn with relentless remorse, bursts into the Council Chamber, turning away from the conscience-stricken man, dismissing the poor fool from his presence with a phrase. We see him, unchanged, when Peter and John stand before him, and he charges them to hold their peace. Who is this resolute, defiant, merciless man? He is the High Priest of God—the holder of the holiest office in Judaism. What is he? An astute and unscrupulous diplomatist; a wily manager of men; a master of assemblies with a fitting gift of speech; a conceiver of bold and daring policies in the hour when others waver, and a man of unflinching will in carrying them out. How shall we describe this man of the holy office, and the crafty speech, and the diplomatic skill, in a single word? In one word, he is an ecclesiastic—the type of all that long succession of men who have laid heavy burdens on every Church, and often thwarted the purpose of God. Let us look at Caiaphas, the ecclesiastic, in the clear light that beats upon him from the Word of God, so that we may not enter into his secret or come into his condemnation.

I take three points of view—

I. The Ecclesiastic in his View of the Church.—Caiaphas, the High Priest, was the virtual leader of the Jewish Church.

What was the Church to Caiaphas? It was an institution on whose history he could have descanted with eloquence. It was an institution he must preserve in its present form at all hazard. It was an institution with certain offices and ceremonies, and buildings, and privileges, and powers. And it was an institution in which he and his fellows held certain station and authority, and power and emolument. Whatever endangered its supremacy, whatever threatened to lower its prestige, whatever assailed its security, must be ruthlessly destroyed. A new revelation might be dawning among men; a new learning might be disclosing more of the power and wisdom of God; new methods of science might be stirring men's minds; a new and holier spirit of compassion might be surging in men's hearts; and all these might have been craving for recognition and sympathy within the Church. It mattered nothing to Caiaphas, the ecclesiastic. The new wine would endanger the old bottle, and the old bottle was his precious thing. It gave him his place and his power, and it must be preserved. It needed only the cry in his ears: 'The Romans shall come and take away both our place and nation,' to rouse him to the strong, unflinching, merciless policy of the ecclesiastic.

Now, what is the source of the ecclesiastic's view of the Church? It is simply the spirit of worldliness—the spirit which prevails when faith in the unseen has died within the soul.

II. The Ecclesiastic in his Attitude towards Doctrine.—This man Caiaphas, although drawn with such almost unrelieved condemnation in the Word of God, must not be thought of as inhuman, or as a

self-consciously evil or diabolic man. Louis XI, with all his cruel craft, had a conscience. Machiavelli, the prince of liars, had always his self-defence in readiness. Lord Chesterfield's letters seem to us so much polite villainy, and yet they were written in tender regard for the well-being of his son. And Caiaphas had men to respect him, perhaps to love him. Children climbed upon his knee, and he put his hand gently on their heads. There were some frailties to which he was not liable; there were many vices impossible to him. And you can believe that in all he did he was well persuaded in his own mind. The state of mind behind his policy, the reason that dictated his action, was his attitude towards doctrine. Towards doctrine, and towards any possible change in doctrine, Caiaphas did not keep an open, testing, discerning mind. He was as fixed as the ice of an Arctic winter, as unreceptive as the dead.

III. The Ecclesiastic in his Conduct to Christ.—This cool, cunning, crafty man saw in a flash that the watchful Roman governor would be only too glad to see in this popular clamour around Christ an outbreak of insurrection, and sweep away the Temple and its priesthood because unable to keep the peace. And with the passing of the Temple would pass Caiaphas and his pride. He stands up in the midst of the sacred and bewildered men, who already hear, in anticipation, the shouts of the populace proclaiming Christ as king, and with keen scorn he says—'Ye know nothing at all'; and then calmly proposes to take Jesus and to put Him to death.

That is the decisive test of the ecclesiastic. The Church needs leaders. She needs men of wise counsel and prompt energy and determining speech. She needs men who will patiently and untiringly serve her tables. But the office they fill is full of giddy and dazing temptations. No class of men need more the continual reconsecration of aim and the fresh baptism of the Spirit. But these are gained only as men keep themselves in the faith and love of Jesus. The man to whom Christ is a name, or only an instrument of service, is a danger to the Church. But the man to whom He is Lord, in whose heart a deep devotion maintains its unquenched fire, may make mistakes, may seem to endanger sacred interests, but his blundering will be wiser than the cold prudence of the ecclesiastic.—W. M. Clow, *The Day of the Cross*, p. 13.

References.—XXVI. 57.—C. Stanford, *The Evening of Our Lord's Ministry*, p. 237. J. G. Stevenson, *The Judges of Jesus*, p. 83. XXVI. 57-62.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xlii. No. 2473. XXVI. 57-68.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—St. Matthew XVIII.-XXVIII.* p. 286. XXVI. 59, 60.—'Plain Sermons' by contributors to the *Tracts for the Times*, vol. ix. p. 315.

'At the last came two false witnesses.'—Matthew xxvi. 60.

In the fourth chapter of his *History*, Macaulay, after narrating the fearful punishment inflicted on Titus Oates, the detected informer, adds: 'Horrible as were the sufferings of Oates, they did not equal his crimes. The old law of England, which had been suffered to remain obsolete, treated the false witness, who had caused death by means of perjury, as a murderer. This was wise and righteous; for such a witness is, in truth, the worst of murderers. To the guilt of shedding innocent blood he has added the guilt of violating the most solemn engagements into which man can enter with his fellow-men, and of making institutions, to which it is desirable that the public should look with respect and confidence, instruments of frightful wrong and objects of general distrust. The pain produced by ordinary murder bears no proportion to the pain produced by the murder of which courts of justice are made the agents.'

References.—XXVI. 64.—G. A. Chadwick, *The Intellect and the Heart*, p. 116. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxiii. No. 1364.

JESUS CHARGED WITH BLASPHEMY

'Then the high priest rent his clothes, saying, He hath spoken blasphemy; what further need have we of witnesses?'—Matthew xxvi. 65.

These horror-stricken judges, rending their garments in simulated grief and zeal, and that silent Prisoner, knowing that His life was the forfeit of His claims, yet saying no word of softening or explanation of them, may teach us much. They are witnesses to some of the central facts of the revelation of God in Christ.

I. They witness to Christ's claims.

The question that was proposed to Jesus, 'Art Thou the Christ, the Son of the living God?' was suggested by the facts of His ministry, and not by anything that had come out in the course of this investigation. It was the summing up of the impression made on the ecclesiastical authorities of Judaism by His whole attitude and demeanour. He did claim a Divine prerogative; and either the claim must be admitted or the charge of blasphemy urged.

He died because He declared that He was the Son of God.

II. Note how we have here the witness that Jesus Christ assented always to the loftiest meaning that men attached to His claims.

I want to know whether that characteristic, which runs through all His life, and is inseparable from it, can be vindicated on any ground except the ground that He was God manifest in the flesh.

III. We have here witness to the only alternative to the acceptance of His claims.

He hath spoken 'blasphemy'. Not that He had derogated from the dignity of Divinity, but that He had presumed to participate in it. And it seems to me, with all deference, that this rough alternative is the only legitimate one. When all is said and done, we come to one of three things about Jesus Christ. Either 'He blasphemeth' if He said these things, and they were not true, or, 'He is beside Himself' if He said these things and believed them, or

> Thou art the King of Glory, O Christ;
> Thou art the everlasting Son of the Father.

If these claims are true, what should our attitude

be but that of infinite trust, love, submission, obedience, and the shaping of our lives after the pattern of His life?—A. Maclaren, *Christ's Musts*, p. 44.

References.—XXVI. 65.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture — St. Matthew XVIII.-XXVIII.* p. 290. XXVI. 65, 66.—Father Bernard Vaughan, *Society Sin and the Saviour*, p. 61. XXVI. 67.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xlii. No. 2473. XXVI. 69, 70.—W. C. E. Newbolt, *Church Times*, vol. xlv. 1901, p. 366.

'And again he denied with an oath, I do not know the man.'
—Matthew xxvi. 72.

'Let us look to it,' pleads Ruskin, 'whether that strong reluctance to utter a definite religious profession, which so many of us feel, and which, not very carefully examining into its dim nature, we conclude to be modesty, or fear of hypocrisy or other such form of amiableness, be not, in very deed, neither less nor more than Infidelity; whether Peter's "I know not the man" be not the sum and substance of all these misgivings and hesitations; and whether the shamefacedness which we attribute to sincerity and reverence, be not such shamefacedness as may at last put us among those of whom the Son of Man shall be ashamed.'

'And again he denied.'—Matthew xxvi. 72.

'Once launched upon such a course,' says De Quincey of Pope, 'he became pledged and committed to all the difficulties which it might impose. Desperate necessities would arise, from which nothing but desperate lying and hard swearing could extricate him.'

THE DENIAL

'I know not the man.'—Matthew xxvi. 74.

I. It is a remarkable thing that, in the Gospel narrative, two of the disciples, and two only, are spoken of as having been in some special way exposed to the assaults of Satan. The one was Judas the traitor; the other that disciple who, on any view we may take of the words, was singled out for special honour by the Lord—St. Peter. It seems as if St. Peter stood side by side with Judas in danger.

And here it is worth while to pause and remind ourselves that temptation always comes to us through that which is most natural to us, and our danger lies very near to that which, rightly used, is our strength.

It was directly after St. Peter's great confession, and the Lord's words, 'Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona,' that there came that stern rebuke, 'Get thee behind me, *Satan!*' The love which could see in Jesus, the Messiah, the Christ of God, could not see him in the Man of Sorrows, the Persecuted, the Betrayed, the Forsaken.

It was this instinctively self-trusting nature, the nature which had not learned to know itself, its own strength and weakness, that Satan sought to claim as his own. 'Simon, Simon,' said Christ after the Last Supper, 'Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not.' Did Christ pray for Judas too? Surely it must have been so.

St. Peter had to learn a deeper lesson of disappointment—the disappointment with self. All his self-confidence had to be destroyed before he could give his real self to Christ. Even Peter could not watch; and when the traitor drew near, he gave way to the momentary impulse of resistance, and then forsook his Lord, and fled.

II. In that hour of sadness and desolation, we can trace again the likeness and the difference between Judas and St. Peter. When the Messiah is condemned, and Judas and St. Peter alike realize their moral failure, the one 'repented himself,' the other 'wept bitterly.' What a difference is implied in those words! The one knew but remorse; the other entered on the toilsome road of penitence. Judas flung back the hated silver to the priests, and went and hanged himself; St. Peter, in that sad look of Christ, saw, even in the reproach, the hope of restoration, and he went out, and wept bitterly.

III. How shall we test our love? 'Lord, help us to know ourselves!' We cannot trust our feelings; we must go to facts. How shall we be sure that our love is real?

1. Love must be love for a person, not a system. It must be love for Christ, not for Christianity; devotion to One 'Who first loves us'. It is the distinguishing mark of religion that it implies a moral and personal relationship between God and man.

2. It will prove its reality by its *moral strength*.

3. And then it will distrust itself, and be trustful only of its Lord; content to be unknown, the least among the servants of God, to fill a little place in God's world, to be thought worthy just to give a cup of cold water to one of God's poor. Covetousness, ambition, self-assertion, all are gone, only when we have learned to say, 'Not I, but Christ in me'. It is the Christian reading of the teaching of the Muslim mystic:—

'One knocked at the door of the beloved, and a voice from within said, "Who is there?" The lover answered, "It is I". The voice replied, "This house will not hold *me* and *thee*". So the door remained shut. The lover went into the wilderness and spent a year in solitude and fasting and prayer. Then again he returned and knocked at the door. And the voice of the beloved said, "Who is there?" The lover answered, "It is Thyself". Then the door was opened.'—Aubrey L. Moore, *Some Aspects of Sin*, p. 129.

References.—XXVI. 74.—D. L. Ritchie, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxiii. 1903, p. 218. B. D. Johns, *Pulpit Notes*, p. 66. A. F. Winnington Ingram, *Addresses in Holy Week*, p. 19. XXVI. 75.—W. H. Hutchings, *Sermon-Sketches*, p. 77. T. B. Dover, *Some Quiet Lenten Thoughts*, p. 62.—XXVII. 1-27.—J. Burns, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxiii. 1903, p. 214.

PILATE

'And when they had bound Him, they led Him away, and delivered him to Pontius Pilate the governor.'—Matthew xxvii. 2.

The councils and kings, the orators and law-givers of Rome, tower out in the backward look of history,

when men nearer us in time are lost in the haze. But there is one Roman who shall outlive them all. He held only a petty post in an obscure corner of the Empire, but he sat as judge on Him who shall one day judge the world, and he delivered unto death the Prince of Life. The name of Pontius Pilate, the governor, shall be remembered when every other Roman name may be forgotten.

Pilate, like all men of culture and thought, had ceased to believe in the cruel and licentious gods of Paganism. And with that disbelief had come the usual disheartening conviction that nothing in all the spiritual world could in certainty be known. For in the moment when a man's spiritual world has vanished like a dream or a mirage of the desert, when the credulities of a young and ardent youth have been proved to be false, when he sees the men around him living only for things seen, what is there left for him but a sad and melancholy mental despair? 'What is truth?' asked Pilate in the climax of his interview with Jesus, and Bacon tells us he jested. If he did jest, it was a bitter jest. It was the partly impatient, partly contemptuous, partly despairing word of a man who flings out a question to which he conceives there is no answer at all. And when we look at this well-read, widely thought, bewildered, and gloomy-minded man, we find in him the type of men common enough among us. For there is no word to describe Pilate but one, and that is 'agnostic'. It is Pilate, the agnostic, who stands face to face with Christ.

I. Now let us look at the agnostic in the light of Christ. We see Pilate in three scenes. Mark them well, for they are the steps in an agnostic's progress away from God. We see him in the grey dawn roused from his rest to hear the denunciation of those scrupulous Jewish hypocrites, who will not enter his house lest they should be defiled. We see him with his Roman feeling for justice, refusing to do an act of summary wrong. And then we see him face to face with Jesus alone, and we cannot help a sigh that he did not know his Lord. For Christ's desire here, as always, is to lift all religious inquiry out of the heating and misleading arena of discussion and debate into the region of personal conduct and conviction. It is the attempt to lead the agnostic from his dialectic, to rouse the interest of his apathetic soul, and to make him face the realities of his own life. But it failed. Pilate is stung by the personal appeal, and the quick retort comes back, with contemptuous scorn, 'Am I a Jew?' But Jesus is love that will not let him go, and this clear voice, whose spell never men failed to feel, rang through Pilate's hall in words Church leaders have not yet fathomed, which spoke of that kingdom not of this world—that kingdom not of the sword—but of the truth. He offered to enrol Pilate as a governor in it. Mark, He does not proclaim Himself as the Son of God. That would have been too high for Pilate, and this Teacher ever stooped to the little ones. He offers Himself as one who came into the world that He might bear witness of the truth. He touched Pilate in his tenderest memories and holiest thoughts and took him back to the days of his youth, when he had dreamed his dreams, and seen his visions of unswerving justice, untainted honour, and ennobling purity. But the agnostic's habit has become too strong for him. It holds him as in a vice, and with the deep, unalterable conviction that Jesus is innocent, he puts his agnostic question, 'What is truth?' breaks off the interview, and passes out from the presence of Christ. When he went out it was the hour of dawn, but the night had begun to fall upon his soul.

II. In the second scene we see Pilate, who has refused to make the question of his religious belief a personal one, become the man of shifts and devices. He goes out to propose Christ's release under a time-honoured custom of the Feast. But the shout for Barabbas teaches him that he has misunderstood the deep hatred felt for Jesus. A second device suggests itself to him. He will scourge Him—aye, mark you! with that scourge of thongs tipped with lead, every one of which bit like a scorpion—and mock Him, for surely, even their pity will be roused, and they will relent at the sight of the thorn-crowned Man, and their rage will be glutted at the sight. But he might as well have fought the blinding spray of a winter storm, as have opposed himself to these hoarse cries of 'Crucify Him! Crucify Him!' He hurries in to Jesus, anew impressed that He who could so rouse the passions of men, must be more than He seemed, and 'Whence art Thou?' he asks Him, as one might inquire at a spirit. But Pilate's question comes too late. Jesus will not answer. Truth which a man will not accept when it is offered to him, truth which a man will outrage by scourging and mocking, truth which a man will set at naught, that he may escape from a dilemma and avoid a duty, is always silent to such a question as Pilate's.

III. The third scene is the dramatic moment of it all. It is Pilate—poor, fear-driven, unmanned Pilate—on the judgment seat, washing his hands in water, to declare his innocence, and so chloroform his soul. Ah, perhaps you think that no man could so deceive himself, that Pilate knew that he could have saved Christ if he only had bravely dared. No, that washing of the hands was no conscious mockery to Pilate. He doubtless went down to his house feeling himself justified, for he had reached the most abandoned state of the human soul. He was sinning against the Holy Ghost.

The sweet mysteries of Christ were dark to him, and he was not asked to accept them. But because he would not be true, because he would not live out the truth he knew, because he allowed truth and innocence to pass to shame and to death, he also passed out of Christ's light, and bears an eternal shame. What hindered him? It was in one word, his *interests*. That, in many forms—some as coarse and sordid as assailed Pilate, some as subtle and refined as seduce the man of wavering and bewildered

mind among ourselves—is the temptation of the agnostic.—W. M. Clow, *The Day of the Cross*, p. 27.

References.—XXVII. 2.—J. G. Stevenson, *The Judges of Jesus*, p. 153. XXVII. 3, 4.—John Ker, *Sermons*, p. 282. XXVII. 3-5.—E. M. Goulburn, *Occasional Sermons*, p. 139. E. B. Pusey, *Parochial Sermons*, vol. ii. p. 197. XXVII. 3-10.—B. D. Johns, *Pulpit Notes*, p. 112.

JUDAS'S 'I HAVE SINNED'

'I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood.'—Matthew xxvii. 4.

The state and history of Judas have, as we humbly trust, through the infinite mercy of God, no exact parallel amongst ourselves.

Judas, we must fear, had already passed into a reprobate state, when he said, 'I have sinned'. For years he had allowed, and systematically pursued, with a show of charity and piety, that sin which God calls the worst, and places the last, in the whole scale of wickedness. He had, probably, some secret hope that Christ might assert His power, and His sovereignty; and that he himself, after all, might have a high place in that temporal kingdom, which they all expected.

I. The Cry of Despair.—Disappointed everywhere—remorse and horror, as they are wont, taking the place of passion—the evil spirit that had lured him on now became, first tormentor, and then instigator to despair. Driven by his evil conscience, Judas sought refuge everywhere, and found it nowhere. Not in his money—what could that do? 'He cast down the thirty pieces of silver,' with perfect indifference, 'on the floor of the Temple;' and the cold-blooded priests, to whom he looked in his misery, said, 'What is that to us? See thou to that.' Not, assuredly, in his own breast. Not in God: he had not sought it there, and though it was not too late to find it, he saw it was too late to seek. And Judas, 'departed, and went and hanged himself,' that he might go to his own place!

II. A Heartless Acknowledgment.—What was the worth of his 'I have sinned' at such a time? The Greek word for 'sinned' is 'missing the mark'. It conveys a great deal of important and affecting teaching. But Judas meant probably only the literal, without the spiritual, signification of the word. 'I have made a mistake; I have missed the mark.' 'I have sinned, in that I have betrayed innocent blood.'

III. No Touch of Spiritual Truth.—His 'I have sinned' was only the acknowledgment of a worldly error. It stands for no repentance. It never touched one spiritual truth.

References.—XXVII. 4.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. iii. No. 113. XXVII. 4, 24.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—St. Matthew XVIII.-XXVIII.* p. 299. Cox, 'The Son of Loss,' *Expositions*, vol. i. p. 348. French, 'Pontius Pilate,' *Sermons New and Old*, p. 134. 'Conscience,' *Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. iv. p. 554. John Ker, 'Judas and the Priests; the end of evil association,' *Sermons* (1st Series), p. 232. Parker, *Ark of God*, p. 54, and *Inner Life of Christ*, vol. iii. p. 238. Cox, 'A Day in Pilate's Life,' *Expositor* (2nd Series), vol. viii. p. 107. Jacox, *Traits of Character*, etc., p. 350. Kitto, *Daily Bible Illustrations*, vol. vii. p. 426. W. M. Taylor in *Three Hundred Outlines on New Testament*, p. 32; and see his *Contrary Winds*, p. 37. A. B. Evans, *Sermons*, p. 377. C. J. Vaughan, *Sermons* (1853), p. 81. Pusey, *Sermons*, vol. ii. p. 276. Simeon, *Works*, vol. xi. pp. 575, 583. Bishop Hacket, *Sermons*, p. 483. Bishop Fleetwood, *Sermons*, p. 444.

'And he went and hanged himself.'—Matthew xxvii. 5.

When an opponent at Gainsborough falsely accused George Fox of claiming to be the Messiah, the Quaker declares, 'I called the accuser Judas, and was moved to tell him that Judas's end would be his; and that that was the word of the Lord and of Christ, through me, to him. So the Lord's power came over all, and quieted the minds of the people, and they departed in peace. But this Judas went away, and shortly afterwards hanged himself, and a stake was driven into his grave.'

References.—XXVII. 5.—C. Holland, *Gleanings from a Ministry of Fifty Years*, p. 287. XXVII. 7.—H. J. Wilmot-Buxton, *Sunday Sermonettes for a Year*, p. 76. XXVII. 11.—R. H. Heywood, *Sermons and Addresses*, p. 37. R. C. Trench, *Sermons New and Old*, p. 134. H. A. Smith, *A Book of Lay Sermons*, p. 3. XXVII. 11-26.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—St. Matthew XVIII.-XXVIII.* p. 310.

THE TWO WILLS

'When He was accused by the chief priests and elders, He answered nothing. Then saith Pilate unto Him, Hearest Thou not how many things they witness against Thee? And He gave him no answer, not even to one word; insomuch that the governor marvelled greatly. . . . Now the chief priests and the elders persuaded the multitude that they should ask for Barabbas, and destroy Jesus. But the governor answered and said unto them, Whether of the twain will ye that I release unto you? And they said, Barabbas. Pilate saith unto them, What then shall I do unto Jesus which is called Christ? They all say, Let Him be crucified. And he said, Why, what evil hath He done? But they cried out exceedingly, saying, 'Let Him be crucified!'—Matthew xxvii. 12-14, 20-23.

Never was tragedy so awful or so swift as that which St. Matthew recounts in the chapter from which these verses are taken. And this is because the two elements of all tragedy, the Will of God and the Will of Man, are there combined and running to the same end.

We have all been puzzled by the difficulty of reconciling these two: *first*, that God willed Christ's death, and, *second*, that man was guilty of that death.

I. Nothing is clearer from the Gospel than this: that it was Christ's own will to die. He had long set His face steadfastly to Jerusalem. While others still deemed it impossible, His soul lay already under the shadow of the Cross.

Some men make up their mind to die when they feel the stress of circumstance bearing in that direction. But Jesus felt no outward circumstance compelling Him to death. Because it was His Father's will He set His face to the Cross.

He also declared why He must suffer. This was not for martyrdom alone. He had come to bear witness to the truth among a people who, as He pointed out, had with tragic consistency slain their prophets. Yet the burden of truth He brought from

heaven was not the only burden He carried. He found another awaiting Him on earth in the sins of men; and this, though sinless Himself, He stooped to bear in all its weight. . . . That is why He was so silent before the Jewish Council and with Pilate. It was not for Barabbas only He was silent. On that day Christ Jesus laid down His life for men.

We do not know what happened to Barabbas. But if he changed, if he led a new life, and as an old legend has it, became a servant of God, it was because he understood the meaning of that silence in which Christ assented to His own death and so let him go free.

We must feel what our pardon cost the love of God, and how much that love in Christ endured for us. Then shall there be born in us a penitence, a faith, a gratitude which will bind us to God, which will give us a hatred for sin, which will beget in us a power of holiness—as nothing else can.

II. The way in which human guilt is brought out in this chapter is very tragic. First there is Judas, the only one who accepted his guilt, and it overwhelmed him. The rest shirked their responsibility, and sought to pass it over to one another. But they could not, for the lesson of the chapter is that, where Christ is in question, every man must make decision for himself.

It is significant that our Lord was slain by no mere drift of circumstance, but by the deliberate and confessed choice of men's wills, and that He was doomed to the cross not by the supreme Roman authority, but, before it could pass sentence, by the voice of the people.

They stood outside the court, because on that day it was not lawful for them to enter Gentile precincts. But even so they did not escape, for the governor brought Christ out to them, and in the end every man of them became His judge.

God will have every common man who has known Christ to come to a decision about Him. This was what Christ came into the world for. And we, to whom He has been presented all our lives, can, least of all, hope to escape.

Nor let us fail to notice the hour in which the men of Jerusalem were called to give their decision. The supreme moment in the history of Christ with themselves was not when He came to them as *the King in His beauty*, but when He stood an equal alternative with Barabbas.

It is not our attitude to our Lord in the easy hours of worship, which determines our true relation to Him. Our real heart for Him is shown, our true relation to Him is determined, far rather in those other, darker hours, when temptation is strong upon us; and we have to choose between Himself and our sin.—G. A. Smith, *The Forgiveness of Sins*, p. 105.

References.—XXVII. 14.—*Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xlv. 1894, p. 42. W. P. Balfern, *Lessons from Jesus*, p. 73.

BARABBAS

'And they had then a notable prisoner, called Barabbas.'—Matthew xxvii. 16.

I. We need not go beyond the New Testament for the history and character of Barabbas.

1. His name is the *first* significant thing about him. He is Bar-abbas, 'the son of the father,' or master. His father was a teacher of the Jewish law, and an expounder of its precepts. He belonged to the religious aristocracy of the Jews. He had been trained in the traditions of Hebrew history, and had been taught that to be a member of the commonwealth of Israel was the proudest privilege a man could enjoy. His childhood and youth had been spent amid the influences of a home whose chief interests were the things of God, whose dominating ambition was the steadfast advancement of His kingdom. He was as nearly as possible in the position of a son of the manse.

2. The *second* significant thing which we are told about him is, that he had 'made insurrection,' or, as Luke more precisely puts it, 'was cast into prison for a certain sedition made in the city'. At the time of the entrance of Barabbas on his manhood, Jerusalem was seething with discontent. The whole nation was palpitating with hope, and lifting up its long shadowed face with expectation that the time of the Deliverer was at hand. 'Art Thou He that should come, or do we look for another?' was John's message to Jesus; and when Jesus was found to be able to sway the multitudes with His words, and feed the hungry with bread, thousands flocked round Him, assured that the long-looked-for King had come. Hope deferred had made the heart sick, but the spirit of the unconquerable Hebrew could not be broken, and in the Holy City itself, and especially under the walls of the Temple, insurrection was continually being plotted, and sedition hatched. There was a fierce and defiant Home Rule party in Judæa, whose unresting aim was to drive the Roman garrison from the Holy Land. Their chosen name was that of Zealots, because of their unquenchable zeal for the restoration of the Jewish Dominion. Out of their ranks came one of Christ's disciples, Simon Zelotes, whom Jesus taught a wider truth and a better way than his fiery heart had at first conceived. These Zealots were the Invincibles in the Jewish struggle, and it was they who, at the siege of Jerusalem, fought with so desperate a fury that they appalled the veteran and disciplined soldiers of Rome. In their stubborn courage they fell in heaps, defending the breaches in the walls. It was this band of Zealots which was ever fostering sedition and making insurrection in the city. Among their number was found young Barabbas, the son of the Master in Israel, eager to roll away the reproach of his people, hating the Roman rule with an implacable hatred, willing to do and dare anything, if only a Jewish king shall reign again in Jerusalem. Many looked with hope on the eager young face of Barabbas Zelotes.

3. The *third* significant thing we are told of him is, that he was a robber, and had committed murder in the insurrection. To the last he was no common thief or cut-purse, but a man who had chosen to intrigue and plot, and to take the sword against the Government of Rome. But from the first he had hated Rome more than he had feared God; he had more of the proud ambition of the partizan than the lowly spirit of holy waiting for God, and, at length, his defiant and regardless deeds made him a mark for a keen-eyed and long-armed Government. He was cast into prison, whence he expected to come only to die the traitor's death on the cross.

4. The *fourth* and only other thing we are told, is that, both by the priests and the people, he was preferred to Jesus.

II. Now, as the Evangelists tell us the story of Barabbas, they focus our attention on one moment of his life. It is that dramatic moment in which Jesus and Barabbas pass out of Pilate's presence together, which is to them so full of pathetic suggestions.

1. The first thought in their minds, as in the mind of every one who knows the story, is the *startling and amazing contrast of their fate.* A man of genius and skill, in our generation, George Tinworth, has worked out, in terra-cotta, the scene at this dramatic climax, with a discerning spiritual insight. From one door, passing before Pilate's judgment-seat, there issues Barabbas, smiling in exultation. The soldiers grasp him by the hand in rude congratulations. His friends seize him in transports of joy. The mob hails him with acclamation. By the other door, held by the hard grip of the callous soldiers, seeing no kindly face looking towards Him, confronted by the relentless hate of the infuriated multitude, there issues Jesus. In all the crowd there is only one discerning, pitying heart. The artist has placed, not very far from Christ's door, a woman with a little child in her arms, and she turns on Jesus as He passes her wondering and compassionate eyes. The woman with the child, alone of all the throng, sees whose is the victory and the unfading glory. That is a master touch. To this day men walk our streets, and sit in our high places, with the triumphant pride of Barabbas, and neither they themselves nor others know how completely they have failed.

2. The second thought which attracts us is—*how much Barabbas missed.* We cannot help thinking of what might have been in the case of Barabbas. As we recall his radiant youth, his eager patriotism, his daring courage, his chivalrous devotion to Israel, we feel the soul of goodness that throbbed behind this man's life, his ardent abandonment to what he conceived to be the kingdom of God. This man, we see, might have been, and ought to have been, a disciple of Jesus. The very thing he so dimly and darkly saw, the thing he so fondly desired—the revival of the ancient glory of Israel—was being fulfilled by Jesus.

3. One other thought is plainly in the minds of the Evangelists. It is the *madness and folly of the choice of the multitude.* We can detect a note of pity for this befooled and blinded multitude, who chose a robber and murderer in preference to Jesus. We share this mingled amazement and sorrow. These Evangelists have caught something of the prayerful compassion of Jesus for those who did not know the time of their visitation. This multitude did not know whom they were rejecting, and did not know that they were closing the book of their history, fixing their eternal destiny, and quenching with their own breath their one hope of temporal peace and spiritual greatness, when they cried: 'Not this Man, but Barabbas!' But the crowd of condemning faces on which Jesus looks is larger than that which pronounced His doom in Jerusalem.—W. M. Clow, *The Day of the Cross*, p. 85.

Reference.—XXVII. 16.—Jesse Brett, *The Soul's Escape*, p. 28.

ENVY'S EVIL WORK

'For He knew that for envy they had delivered Him.'—Matthew xxvii. 18.

That quiet, simple sentence in this condensed report of Christ's appearance before Pilate always arrests the mind. It is the statement by the evangelist of the inner judgment of Pilate. He had discerned the motives which lurked behind the air of justice on the part of the chief priests and elders. He knew the men with whom he had to deal. The sight of Christ, and the short interviews he had with Him, convinced him, not only of Christ's innocence, but of His spiritual majesty. But he was a man caught in the trap of his own past. Had his past been unstained, his action might have been different. He discerned the character of Christ. He was awed and touched by His greatness. 'He knew that for envy they had delivered Him.'

I. Let us first inquire *what envy is.* Envy must be distinguished from other passions which are sometimes confounded with it. There is a wise and commendable emulation which is far from envy.

Envy must also be distinguished from jealousy, although the one word in common speech is often interchanged for the other. Jealousy is the child of love — love that believes itself wronged, injured, robbed of its due.

Envy is the child of hate. Envy does not long to run in the race and claim fellowship with those who excel. Envy does not seek the love and the well-being of the person envied. Envy is a gnawing hate, an inward grief, a wasting impatience of spirit, the souring of the heart, the distemper of the soul, 'a rottenness of the bones'.

There is in the Chapel of the Arena, at Padua, a significant fresco, by Giotto, of 'Envy'. Giotto's representation is that of a man of mean, misshapen figure, with crouching shoulder, and craning neck. He stands in profile in the picture with lean cheek, sunken, averted eyes, one hand clutching a wallet of gold, the other stretched out with fingers shaped into claws. The ears are large, unshapely, distended. Out

of the mouth there plays a serpent, whose fangs are striking Envy himself on the brow. Around the feet there leap up flames of fire. A master conception this of this passion of envy! Take one or two of the features. These large, distended ears are meant to signify that envy is on the alert for every babble of slander. The serpent in the mouth points to the poisonous insinuations, the fabricated stories which the tongue of envy is eager to tell. The hands, clawed like a vulture's, set forth the tearing motion and the clutching greed of the envious spirit; and the flames of fire round the feet mark the torture and despair in which envy lives—a torture and despair which are of hell. When we look at Giotto's picture, and read the story of the trial before Pilate, we no longer wonder at the quiet sentence, 'He knew that for envy they had delivered Him'. We understand that envy is no excusable resentment, no trifling meanness of the spirit, no transient passion, but a deep-seated, over-mastering, indwelling spirit of evil, which reaches its final expression when it hales its victim to his cross.

II. Let us now, in the second place, watch the *consequences of envy.*

1. Its simplest effect is to *blind the mind;* that is part of its confusion and evil work.

2. It also *poisons the heart.* As a poison strikes through the body and fevers the blood, so envy galls and fevers the heart.

3. The climax of evil consequence is reached when *envy crucifies Christ.*

III. But let us consider *the remedy for envy.* Envy may often visit the heart without reaching the climax of its consequence. There is no one who has not had a touch of envy at times. The man of saintly character and assured faith has found the subtle passion slipping into his heart, in some unwatchful moment, and troubling his peace. In one of the most thoughtful and uplifting of the Psalms this experience is detailed, and the sin and its remedy are disclosed. 'My feet were almost gone, my steps had well-nigh slipped. For I was envious at the foolish, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked.' And the Psalmist tells us the doubts that troubled his mind, and the darkness that fell upon his spirit. But he recovered. 'When I went into the sanctuary of God, then understood I their end.' Standing in the sanctuary he was illumined, the vision of God was given him again; the baseness of the things he had envied was borne in upon him; the manner of his envious desire stood clearly forth, and in God's light he saw light clearly. —W. M. Clow, *The Day of the Cross*, p. 71.

'He knew that for envy they had delivered Him.'—Matthew xxvii. 18.

Another of Badman's sins, 'among the foulest villanies . . . rotting the very bones of him in whom it dwells,' was envy. Bunyan quotes Matthew xxvii. 18 to show what he means: 'For he knew that for envy they had delivered Him'. It is a certain malignant hatred of good, the lowest conceivable depth of wickedness. Its root is ignorance. For this we are usually held not to be accountable, but to Bunyan, whether we are accountable or not, was not worth debate. It was 'ignorance' which preferred Barabbas to Jesus.—Mark Rutherford, *John Bunyan*, pp. 183, 184.

Reference.—XXVII. 18.—J. Parker, *City Temple Pulpit*, vol. ii. p. 156.

PILATE'S WIFE—MORAL INFLUENCE OF WOMEN

'And while Pilate was sitting on the judgment seat, his wife sent unto him, saying, Have thou nothing to do with that righteous man, for I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of him.'—Matthew xxvii. 19.

Of Pilate's wife nothing is known but the bare fact, recorded by St. Matthew alone, that she interceded with her husband in favour of a prisoner who, for some reason unknown to us, had aroused her sympathetic interest.

Tradition says that her name was Claudia Procula, and that she was a Jewish proselyte. The Greek Church has canonized her, and she ranks among its saints.

The fact that this Roman lady felt so deeply about Jesus that she risked offending her husband by interposing in a matter which lay beyond her proper sphere is of many-sided interest.

I. It serves to illustrate in an undesigned way the profound impression made by our Lord upon women in every case where they came under the spell of His influence.

II. The incident may be used in illustration of the common remark that womanly instinct sometimes hits the mark while masculine calculation goes astray. So far as we know, the sole protest against the counsel and deed of those who forced on the tragedy of Calvary was the protest of a woman.—J. W. Shepard, *Light and Life*, p. 72.

PILATE'S WIFE

'When he was set down in the judgment seat, his wife sent unto him, saying, Have thou nothing to do with that just man: for I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of Him.'—Matthew xxvii. 19.

Every religion may be tested, ethically and practically, by its appeal to womanhood. That faith which outclasses every other in its power to meet the needs of woman, and uplift her to moral beauty, will stand every other test of the truth of God. When Christ came with His meekness and lowliness, His searching and uncompromising hostility to sin, His compassion for weakness, and His great cross of love and atonement, womanhood fell down at His feet in a surpassing loyalty, and Christ placed a crown on her head. It was a man of Macedonia whom Paul saw in his vision, but it was a woman who listened by the river-side, and first made response to Christ. And to this day the voice of Christ finds its clear echo in women's hearts, and both gentle and simple are found reaching their noblest and highest when sitting at His feet.

It is then precisely what would have been expected, that amid the sad scenes of the tragedy of Christ's last day on earth, there should be told us this idyll of Pilate's wife. The story shines on the page like a

strong gleam of sunshine on a winter day. It is a word of radiant prophecy in the record of a history laden with sorrow.

I. The first thing I remark about Pilate's wife was the *sorrow and shame of her life*. There is no doubt but that a tender love subsisted between Pilate and his wife. This cruel and worldly man had this redeeming virtue left him, as such men sometimes have. The altar flame of love had not gone out. The proof of this mutual love lies in the fact that she accompanied him to Jerusalem. A Roman governor was forbidden by law to take his wife with him to his province, very much for the same reason as a ship captain is forbidden to take his wife to sea. That law could be broken only by a strong personal appeal. But in that imperial age, hastening with swift strides to an unspeakable corruption, husbands were only too willing to be freed from a wife's watchful eyes, and wives were as willing to be left to live their butterfly lives amid the gaieties of a profligate Roman world. But Pilate's wife was more than eager to face the loneliness of a life among an alien people. Love broke even a stern Roman law. But how far apart had these two drifted—although their love still persisted. The young Pilate whom the woman had idealized, whose face had flitted through the dreams of her youth, whose career she had so hopefully anticipated, had deteriorated into this sordid, cruel, vengeful, murderous man. The women of Jerusalem who saw Pilate's wife looking out from her lattice, and caught the flash of the gems on her white hands, and marked the pride of her patrician face, and envied her ease and state, never guessed how wistfully she looked upon them, and how constant was this cloud of sorrow and of shame, because she knew herself to be the wife of a dishonourable man.

II. The second thing I remark about Pilate's wife is *her service to her husband*. 'When he was set down on the judgment seat, his wife sent unto him, saying, Have thou nothing to do with that just man.' It was a deed of singular daring. It was the last resource of a loving heart making one more appeal. To send a message with the attempt to sway the mind of the judge while he sat upon the seat of judgment was a punishable offence, and only the awfulness of the deed she saw about to be done could have moved her to it. Pilate may have smiled at her dream, but her words stung his conscience, and had there been any way of escape for this hardly pressed man, had he had courage to brave his fate, gladly would he have set Christ at liberty, and gone home to look with the eyes of a man, redeemed from his evil fate, in the face of her whose love had almost saved him.

That is the highest service a wife can do for her husband—to stand in the shadow while he faces public light; to be ever his counsellor, his helper, his gentle and yet unfaltering preacher of righteousness—aye, to be his saviour—is her noblest office.

III. The third thing I remark about Pilate's wife is *her intercession for Christ*.

And so to this day Pilate's wife walks at the head of all that long procession of nobly-born, and noblyplaced, and nobly-gifted women who do service for Christ. She leads the noble army of saintly martyrs and confessors. There follow in her train queens like Helena and St. Elizabeth of Hungary, women of generous hand like Lady Huntingdon, and of saintly wisdom like Lady Glenorchy; and those even greater and more devoted women, enshrined in the *Book of Martyrs* and the *Scots' Worthies*, true Ladies of the Covenant, who, when Christ, in His persecuted saints, walked again the way of weeping, cast aside their pride, placed no value on their rank, reckoned light the suffering, and stepped into the way with Him. Surely we shall not say too much when we believe that the name of Pilate's wife, though not written on this page, is written first on the roll of those women who laboured much in His Gospel, 'whose names are in the Book of Life'.—W. M. Clow, *The Day of the Cross*, p. 99.

References.—XXVII. 19.—G. Lorimer, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lvii. 1900, p. 243. J. G. Stevenson, *The Judges of Jesus*, p. 129. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxviii. No. 1647.

CHRIST, A PERPLEXITY

'What shall I do then with Jesus which is called Christ?'—Matthew xxvii. 22.

I. We may crucify the Saviour in many ways when we do not seem to be crucifying Him. That is the very subtlety of the devil's temptation. There would not seem to be any wickedness in not forgiving a man who had injured you very much and who had prayed for your pardon. If any soul has ever asked you to forgive him, that soul supplied you with the greatest opportunity of being a Christian that ever was supplied during your whole experience. To plead for mercy and not to receive it, the case being between two human hearts, that would stab the Saviour with a sixth wound.

There is another thing you can do with Christ: you can admire Him. Many persons admire Him, and get their livelihood out of Him: paint His portrait, surround His head with haloes, give His mother a nimbus, and give Himself as a Babe an aureole; all that you can do, but that is nothing. I have great fear of those who have not passed beyond the point of admiration. Jesus Christ came not to be admired, but to be believed, received, served. He is all, or nothing, and less than nothing.

There is a third thing you can do: you can adore Jesus. Now you are coming to higher ground. You can fall down before Him, you can offer Him your gold and frankincense and myrrh, not of mere gold and material, but of real reverence and love and faith, so that He shall be fairest among ten thousand and altogether lovely; not in form, but in the poetry of His meaning, in the ideality of His desire.

There is a fourth thing you can do: you can serve Him. What is 'to serve Him?' It is to suffer for Him. Do we serve Him? is His service a delight? if our lives were deprived of His service would they

go down in music, in quality, in hope, in force? If you can say, Yes, then you are in very deed serving the Christ.

II. There are three things you cannot do with Christ.

1. You cannot get rid of Him. Some men may think they have dismissed Him, but they have not. It is Christ's habit, as it always has been from resurrection time, to appear unto some in 'another form'.

2. You cannot mistake Him for some one else. That is curious. The uniqueness of Christ is one of the greatest arguments in Christian apologetics. There is none to compare with Him.

3. You cannot change the terms of discipleship. They are severe terms. He never admits anybody easily into His kingdom. What is the way into the kingdom? The Cross is the only way. What is the object of discipleship? The Cross is the object of discipleship. Can I not have some ornamental cross, some ivory crucifix, and place it on my breast and say, Behold my tribe and my Master? No, this must be a heart-born Christ, this must be a cross that throws its shadow, yet its light, over the whole life. 'If any man would be My disciple, let him take up his cross daily and follow Me.'—Joseph Parker, *City Temple Pulpit*, vol. v. p. 184.

'They all say unto Him, Let Him be crucified.'—Matthew xxvii. 22.

Last year about this time our Lord was, as it were, upon the Mount of Olives. He rode, as it were, triumphantly at the head of a small party to the market-cross of Rutherglen, and many cried 'Hosannah to the Son of David,' for a few days after. But since the 22nd of June, 1679, how many have cried out, 'Crucify Him, crucify Him, away with Him: we will have no more to do with Him. Christ is too dear a Lord for us. These field-meetings of His are too costly for us. We wish there had never been any of these field-meetings in Scotland!'—From a Sermon by Richard Cameron.

References.—XXVII. 22.—S. H. Kellogg, *The Past a Prophecy of the Future*, p. 144. W. Howell Evans, *Sermons for the Church's Year*, p. 102. V. R. Lennard, *Passion-Tide and Easter*, p. 45. T. Teignmouth Shore, *The Life of the World to Come*, p. 125. R. Baldwin Brindley, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxxviii. p. 136. David Purves, *ibid.* vol. lxx. 1906, p. 70. T. Waugh, *The Cross and the Dice-Box*, p. 201. C. Perren, *Revival Sermons in Outline*, p. 164. A. Goodrich, *British Weekly Pulpit*, vol. ii. p. 189. C. Stanford, *The Evening of Our Lord's Ministry*, p. 256. XXVII. 22-50.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxxix. No. 2333.

PILATE WASHING HIS HANDS

'Pilate . . . took water, and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, I am innocent of the blood of this just person: see ye to it.'—Matthew xxvii. 24.

I. The first point to notice is the vain plea for wrong-doing.

Pilate excused himself to himself on the ground that policy and self-defence forced him to his act. He could say 'I am innocent' because he said, 'I am obliged to connive at this crime'. Though in his case the plea is for a gigantic sin, and in our case it may be for a comparatively small one, the same sort of thing is being said by us continually.

There is *nothing* necessary for a man which he can only get or keep by tampering with conscience. There are two things needful for us: God and righteousness; and there is no third.

And in another way, the pleading of compulsion from without, as an excuse for evil, is evidently vain; because no man and no thing can force us to do wrong. We know, in each specific case, that, however strong the temptation may have been, we could have resisted it if we would, and that therefore the yielding to it was our act and ours only.

II. Notice here the possibility of entire self-deception.

This man had managed to persuade himself, on a very rotten plea, that he was entirely free from guilt in his act. And the fact that the man who did the most awful of crimes—though perhaps he was not the most guilty—could do it with the profession, to some extent sincere, of innocence, may teach us very solemn lessons.

You can persuade yourself that almost any wrong thing is right, if only you desire to do so. Inclination can silence conscience. The rush of passion can silence conscience. The very stress of daily life tends to weaken the power of pronouncing moral judgment on the things that we are doing. We all have sins altogether unsuspected by ourselves. There are plenty of us that do just as Pilate—who condemned himself in saying, 'I am innocent of the blood'.

III. Notice how here we get an illustration of the impossibility of wriggling out of responsibility.

It is very interesting to observe how the parties concerned—the conspirators, if I may say so—in this great tragedy try to shuffle the blame off their own shoulders and to place it on others. If there is anything a man's own, of which he cannot get rid, it is the burden of responsibility for his acts, and the inheritance of their consequences.

IV. Note the contrast between present and future estimates of our acts.

Pilate probably went back to Cæsarea after the feast, thinking that he had got well out of what threatened to be an awkward business; and in all likelihood he never thought any more, either about that strange Prisoner, or about that stormy session in the Hall of Judgment. We have not to measure his guilt. It depends upon his knowledge, and his knowledge was very slight. But, for all that, one cannot help thinking of the shock of surprise which struck him when he passed beyond life, and ceased to be a governor and a judge, and stood at the bar of the Man whom he had condemned.

The same reversal of present and future estimates will come about with many of us. 'That fierce light which' flashes from the 'throne' will show the seaminess of many a life which looks fairly well by the candle-light of this present.—A. Maclaren, *The Wearied Christ*, p. 222.

References.—XXVII. 24.—A. F. Winnington Ingram, *The Men Who Crucify Christ*, p. 20. XXVII. 24, 25.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxviii. No. 1648. G. F. Browne, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxxix. 1891, p. 184. H. Ward Beecher, *Sermons* (1st Series), p. 92. XXVII. 24-31.—C. Stanford, *The Evening of Our Lord's Ministry*, p. 289. XXVII. 25.—R. W. Hiley, *A Year's Sermons*, vol. i. p. 189. Father Bernard Vaughan, *Society, Sin, and the Saviour*, p. 155. Hugh Black, *University Sermons*, p. 212. XXVII. 26.—W. P. Balfern, *Lessons from Jesus*, p. 210. XXVII. 27.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxxix. No. 2333. XXVII. 27-54.—*Ibid.* vol. xlviii. No. 2803; vol. l. No. 2887. XXVII. 28.—W. P. Balfern, *Lessons from Jesus*, p. 213.

'And they put a reed in His right hand: and they bowed the knee before Him, and mocked Him, saying, Hail, King of the Jews!'—Matthew xxvii. 29.

It is so easy to be orthodox in creed and statement; so *safe* to rest in a merely traditionary belief, that many a decorous Christian fails to perceive the sure though invisible connexion between the life-confession and self-denial of a merely outward profession, and the broader form of denial by which all such profession is derided. Yet between Christ mocked and Christ rejected there is but a step; who shall say how easily it is taken, or how quickly we pass from the hollow homage, the 'Hail, Master!' which mocks our Lord, to the smiting and buffeting of open outrage? When Christ is invested with but the show of sovereignty, the reed placed in His hands will be quickly taken, as by the soldiers, to smite His head. *This reed is nominal Christianity*, a strange slip of a degenerate vine, beneath whose blighting shadow a poison-growth of unbelief never fails to root itself. —Dora Greenwell.

The whole history of Christianity shows that she is in far greater danger of being corrupted by the alliance of power than of being crushed by its opposition. Those who thrust temporal sovereignty upon her treat her as their prototypes treated her Author. They bow the knee, and spit upon her; they cry 'Hail,' and smite her on the cheek; they put a sceptre in her hand, but it is a fragile reed; they crown her, but it is with thorns; they cover with purple the wounds which their own hands have inflicted on her; and inscribe magnificent titles over the cross on which they have fixed her to perish in ignominy and pain.—Macaulay on Southey's *Colloquies*.

References.—XXVII. 29.—G. H. Morrison, *The Return of the Angels*, p. 34. W. H. Brookfield, *Sermons*, p. 216. C. Jerdan, *Pastures of Tender Grass*, p. 304. B. D. Johns, *Pulpit Notes*, p. 25. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xx. No. 1168; vol. xlix. No. 2824.

'They led Him away to crucify Him.'—Matthew xxvii. 31.

A month before his death, on 'Sabbath, 21st September,' says Dr. M'Crie, 'Knox began to preach in the Tolbooth Church, which was now fitted up for him. He chose for the subject of his discourses the account of our Saviour's crucifixion, as recorded in the twenty-seventh chapter of the Gospel according to Matthew, a theme upon which he often expressed a wish to close his ministry.'

Reference.—XXVII. 32.—F. D. Huntington, *Christian Believing and Living*, p. 338.

'They came unto a place called Golgotha.'—Matthew xxvii. 33.

That spiritual beauty and spiritual truth are in their nature communicable, and that they should be communicated, is a principle which lies at the root of every conceivable religion. Christ was crucified upon a hill, and not in a cavern, and the word Gospel itself involves the same idea as the ordinary name of a daily paper.—G. K. Chesterton.

References.—XXVII. 33, 34.—G. Body, *The School of Calvary*, p. 26. XXVII. 33-44.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. li. No. 2942. XXVII. 33-50.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—St. Matthew XVIII.-XXVIII.* p. 317.

THE UNCONSCIOUS SERVICE OF CHRIST

'They gave Him vinegar to drink mingled with gall.'—Matthew xxvii. 34.

The drink offered to Jesus was a narcotic. It was offered in mercy and it was offered by those opposed to His doctrines. It was given by the Roman soldiers with a view to mitigate His pain.

I. The act is deeply suggestive. It is an act of friendship performed by antagonists. We are in the habit of dividing the world into Christians and non-Christians. To which of the two classes did these Roman soldiers belong? They were certainly not followers of Jesus; but neither were they against Him. I am told that at the Day of Judgment those will be on the right hand who gave Him drink, and those on the left hand who did not. But here on earth, He has received drink from those apparently on the left hand. Roman soldiers have sought to assuage His sufferings!

II. Is it not the same still? We are so fond of sharp divisions that we forget the intermediate shades; but God does not. There are men among us who at this hour are helping Jesus, and who yet profess to yield no allegiance but to Cæsar. They are numbered among the legions, not among the saints. Yet, wherever the Son of Man is crucified, they are there.

III. Wherever humanity is heavy-laden, wherever souls are sad, wherever bodies are burdened, wherever days are darkened, wherever man is mastered by the physical, you will find them there. In the den of poverty, by the couch of pain, at the bed of languishing on the track of fallenness, you will find them there. Where Noah combats the waters, where Abraham journeys homeless, where Jacob lies on a stair, where Joseph weeps in a dungeon, where Moses mopes in a desert, where Elijah hides in a cave, where Job pines in an infirmary, where the Son of Man fasts in a wilderness, you will find them there. They see not the vintage and the gold; but they bear the vinegar and the gall.—G. Matheson, *Messages of Hope*, p. 249.

THE ENDURANCE OF PAIN

'They gave Him vinegar to drink mingled with gall: and when He had tasted thereof, He would not drink.'—MATTHEW XXVII. 34.

IN the reports of the Passion preserved for us in the Gospels, we are told that at three different times on that first Good Friday was a draught offered to our Lord; and if we read the narratives with care, we shall observe that these draughts were not only offered Him under entirely distinct circumstances, but that His attitude with reference to them was distinct in each case.

I. Let us take first what St. John tells us. *All things* being *now accomplished*, we read that Jesus cried out in His agony that He was athirst; and some of the soldiers in tardy mercy took pity upon the patient Sufferer, and offered Him a draught of the sour wine provided for their own use. And Jesus received it, and crying out, 'It is finished,' bowed His head, and breathed out His spirit.

'All things were accomplished.' He had done that for which He had come. And so He no longer keeps back the cry, 'I thirst'. The lesson is this, that pain, as pain, is of no moral value at all. To suffer a useless pain—that had no place in the economy of redemption; and it has no place in the life of redeemed humanity. When all things were accomplished, Jesus accepted the bracing draught.

II. But yet pain of a sort, of a bitter sort, comes to us all. How are we to meet it? Let us carry our thoughts back to another and earlier scene at Calvary. 'And the soldiers,' says St. Luke, 'also mocked Him, coming to Him, and offering Him vinegar, and saying, If Thou be the King of the Jews, save Thyself'. The wine-cup was offered in mockery to the King Who was in truth in their midst, though they knew it not. But He endured it all in patience and sadness. All things were not accomplished yet. It does not need that tragic story to teach us that there are some pains of life which are not in our power to evade. We had best endure them in silence. The cup of insult may be offered to us; it does not rest with us to say whether we shall accept or reject it.

III. But the commonest pains of life are those which we at once ought to endure and which we could evade if we chose. As St. Mark has it, 'They gave Him to drink wine mingled with myrrh: but He received it not'. 'When He had tasted thereof, He would not drink,' says St. Matthew. Why not? The Cross was to be endured with full consciousness. The cup which His Father had given Him He would drain to the dregs. All things were not yet accomplished.

Philosophers have taught us that there are different kinds of fortitude. There is the fortitude which will endure without murmuring the pain that we cannot escape; but to endure pain that we may escape, if we will—that is the true courage. This was the fortitude of the Divine King on the cross. And perhaps, without too curious prying into the purpose and manner of the Atonement, we may see in one direction at least that the conquest that has been achieved by the Gospel of Christ would not have been inspired by a Victim—even a Divine Victim—unconscious at the last.

What is our lesson from this last act of self-denial of Jesus Christ? Is it not this, that to suffer pain which we may evade if we will, to endure *unto the end*, is often the most imperative of duties?

In the ordinary affairs of business we often see a man lose all profit of his toil because he will not take the small additional pains which are needed to bring his machinery or his organization to perfection. The same is true in science, it is true in art, it is true in every department of human activity. A French proverb tells us that it is the *first* step which costs; but in truth the *last* step is as often the one which is critical.—J. H. BERNARD, *Via Domini*, p. 154.

REFERENCES.—XXVII. 35.—F. Case, *Short Practical Sermons*, p. 104. T. G. Selby, *The Cross and the Dice-Box*, p. 3. W. J. Dawson, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xlii. 1892, p. 349.

THE WORDS FROM THE CROSS

(*Good Friday*)

'And sitting down they watched Him there.'—MATTHEW XXVII. 36.

JESUS CHRIST'S death on the cross was not only a sacrifice for our sins, but was also part of His great example. He there taught us how to suffer. Let us listen to the few words which came from those patient and holy lips, that we may learn something of the spirit in which, when our hour of suffering comes, we ought to take it.

I. We may very possibly have to suffer through the fault of others; or, when we are suffering, it is possible that others may be hard or unkind to us. When those trials and temptations come, let us stop and think of Him Who was nailed to the cross. What were His first words when the nails had pierced His hands and feet, when the cross was set up, when the malice of His enemies had at length compassed what it sought, when the cup of agony was full? *Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.* Jesus forgave the murderers who crucified Him. Jesus made an excuse for their cruel malice.

II. When we suffer, we generally think only of ourselves. We think that we have enough to bear without troubling ourselves about the wishes or sorrows of others. But watch Jesus Christ on the cross. Watch Him after that long morning of racking agony to nerve and to spirit. Wearied, worn, exhausted, dying, He sees His mother, and the disciple whom He loved. In His own bitter suffering, He sees how they are suffering; He thinks of them; He thinks of what would be a comfort and support to them. *Woman, behold thy Son! . . . Behold thy mother!*

III. Nor did He think only of those who belonged to Him—His mother and His disciples. There was a poor wretched criminal, a murderer and a robber, the outcast and the offscouring of society, hanging at His side, hung there to do Him greater dishonour—

to show Him to the world as worthy to die with the vilest malefactors. Yet, in the midst of His own torments, amid the jeers and brutal mockery of this miserable man's companion, He was willing to receive and be favourable to this poor creature's petition. How should we like, in moments of pain, in the hour of death, to be asked to consider the wants, and to minister to the comfort of an outcast, friendless soul, all its lifetime abandoned to hardened sin? We dare not answer for ourselves. We dare not think what we should do. But we know what the Redeemer did. We know that He did not grudge him words that the greatest saints would have hailed with rapture—*To-day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise.*

IV. To most of us, pain and sickness seem to bring a release from ordinary duties. We feel ourselves free from the obligations which lie on us in health. We think we need not be so strict. It is one of the great trials of suffering, that it makes us indifferent to what becomes of us, careless of our duties, and of other people who depend upon us. But in those times, think of Jesus Christ on the cross. He thought of fulfilling to the uttermost all that was appointed Him. It had been said of Him that He was to drink the vinegar, so He asked for it. He said, *I thirst.* He did not put it from Him as a needless, useless interruption in the midst of racking pain and faintness. He would not go till He could say, *It is finished.*

V. There is one strange and awful sentence of those which He spoke on the cross which we must sometimes have wondered at. *My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?* Surely those are not the words of despair and distrust. What they fully mean, it would be dangerous to ask, for they are the words of the Incarnate Son of God in man's nature. But no more comforting words than they to our poor, weak, fainting nature, were spoken on the cross. On the cross Jesus Christ utters the same cry as His weak and fainting creatures. He takes David's words in the twenty-second Psalm and makes them His own; not to teach us to cry out against God; not to teach us to distrust God; not to encourage us to give way to hard thoughts of our Father in heaven; but to give us comfort, that if we have such feelings rushing into our minds sometimes, they need not be wrong ones, unless we make them so by our impatience and repining and want of faith.

VI. *Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit,* and having said this, He gave up the ghost. There He has taught us how to die. Say what we will, death is an awful parting. We love life, and it is hard to take leave of it, hard to lay it down. But here is our lesson. Let these words of Jesus Christ ever be in our hearts while we are in health, that they may be ready to come to our lips when we are dying. We must learn to say them from our hearts, in the hours of pain and sickness, that we may learn to say them as Christ said them when the spirit is almost gone. 'Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit.'—R. W. Church, *Village Sermons* (2nd Series), p. 133.

References.—XXVII. 36.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—St. Matthew XVIII.-XXVIII.* p. 325. Cosmo Gordon Lang, *Christian World Pulpit,* vol. lv. 1899, p. 209. J. Parker, *City Temple Pulpit,* vol. vii. p. 280. XXVII. 39, 40.—W. C. Magee, *Christ the Light of all Scripture,* p. 165. XXVII. 40.—H. Arnold Thomas, *Christian World Pulpit,* vol. xxxviii. 1890, p. 247. R. W. Hiley, *A Year's Sermons,* vol. iii. p. 136. XXVII. 41-43.—R. Dalby, *Christian World Pulpit,* vol. xl. 1891, p. 221. A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—St. Matthew XVIII.-XXVIII.* p. 332.

THE ALTERNATIVES

'He saved others; He cannot save Himself.'—Matthew xxvii. 42.

These are true words, but they were spoken by men who did not know how true they were. They describe the situation with exactness.

I. Looking back over the life of Jesus, as it is set forth for us in the Gospels, we see that, at every stage of His life, at every new departure in His work, these two alternatives were somehow set before Him—If He is to save Himself, He cannot do His work; if He is to do His work, He cannot save Himself.

From the tempter at the outset of His ministry, from His mother and His brethren during the course of it, from His disciples and Peter as it drew near its close, from the chief priests, elders, and scribes while He hung on the cross, and from the thief, who desired Him to use His Messiahship for His own benefit and theirs, from friend and foe alike, came the suggestion that there was an easy, a less costly way of accomplishing His work. From first to last, from whosoever the suggestion came, Jesus resolutely and steadfastly set it aside. Nor was it merely from those who thus presented the alternative to Him that the thought came. In the agony of the garden He asked if it were possible for the cup to pass? 'Father, if Thou be willing, remove this cup from Me.' With strong crying and tears He asked if it were possible to find a less costly way of doing His work.

II. We should miss the strength and comfort which should come to us from the devout study of our Lord's life, if we did not realize that all these suggestions which we have enumerated called Him to a real decision, and led Him to a greater victory. It was a real situation which always met Him, and at each step there was a possible parting of the ways, and He always had to make a real choice; and He chose the upward, thorny path which led to the agony of the garden and the death on the cross.

III. In our way and in our measure, we are also ever called on to make a similar choice. To each of us a mission has been given, a task has been assigned, and a work has been given to do. Each of us has only one life to live, one place to fill, one work to do. It can only be accomplished if we have a clear vision, a pure heart, a good conscience, and a resolute will.—J. Iverach, *The Other Side of Greatness,* p. 18.

'He saved others; Himself He cannot save.'—MATTHEW XXVII. 42.

SAUVE QUI PEUT, Bonaparte is said to have exclaimed at Waterloo, along with his routed army. At all events this was the rule by which he regulated his actions, in prosperity as well as in adversity. For what is *Vole qui peut!* but the counterpart of *Sauve qui peut!* . . . What an awful and blessed contrast to this cry presents itself, when we think of Him of whom His enemies said, *He saved others; Himself He cannot save!* They knew not how true the first words were, or how indissolubly they were connected with the latter, how it is only by losing our life that we can either save others or ourselves.—JULIUS HARE.

REFERENCES.—XXVII. 42.—J. W. Brown, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xliii. 1893, p. 390. W. Scott Page, *ibid.* vol. lxii. 1902, p. 418. J. Baines, *Twenty Sermons*, p. 139. W. Hay M. H. Aitken, *Mission Sermons* (2nd Series), p. 169. C. W. Furse, *Sermons Preached at Richmond*, p. 32. XXVII. 43.—C. E. Jefferson, *The Character of Jesus*, p. 135. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxxiv. No. 2029. XXVII. 45.—H. E. Manning, *Sin and Its Consequences*, p. 201. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxxii. No. 1896. XXVII. 45, 46.—Frederic Watson, *The Seven Words from the Cross*, p. 54.

THE CRY OF DERELICTION

'My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?'—MATTHEW XXVII. 46.

WHAT do these words mean?

I. We cannot explain that cry as a momentary failing of human courage or human conviction. Every line of the Gospel forbids us to do so.

Think of His Name and why He bore it. 'He shall be called Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sins.' He Who was 'in the form of God' could not be happy in heaven while the cry of the world which He had created was beating upon His ears. He had spoken often and not in vain, through Prophets and Psalmists and holy men, and now the time had come for the last supreme appeal, the sovereign proof that what He bade His people be He was Himself. And therefore He went forth and took upon Him the form of a servant and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. He went forth and He went down. He could save; but only by going down, with His Divine Nature upon Him, into the very depths of the world; by getting under all the evil, and lifting it up with the strength of His own shoulders, and the suffering of His own body, soul, and spirit.

II. Now how far did He go down? He had suffered whatever man can suffer, betrayal by a friend and disciple, denial by the chief of His Apostles, degrading insults and bodily anguish, such as we shrink from putting into words. And now at the last came those jeering priests. And He must have asked Himself, What are these men? and where are they? And beyond the indifference of the ignorant and careless, beyond the cowardice of timid friends, beyond the animal cruelty of rough soldiers, beyond and below all this, He must have seen and entered a lower depth still—the mind of those who knew or ought to know, who had read their Bibles, who thought themselves the chosen people of God, and yet could crucify their Christ, and then could mock and jibe with the vilest of the vile at the foot of the cross—the mind of those who are in the outer darkness, hating the light. For one black moment He became as they, that He might be able to save even them.

Then came that loud cry—was it 'Father, into Thy hands I commit My Spirit'? was it 'It is finished'?—a loud triumphant cry. God is the Father again, the horrible vision has passed, and the end has come.

III. It is horrible; and yet it is the condition of power and success. For what is the horror? It is the sense of God's absence, the feeling of abandonment in the outer darkness. And who can feel that except those who know what God's presence means? Only those who have tasted of love, joy, and peace can understand what evil is. Others may see the outward symptoms of evil, the squalor, the vice, the hopelessness; they alone know the root of the disease, and therefore the way to cure it. Doctors tell us that you cannot cure symptoms. You can alleviate them, and it is a duty to do that, if you can do no more. But to cure you must get down to the cause, and is not that the absence of God? and can you make men understand that unless you know all that it means?

Let this mind be in you, says St. Paul in the Epistle, which was in Jesus Christ. Go down like Him and suffer and learn, in His name and in His strength.—CHARLES BIGG, *The Spirit of Christ in Common Life*, p. 274.

THE FOURTH WORD FROM THE CROSS

'My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?'—MATTHEW XXVII. 46.

I. WE are told in the Bible that there was a great darkness over all the land, from the sixth hour till the ninth. And in the midst of this outward darkness it would seem that our Lord remained quite silent till at last He uttered these words, 'My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?' Why was this darkness? Was it to point out our Saviour as the Light of the world? When He was born at Bethlehem a bright star appears; when He dies the sun veils His face. Let us catch from it this certain truth, He was the true Light. Jesus is come to be a new light to man, a new revelation, a new force, a new light for men to walk by to God.

II. But these words of our Lord, though perhaps the most difficult, have been as fruitful as any in comfort to the simple-hearted. They have been a comfort in helping good people when tempted to despondency. Here they have looked up and have seen, as it were, our Lord, not in bright cheerfulness but in darkness, and they have heard His voice crying, 'My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?' as though He were depressed in soul. As we have seen Him suffering outwardly in the body, so this was some inward agony of the soul, the crucifixion, so to speak, of His heart. And He cried,

'My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?' It was an extreme agony as though He were being shut out from the presence of God. Not that there was any sense of being actually lost; not that there was any sense of God's wrath upon Himself; because it is still, '*My* God, *My* God'.

III. We need to be more careful, perhaps than we are, about desponding thoughts. They may be very much checked by being watchful over our imaginations. Be careful of indulging your imaginations, *either way*, towards *success*, which may lead you to vanity; towards *failure* which may lead you to despondency, to despair, to unworthy distrust of God. Do your best to keep in check this power of the imagination, and if you—like many saints before you, yea like our Divine Master—have sometimes to pass through a cloud in the journey of life, do not be afraid, if you sometimes have to feel that you are left, deserted; look up to Him, and listen to His word, which He has uttered for our consolation, our hope, 'My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?'—Bishop King, *Meditations on the Last Seven Words of Our Lord Jesus Christ*, p. 37.

ACCORDING TO THE SCRIPTURES

'Jesus cried with a loud voice, My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?'—Matthew xxvii. 46.

They are the words of the greatest Commentator on the Old Testament that the world has ever known. When Christ presents the Passion Music of the twenty-second Psalm, the experience with which from that moment the ancient words become redolent as they ascend to Him Who is throned above the praises of Israel, makes their citation on Calvary the supreme instance of 'The Psalms in Human Life'. Enriched as they have been with fresh associations of joy and sorrow in every age, it is the crowning triumph of this wonderful book that it was able to express Golgotha.

I. The Realism of Christ.—One thing at least which becomes at once apparent as Jesus uplifts this deep-throated chant upon the evening air is the intense realism of His nature. There is no dreamy idealism or sentimental mysticism in Him Who reigns from the Tree. He has all the living interest in sensation, in the actualities of experience, which marks the largest personalities. We see why it was that He refused the draught of medicated wine, which would have mitigated suffering and deadened pain. There awaited Him a fuller and more satisfying experience than the most crowded hour of glorious life, to see of the travail of His Soul, and to taste death. It is a mark of true nobility, befitting a Richard Grenville or a Robert Browning, to be ready to bear the brunt of the last conflict with unbandaged eyes. But what shall we say of a Spirit like that to which these great words bear witness, as He surveys the scene of His Crucifixion and the agony of His inward experience, nor fails to interpret either to the ear of succeeding generations? Jesus Christ is never more miraculously real than in the hour of death. He reigns because He lives. Every moment as it passes is real to Him. This is a necessary element in the highest type of influence. It is not only to the men of business, heaping up riches and therefore walking in a vain show, that the self-absorption, the other-worldliness, the unpractical quietism of the saints is an offence and a barrier. Natural instinct puts us on the side of Lippo Lippi. We feel that, if the world is to be redeemed, it must be first loved, realized, and, above all, seen. The taste of wine, the scent of roses, the bustle at the street corner, the play of facial expression, the children crying in the market-place—you, who would fain bear aid to the human race, will accomplish little if you do not appreciate these things. Fact must be a very sacred thing to you—something axiomatic, a postulate which must be conceded as the condition of your taking life seriously. Docetism leads nowhere. A phantom Christ cannot redeem. That, it may be said in passing, is the appropriate criticism of a theology which sits loosely to the empty tomb or the Virgin Birth.

View it how we will, there can be no doubt that it is not the thought but the Passion of Jesus that has moved the world. This wonderful capacity for experience, not the sweep of His intelligence, is the true warrant of His power to redeem. With Him there are no aristocratic exemptions. He belongs to the painful people. What He tholes is the measure of what He works. Christ with His touches of things common belongs entirely to the realm of reality. His reach extends to the whole gamut of human experience. He sees, He hears, He feels. So perfectly does He bear that, far from forgetting His sufferings, He can make them equally with the impressions of sight and sound the object of a contemplation unspoiled by self-pity. 'They pierced My hands and My feet; I may tell all My bones.' Is not this the plain inference from the words that rise to His lips when at last the time for utterance has come? He muses upon the Psalm, He cons it over, He fits its passages to the blood-red experience of the Tree; His thoughts are hot within Him till His meditations find a voice, and at the last He speaks with His tongue.

II. The Transcendence of Calvary.—It requires no doctrine of inspiration, no theory of the relation of prophecy to fulfilment, to see that when with loud voice Jesus cried, 'My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?' He proclaimed from the Cross, as from a universal pulpit, that Calvary is God's transcendent act, whereby He has taken to Himself the shame and sorrow of a guilty race, and out of failure has perfected praise. Never, while the world lasts, will the imagination of Christendom cease to dwell on the weird correspondence between the incidents of this marvellous Psalm and the successive episodes of the Passion. Never will the Christian believer cease to recognize the power and presence of that purposeful Spirit which reaches from one end to the other, guiding towards its appointed consummation

the progressive destiny of mankind. But it is the mind and will of Christ Himself that have given to the language of this ancient poet their true significance and undying power. From the day when the Crucified took these words upon His sacred lips they have become Christ's own commentary on the Cross. 'We behold Him, Who hath been made a little lower than the angels, even Jesus, because of the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour.' —J. G. Simpson, *The Guardian*, 25 February, 1910.

THE SAVIOUR'S QUESTION ON THE CROSS

(*For Good Friday*)

'My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken me.'—Matthew xxvii. 46.

We remember how our Blessed Saviour was withdrawn into a deep silence for some considerable time before He spoke these words. There is very much to be learned from the silence of Jesus Christ. It teaches us how we may most fittingly bear the chastisements of God.

Two things we notice about this mysterious cry of the stricken Saviour. First of all, that it is a question, the only question, which, so far as we are told, was ever uttered to the Father by His lips: 'My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?' And the Blessed Son of God seems to put Himself, as it were, with those holy men of old who at different times and stages of Israel's history pleaded with God concerning His judgments.

And yet, in the second place, how strange it is that to that question there is no reply, as if to teach us of the mystery of God's dealing with men. What an unspeakable mystery is the Atonement of Christ! We see enough to satisfy our reason to some extent; we see enough to reassure our aching heart, but we cannot fathom the mystery of what Jesus did upon the cross. Religion does not profess to give us cut and dried answers to every futile or unreasonable question that we may ask. All we know is, and that is quite enough for us, that he that followeth the Lord Jesus Christ shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life. And so I suppose in this utterance Jesus shows Himself the helper of the perplexed. Let us be sure that God's judgments are a great deep, that there is much which in this life at least we must be content not to know, and that our Blessed Lord passed victorious through the pain of perplexity and went forth into the light once more.

And one more thought is this—the thought of the faithfulness of our Creator. He does not say, 'My Father, My Father,' but 'My God, My God'. He appeals to God as a Creator. He commits His soul as to a faithful Creator, and He knows that He is safe. Though a man does not see what is the exact meaning, what is the end of the discipline through which he passes, he may commit himself to God with the faithful assurance that he will not be forsaken. for man is not alone in his search for truth. The truth is seeking him.

And so for our comfort in perplexity let us remember that the Blessed Saviour Himself has got a heart that can sympathize with the perplexed, and that He for Whom we seek here, and for Whom we wait, and for Whom we long, will manifest Himself, if not here, then beyond the veil, and in due season we who seek after Him shall find Him, and we shall reap if we faint not.

THE WORD OF AGONY

(*For Good Friday*)

'Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? . . . My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?'—Matthew xxvii. 46.

This I would term the Word of Agony. The word of Tender Care and the word of Agony come close together, but it is significant.

In the cry 'Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?' our Lord goes back to the Syriac, His old vernacular. You have heard people who are in a great agony going back to their old language: it often happens. So our Lord goes back to His old vernacular, and cries 'Eli, Eli, . . .' which being interpreted is, 'My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?'—the most mysterious of all the words. First of all, fancy His saying 'My God, My God!' Hitherto it has been 'My Father'. It is the cry which comes from His perfect human nature. It shows us that we must not confound our Lord's human nature with His Deity. We cannot understand these things: we cannot understand how He could 'increase in wisdom and stature' when He was the Eternal Son of God; but He did. We do not know why He cried 'My God, My God'; but He did; it was perfect human nature. It is the cry of agony. He was born with a perfect human nature that He might die a perfect human death. He was the Man Christ Jesus 'Who tasted death for every man'. But He was also God.

I. What made Him cry, then? Was it weakness? No. It could not be weakness, because afterwards He cried with a loud voice: He was not exhausted. Was it, do you think, that He had made a mistake and thought that God had forsaken Him? No. He could not make a mistake. He never made a mistake in His life, and not in His death. But had God forsaken Him? How could God forsake God? The only explanation that I can possibly give you is that He willed to feel forsaken that you and I might never be forsaken.

But, to be forsaken of God! We cannot get out of it, because it is so personal. 'My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?' If God forsook a sinner we could understand. But the Saviour! It was to teach us the lesson that 'the Lord hath laid upon Him the iniquity of us all'. As representing Sin, He had to go through the Passion of seeming forsaken. 'He became Sin' (hear the words of Scripture; I do not understand these things, but I believe and worship) 'Who knew no sin.' And why did He become Sin? For me. 'He loved Me, and gave Himself for me.'

II. There are times when you and I have come very

near to Atheism. When things have gone entirely wrong; when the nearest and dearest have been taken away from us; when all our hopes are shattered, we have said to ourselves, 'Well, I doubt really whether there be a God at all. At any rate, if there is one, He has forsaken me!' I do not say that you have passed, but I do say that you may pass, through this gloom. For during the Passion darkness came upon the land, and when you have your passion (it may be at midday or midnight, and though the sun be shining in the heaven yet it may be as dark around you as night) you may say, 'I am a God-forsaken man'. And He will be near you, I know, and forgive you and excuse you. And when, afterwards, the sun begins to shine upon your life again, and you are sorry you ever said or thought such a thing, you can say to Him, 'Thou, dear Saviour, didst say in thine Agony, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" I lie down under Thy cross, and hide myself in Thine Agony, and cover myself with Thy Blood of Redemption'.

'Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is to say, My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken Me?'—MATTHEW XXVII. 46.

SUCH words may not have been uttered, but such despair has been felt by preachers, reformers, and prophets of old time and of all time—by Job, David, and Isaiah; by John the Baptist, St. Francis, Savonarola, George Fox; by Tolstoy and Mazzini. *Lama Sabacthani* is often the last cry of men whose life seems to end in ignominious failure, but whose very groans have a vital force long after they are gone.—FREDERIC HARRISON.

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'Some of them when they heard that, said, This man calleth for Elias.'—MATTHEW XXVII. 47.

IN His work for man it is the constant fate of God to be misunderstood.—ROTHE.

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'As it began to dawn toward the first day of the week.'—MATTHEW XXVIII. 1.

DID you ever read Isaac Taylor's *Saturday Evening*? In 1842 B. Gregory introduced it to me. What it was all about I have forgotten, but not the deep tranquil impression made by it—

> Light
> Which broods above the sunken sun,
> And dwells in heaven half the night. . . .

Well, that was Isaac Taylor's Saturday evening, and this is mine; and for many years every Saturday evening I have felt just like that, 'In the beginning of the Sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week'.

My dawning is begun, like the Jews' dawning, the evening before . . . for the sense of benignity and regard, outgoing and unrestrained, is always very strong upon me, being like deep waters—a tidal sway of affection—'of pure affection round earth's human shores'; and it is one of the most delicious feelings on earth. As Saturday evening is to the coming Sabbath, so is this feeling to the coming heaven.—JAMES SMETHAM.

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SEEKING JESUS

'I know that ye seek Jesus.'—MATTHEW XXVIII. 5.

How much more do the angels know? If they know anything, they may know something more; they may be better acquainted with us than we suppose. We must be of interest to them because we are of interest to their God. The angels are inquirers, students; they desire to look into the meaning of the blood.

It is an angel who speaks in this most tender and imusical text. 'I know that ye seek Jesus.' This is in striking contrast to something that is also related nn the context—to the great earthquake. Man is eever so helpless as in an earthquake. God keeps the arthquake for special occasions. The sturdiest man amongst us withers away when he feels the earth rocking. The angel answered and said unto the women, 'It is different with you, you have no need to fear'—'for I know that ye seek Jesus,' and they who seek Jesus need never tremble; earthquake, or no earthquake, their sanctuary is safe.

I. The difference between the people who fear spiritual presences and the people who do not fear them and rather welcome them, is this: the one people seek the sepulchre, the other seek the Christ. There are many people who have no objection to the sepulchre, there are travellers who go long distances in order to see the sepulchre who would not move an inch to see the Saviour. Such men are lovers of form, special places, extraordinary ceremonies. To see the sepulchre is what they come for; they would be afraid if they saw Him who had lain in it but some three days ago.

II. 'Fear not,' though you are seeking Christ at the wrong place, as these women were. We must have greater sympathy with people who are trying by some stumbling way to get at the right end. We have been too severe with the stumblers. They are just as good souls as we are, they may even be nearer heaven than those whose Christianity is a mere correctness. Christianity is not an exercise in conventional correctness. Some poor honest souls are going to the wrong place, but they are going for the right thing; they are orthodox. He who seeks truth with an honest soul and a clean heart is orthodox, though he does not believe a word that I believe, in its merely alphabetical or controversial sense.

III. Our Christianity needs widening and deepening; we have all the earth part of it, but we want the firmament. No man was ever saved by correct notions. Man is more than a coat, man is more than a body. Man has a body, but he is a spirit. All this may be perverted by those who would pervert bread and water. We cannot always guard ourselves against the perverting spirit, it is a most mischievous and uncontrollable spirit; we must not therefore give way to those who would shut us up to our own little nutshell notions and say that there is nothing beyond. God has still more light, and we must find it, because to seek it is to obey an impulse Divine.

IV. Some seek Christ as an ideal. Ideal is the favourite word of the ecclesiastical hour; in fact, it is the idol-word of the political hour as well. Some seek Christ as an ideal, a novelty in poetry, a variety in intellectual life. Jesus Christ is enrolled and honoured and invited to a very high place in the pantheon, and He is told that this seat, this throne of ivory, is His own. He is regarded as an ideal. What did the angel say? He spoke other language, he spoke in accordance with tragic facts; the air was still hot with the terrible tragedy, and the angel caught its spirit and expressed it in a word. 'He said, 'I know ye seek Jesus'—yes, but what Jesus? the ideal, poetic, transcendental Jesus? No—'I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified'. That is His title; do not abbreviate it, do not corrupt it by excision; it will bleed to death if you do not give the full style, title, and address of the Son of God. 'Jesus, which was crucified'—the man in whose palms the nails were driven and on whose brow the thorns were enwreathed; I know the Christ you are seeking; you know Him by blood-marks. That is the Christ we have too much forgotten. We are admirers, but not believers. Drop your admiration, and get back to living faith in Him who was crucified. Crucifixion meant redemption. On the one side the crucifixion was a Jew's murder; on the other, a Divine expiation, a new illumination, of the will of God, a grand interpretation of the purpose of the creation of human nature.—Joseph Parker, *City Temple Pulpit*, vol. vi. p. 194.

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TWO ENVIRONMENTS

(*Preached on Easter Sunday Morning*)

'Jesus met them.'—Matthew xxviii. 9.

Jesus had a way of meeting people unexpectedly. He has never abandoned that significant and blessed way. Jesus waylays men; Jesus watches the travellers, counts their footfalls, observes the whole manifestation of their personality when they are in grief and wonder and tender communication one with another; and at the right moment, for Jesus keeps all the moments, He joins them, faces them, suddenly encounters them, and asks them delicate and feeling questions. The appearances of Jesus Christ would seem to be always sudden, though they have been expected for centuries; for they have been foretold by the most elaborate and dignified prophecy.

I. Shall we look at the environment of the Resurrection? What is that first object that you see? 'It is a garden; there is a tomb in it.' I do not speak of that, I reverse your sentence, retaining its history and enlarging its meaning. We could say moaningly

and fretfully, almost, indeed, atheistically, There was a tomb in the garden. That is poor talk. How can you improve it? Easily, by almost inverting it: there was a garden round the tomb. That is better, the Gospel gleams in that nobler talk. In my lowest moods, in my saddest depression, I see only the tomb, and after some spirit has talked with me for a moment I lose sight of the tomb in the broader, lovelier view of the garden. Let the athiest say there was a tomb in the garden; I pray my God to help me to say there was a garden around the tomb.

Is there anything in the environment of the resurrection to match the garden beauty and the garden fragrance? Yes. What is it? Morning: 'As it began to dawn'. It always begins to dawn when we are conscious of the presence and the blessing of the dear Lord. His coming means light, morning, something that has to grow, an increasing light, a gleam of the heavenly lightning that makes and seeks the eternal that it means. So far, then, the environment is right, garden and morning, how they match one another! what a duet is that! let them sing their music to the accompaniment of the spheres. Garden and morning—what next? What we call spring, April, the time when the green blade is coming up or the little flower has fought its way through the frost and snow. When Christ rises all things rise; when Jesus comes up from the tomb there is no tomb, He has left it; now there is nothing but vernal beauty, vernal music thrills the responding air. A lovely environment, garden, morning, spring—what more? Angels. A beautiful picture it is to see the angel of the Lord coming and thrusting back the little pebble that was rolled to the door of the tomb, and—oh the subtle irony! oh the holy contempt!—rolling back the stone and sitting on it! Marmion waved the fragment of his blade in sign of victory, a sign in its way and at the time pardonable, but there stands out one utterance and expression of victory grander than Marmion's waving of his blade. The angel of the Lord flicked away the stone with its red Roman seal, and having set it a few inches away sat upon it. It is then a right beautiful environment, and full of holy suggestion, and wet with a very gracious pathos, wet as with sacred tears, such as might have dropped from heaven. Garden, morning, spring, angels; that is resurrection, resurging, coming back to flood and throne and final diadem.

II. We do not see all the beauty of that environment until we contrast it with the environment of the birth. What do we see at the nativity of Christ? A manger, and no garden; night—'and there were shepherds keeping their flocks by night'. This Child is going to be born in the darkness, He may bring the light with Him, He has always done so, He will not fail at Bethlehem. A child always brings light with it; the darkness has notice to quit the moment the child cries. Manger, night, and what we call winter. We keep the Saviour's birthday when the snow is on the ground; the keener the frost, the more highly piled the snow, we say, This is true Christmas weather. Not resurrection weather; something has happened between the winter and the spring, something has taken place between the fall of that snow, the growing of that ice, and the breathing of that balmy breeze over Jerusalem. 'This same Jesus,' Jesus of the garden and the morning, of the spring and of the angels, was once the Jesus of the manger and the night and the winter.

III. Look at the spiritual and ideal significance of these two environments, and especially the environment of the resurrection. What is the meaning of all this? The meaning is poetry, ideality, higher consciousness, a continually self-refining spirituality, a continually shedding off of the old and the poor and the mean that belongs to our own nature, and a constant rising into the true manhood. I belong to an ancestry, quoth one, who shot king after king on field after field. And I, quoth another, have no blood records in my family—

> Higher far my proud pretensions rise,
> A child of parents passed into the skies.

And if you have the gracious soul, the beautiful spirit, the very soul of charity and helpfulness to others, that is fame. All else may be but infamy.—JOSEPH PARKER, *City Temple Pulpit*, vol. I. p. 142.

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'Then saith Jesus, go tell My brethren that they depart into Galilee.'—MATTHEW XXVIII. 10.

IN Thomas Boston's Memoirs for 9 December, 1710, the following entry occurs: 'This night I was in bad case. I find it is not easy for me to carry right, either with or without the cross. While I was walking up and down my closet in heaviness, my little daughter Jane, whom I had laid in bed, suddenly raising up herself said, She would tell me a note; and thus delivered herself: Mary Magdalen went to the sepulchre. She went back again with them to the sepulchre; but they would not believe that Christ was risen, till Mary Magdalen met Him; and He said to her, "Tell My brethren, they are My brethren yet". This she pronounced with a certain air of sweetness. It took me by the heart: "His brethren yet" (thought I); and may I think that Christ will own me as one of His brethren? It was to me as life from the dead.'

O INFINITE mercy! How dost Thou raise their titles with Thyself! At first they were Thy servants, then disciples; a little before Thy death, they were Thy friends; now, after Thy resurrection, they were Thy brethren. O mercy without measure, why wilt Thou, how canst Thou, O Saviour, call them brethren, whom in their last parting, Thou foundest fugitives? Did they not run from Thee? And yet Thou sayest, 'Go, tell My brethren!'—BISHOP HALL.

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OPTIMISM

'Go ye therefore, and make Christians of all nations.'—Matthew xxviii. 19.

I. Among the characteristics of Jesus' teaching which have passed into the higher consciousness of Christianity is an inextinguishable optimism. If He called apostles they were to disciple every creature, and if He died it was for a world. His generation might condemn Him, but they would see Him again on the clouds of heaven. He looks beyond His own land, and embraces a race in His plans.

1. This high spirit has passed into the soul of Christ's chief servants. The directors and pioneers, the martyrs and exemplars of our faith have no misgivings; the light of hope has ever been shining on their faces. They might be losing but their Commander was winning. The Cross might be surrounded with the smoke of battle, it was being carried forward to victory.

2. They were right in this conviction, but do not let us make any mistake about the nature of this triumph, else we shall be caught by delusions, and in the end be much discouraged. The kingdom of God will not come through organization but through inspiration. Its signs will not be the domination of a Church, but the regeneration of humanity.

II. Have there been no grounds for optimism? Has the splendid hope of Christ been falsified? One may complain that the centuries have gone slowly, and that the chariot of righteousness has dragged upon the road. But Christ has been coming and conquering. We are apt to be pessimists, not because the kingdom of God is halting, but because it has not raced, not because the Gospel has failed to build up native churches in the ends of the earth with their own forms, literature, martyrs, but because every man has not yet believed the joyful sound.

1. There are two grounds for the unbounded optimism of our faith, and the first is God. How did such ideas come into the human mind? Where did the imagination of the Prophets and Apostles catch fire, where is the spring of the prayers and aspirations of the saints? Whence do all light and love come? Surely from God.

2. The other ground for optimism is Jesus Christ. Does it seem that the perfect life for the individual and for the race is too sublime: that it is a distant and unattainable ideal? Christ lived as He taught. He bade men lose their lives and He lost His; He bade men trample the world under foot, and He trampled it; He commanded men to love, and He loved unto death. This He did as the forerunner of the race. Why not again with Christ as Captain?

Only one institution in human society carries the dew of its youth; and through the conflict of the centuries still chants its morning song. It is the religion of Jesus.—J. Watson (Ian Maclaren), *The Inspiration of Our Faith*, p. 37.

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THE AUTHORITY OF THE KING

'Go ye therefore, and disciple the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you: and, lo, I am with you all the days, even unto the consummation of the age.'—Matthew xxviii. 19, 20.

I. Consider first, the deposit of the Church. The one truth emphasized in this phase of the Missionary Manifesto is that of the absolute authority of Christ; His supremacy and sovereignty; the fact that He shares the throne of empire with none. The word here translated 'authority' does not suggest power in the sense of energy or might. The first intention of the word is that of the power of choice—that is, the right to choose. Its second intention is that of the power of enforcement—that is, the right to insist upon obedience. The third intention is that of the power of government—that is, the right to utter the final verdict and to pass sentence.

Human choice must always be made in submission to a higher will, therefore it can never be said that man can have an absolute right and power of choice. Authority in the last analysis is the right to determine, enforce, and pass sentence.

In these words Jesus, standing on the resurrection side of His grave, in the simplest language made the sublimest claim, when He thus declared Himself to be King by Divine right, and therefore absolute in His Kingship. The word admits of no qualification. The claim admits of no limitation. In that moment

He claimed authority in the material, mental, and moral realms.

The application of His claim to this world does by no means exhaust it. He swept the compass with a reach far wider, more spacious, and stupendous. Not only on earth, but in heaven is authority given to Him. The one phrase, 'in heaven and on earth,' includes the whole creation of God. It is manifest that He is excluded Who created, and Who puts all things under the feet of His King. It is equally manifest that all is included which comes within the scope of that comprehensive word, the creation of God. We may interpret this final claim of Jesus by the prayer He taught His disciples: 'Our Father Who art in the heavens. Hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in heaven, so on earth.' His ministry of teaching having been completed, having accomplished His exodus and resurrection, at last He claimed authority in heaven and on earth, thus assuming the throne of empire over the whole creation of God, included in the terms of the prayer, and now defined in the words, 'in heaven and on earth'.

II. The debt? It is clearly indicated as to its widest scope in the words 'disciple the nations'. The Church's responsibility as indicated by these words is that of the proclamation of the Lordship of Christ, the insistence upon the supremacy of his ethic in every nation, among all peoples. His messengers are charged to proclaim the fact of His Lordship, to announce to men everywhere that He is king. They are to pass through all nations proclaiming Him King upon the basis of His resurrection, and all that it involves. This means therefore, that the Church is to proclaim and insist upon His ethical standards; that His ideal of intellectual greatness is the knowledge of God; that His ideal of emotional function is to love God and our neighbour; that His ideal of volitional fulfilment is to seek first the kingdom of God.

III. Finally, a brief word concerning the dynamic. If the Church is to fulfil this great responsibility, she must enter into the full meaning of the final words of the Lord: 'Lo, I am with you all the days, even unto the consummation of the age'. We must understand the meaning of the phrase 'end of the world'. Too often we think of it as some catastrophe or destruction of the earth. That is not the meaning of the words of which the Lord made use. The superior translation is undoubtedly 'consummation of the age'. The earth will continue long after the completion of this age. The promise is that of the abiding presence of the King through the present age. It is impossible to preach His Lordship prevailingly, save in living fellowship with Himself. We may discuss it and demonstrate it intellectually, but the demonstration will lack compelling power, save as the truth is proclaimed in living, personal comradeship with Him. In his phrase 'all the days,' is inferred mastery of circumstances, the inference vindicated, as we have seen, by His resurrection. The One Who through defeat proceeded to absolute victory accompanies His people, as in obedience to His command they go forth to proclaim His Kingship.

In the words already dealt with, 'the consummation of the age,' His ultimate victory is implied. There was no fear of failure in the heart of the King. The age initiated by His first advent will be consummated at His second; and through all the toil He abides with His people, leading them in perpetual triumph as they abide in fellowship with Him.—G. Campbell Morgan, *The Missionary Manifesto*, p. 27.

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'Go . . . and, lo, I am with you.'—Matthew xxviii. 19, 20.

This idea, that the sense of Christ's presence is vouchsafed to obedience and service, is illustrated by Mr. Hutton's well-known phrase about 'the sacramental power of common everyday duty'.

'No one who does not go away, leaving all and going alone,' said Gilmour of Mongolia as he sailed from England, 'can feel the force of this promise; and when I begin to feel my heart threatening to go down, I betake myself to this companionship, and, thank God, I have felt the blessedness of this promise rushing over me repeatedly when I knelt down and spoke to Jesus as a present companion from whom I am sure to find sympathy.'

References.—XXVIII. 19, 20.—F. D. Maurice, *Lincoln's Inn Sermons*, vol. iv. p. 29; see also *Sermons*, p. 33.

THE ABIDING PRESENCE

'Lo, I am with you alway.'—Matthew xxviii. 20.

I. Such is the promise of the Lord Christ. It is exactly like Himself. It is like Him, first, because of its sublime, unhesitating self-assertion. He speaks and acts always as with an absolute certainty that to the salvation of the world, and of the soul, to the whole depth and range of human need—its sin and its sorrow, its perplexity, its death—He is necessary and He is adequate. Listen to this imperial Prince and Leader, who is so absolutely sure of Himself, and then, with hearts open and unreserving, make sure for yourselves of Him. The human soul that has

come to know itself, its sin, its wants, its hunger and thirst, its true ideal, and then comes to look with worshipping desire towards Christ, finds Christ, in self-evidencing justness, the key to fit its lock, and thus *knows* Him with a knowledge as unshakable as our certainty of ourselves. And to know Him, what is it in its issues? It is the life eternal. It is heaven poured out into the necessities of time.

II. Further, these words of our Lord are just like Him because what they promise is His personal presence with His followers. And this is just like the Lord Jesus Christ, because at every turn in the Gospel story you see Him as the leader who not only leads but also positively delights in the company of His followers. He *haunts* them through the Forty Days, week after week, in His new and wonderful life, till at last He ascends indeed out of their sight, but with a final positive promise to return in visible glory, and undertaking meanwhile to be with them all the days and all day long, in a mysterious unseen companionship, as intimate as possible, even to the end.

Such is the heart of our Lord Jesus Christ towards us. We are entirely unworthy of Him; we are ignorant, we are far more sinful than we know, we are indeed a contrast to His pure glory. Yet such is His heart. 'His delights are with the sons of men.' As Creator of our nature, as Redeemer of our souls, He takes pleasure in us. There is no surer index of a perfect affection than the desire and purpose of perpetual company. And He says, 'I am with you, all the days and all day long'.

III. The Christian life—what is it at its heart? It is to know that we belong to the Christ of God, and to live that condition out.

How shall it be lived? Who is sufficient for such a life? The answer, as I take it, is given us here, direct and clear: He is sufficient, be he man or boy, who uses his Lord as a living Presence all the days and all day long.—H. C. G. Moule, *Christ's Witness to the Life to Come*, p. 135.

THE REAL PRESENCE

I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.'—Matthew xxviii. 20.

Jesus is here! If we could repeat these words with the reverent simplicity of little children, a new power of believing prayer would be kindled in the heart of the Church of England.

I. We modern Christians explain the promise of the abiding presence of Jesus as a theological influence. The first disciples accepted it as a concrete fact, verified from day to day in a rich and living experience.

II. Now it is just when we look at the life of the early Church that we see how simple was their belief in the real presence of their Lord. It was because they believed that Jesus was really with them still, that the brotherhood of which they were members became the home and temple of His Spirit, that the sacraments whereby it was welded into one were a ministration of the life and powers of the world to come. Jesus was there—not merely the Spirit manifested through Him, but the very Lord who showed them His hands and His side. Jesus was there in the midst of the Church, guiding, controlling, inspiring, choosing His ministers, comforting His saints, receiving His martyrs.

This was the secret of the grand and simple faith of the early Christians. To them Jesus was no sentimental idea, no romantic abstraction of the mind which a warm and ardent fancy clothed with the attributes of a tender personality.

III. What a majestic faith is here! It is the faith of children. But alas! our lot has fallen upon other days. We falter where they firmly trod. And yet no other faith is Christian. It is what the Church needs to-day, the sure and certain conviction that Jesus is Himself here, that Christ is with us always even to the end of the days.—J. G. Simpson, *Christian Ideals*, p. 309.

THE PRESENCE THAT NEVER FAILETH

(*Whitsunday*)

'And, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.—Matthew xxviii. 20.

It was the last promise that He gave to His disciples. And now we read them as the Saviour's legacy to the Church. For these words are unlimited in their application. Lo, I am with you alway, even to the end of the ages, even to the final consummation, when His purpose will be completed and the work of the Church done.

I. This is substantially the truth which is brought before our minds to-day, the truth which Whitsuntide recalls and emphasizes. The one Divine fact which underlies all the rest is this: that Christ on that day began to fulfil and prove His last promise. All that they saw and felt on that day and every day afterwards were manifestations of His presence. He *had come* again; He was in their midst; His spirit was in contact with theirs; His power rested upon them; He swayed them, in fact, more mightily than ever He had done during His life. Aforetime He had been outside their lives, a face to behold, a voice to hear, a master to follow. Now He was even nearer, He was within them; they were the temple in which He dwelt; He had become a part of their very nature, and in all they said and did they felt the movements of His spirit, and laboured and suffered with a power greater and Diviner than their own.

II. This is the greatest of Christian facts. It is the truth which gives our faith all its substance and certainty and which inspires the believing heart with all its confidence and hopefulness. That which makes the Christian life is an undoubting belief in a present living mightily working Christ. His ministry was not for three years, but for all the ages.

III. His unseen presence and power make the perpetual miracle of Church history and Christian life. It is a strange thing that since He vanished from the view of the disciples He has never been seen again

by mortal eyes, never again, save by one man—Paul. But there is a far stranger thing than that. It is an infinitely more wonderful thing that He has done all His most wonderful works among men since His visible presence was taken away, and without showing Himself at all. Millions of men and women in every period of Christian history have been more moved and inspired by the unseen Christ than the most devoted of His disciples were moved and inspired by the sight of His bodily form. He is to the moral world what the vital forces are in the natural world. No one can see those vital forces or explain how they work. We can only see the results. They clothe the landscape with verdure, they cover the hedges with blossoms, they change ugliness into beauty, and waste places into gardens of delight. And thus the unseen Christ works in the moral world. Everywhere moral life springs into beauty where His visible hand has been.—J. G. Greenhough, *Christian Festivals and Anniversaries*, p. 123.

THE ABIDING PRESENCE

(*Ascension Day*)

'And, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen.'—Matthew xxviii. 20.

To none whom we have known was it ever given to say, 'I am with you alway'. And one intention of their going, and of our going presently, is to make us turn from all that is dying and changing, to Him to Whom alone it belongs to say, 'Lo, I am with you alway'.

The contrasts of this world are essential to the setting forth of the eternity of the Resurrection-life of Christ, and the value of His abiding presence.

I. He spake these words after He had Himself passed through death, after He had proved and tasted the bitterness of separation.

What joy to hear the voice of some lost dear one at our side once more, saying, 'I left you for a little while; it was needful that I should go; but now I am back again, to stay with you for ever!' Listen, then, to Him Whose love surpasseth every love: 'I am He that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore'. 'Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen.'

But some man will say, 'Oh! that that presence were but visible! I cannot realize, or enjoy, an invisible presence.'

Certainly. It does require strong exercise of faith; that other sense added to the natural faculties—a gift of God—to be prayed for and cherished. But that invisible presence once apprehended, it is more real, more precious, than a visible. For a visible must come and go, as Christ did in the flesh. We could not have it always; it is not in the compass of our present nature. But now, always and everywhere, we carry it along with us without the possibility of interruption, without the shadow of a change, because it is invisible: 'Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world'.

After our Lord's Resurrection He never once showed Himself, or uttered a single word, to unbelievers; all that He said and did was for believers only. To His own people alone Christ spake during those forty days, and His last and best words were, 'Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world'.

II. But observe the full meaning of the words more literally rendered. 'Lo, I am with you all the days, until the consummation of the age.'

What force and beauty there is in those words, 'all the days'. They convey, before the mind of the Speaker, that 'all the days' lay ranged in order, to the end of time. To Him they were altogether but so many 'days'; and yet each 'day' was distinct and separate, with its own proper history, in His sight. And all along that line of 'days,' and around the 'days' of our fathers' lifetime and our own, and our children, and children's children, on each and on all the 'days' He saw the Changeless Presence in the midst of the changeable and changing—that constant, lasting presence. 'Lo, I am with you all the days, unto the end of the world' (or, the consummation of the age). 'Amen.' We are always stepping out into an unknown future; but the foot cannot fall outside the presence of Jesus.

III. As to the method and nature of that presence, it were better to leave it, as if some dear dying friend had said, in his last moments, 'I shall never be far from you: though you see me not, I shall be about your path and about your bed; and not a single day or night shall pass but I shall be with you there'. So simply did my Saviour say it, and so simply would I take His words.

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ST. MARK

ST. MARK

'The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ.'—Mark i. 1.

A great epoch was exhausted, and passing away to give place to another, the first utterances of which had already been heard in the north, and which awaited but the *Initiator*, to be revealed.

He came. The soul the most full of love, the most sacredly virtuous, the most deeply inspired by God and the future, that men have yet seen on earth—Jesus. He bent over the corpse of the dead world, and whispered a word of faith. Over the clay that had lost all of man but the movement and the form, He uttered words until then unknown: *Love, Sacrifice, a heavenly origin.* And the dead arose, a new life circulated through the clay, which philosophy had tried in vain to reanimate. From that corpse arose the Christian world, the world of liberty and equality. From that clay arose the true Man, the image of God, the precursor of humanity.

Christ expired. All He had asked of mankind was wherewith to save them—says Lamennais—was a cross whereon to die. But ere He died, He had announced the *glad tidings* to the people. To those who asked of Him from whence He had received it, He answered, from God the Father. From the height of His cross He had invoked Him twice. Therefore upon the cross did His victory begin, and still does it endure.—Mazzini, *Faith and the Future.*

References.—I. 1.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—St. Mark I.-VIII.* p. 1. Archbishop Alexander, *The Leading Ideas of the Gospels*, p. 36. J. Addison Alexander, *The Gospel of Jesus Christ*, p. 7. G. Campbell Morgan, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxv. 1904, p. 371. H. Scott Holland, *ibid.* vol. lxxvii. p. 17. I. 1-11.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—St. Mark I.-VIII.* p. 13. I. 1-13.—W. H. Bennett, *The Life of Christ According to St. Mark*, p. 1. I. 8.—R. Glover, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. liv. 1898, p. 139. I. 9.—T. Vincent Tymms, *ibid.* vol. lxviii. 1905, p. 149.

TEMPTATIONS OF THE SPIRIT

'And straightway coming up out of the water, He saw the heavens opened, and the Spirit like a dove descending upon Him. And there came a voice from heaven, saying, Thou art My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased. And immediately the Spirit driveth Him into the wilderness.'—Mark i. 10-12.

People actually wonder how Jesus Christ, if He were what we believe Him to have been, could possibly be subject to temptation. They talk as if the Divine Sonship would make everything easy, and would render impossible the strain and anxiety which are the notes of our real humanity. The Sonship creates the conditions of temptation.

What have we to do, we may ask, with temptation such as His? We have to do with it just so far as we are religious and spiritual persons, and no farther.

I. We all, for instance, if we have made the slightest effort to be religious, know that swift, secret, sinister appearance of egotism inside our religion, which was the note of our Lord's first temptation. He was tempted to let His spiritual force be turned aside from His dedication to God in order to play round His own self-consciousness, and satisfy His wants, and increase His own self-importance. If He is Son of God, why not feed Himself? 'Self,' it is always self. Self whispering to us out of our prayers, in our sacraments, through our best intentions, in our very efforts, perhaps, of watching and praying and fasting.

We are so full of spiritual concerns, and yet, are we all the time doing anything else but turning stones into bread, feeding our own satisfactions?

II. And then, our vanity, our silliness. Religious people are so silly. Our unreality, our insincerity! We are always tossing ourselves off some pinnacle of the temple, in freaks of impulse, weak loss of control, in insolent desire to surprise, in stupid disregard of real, honest, working facts.

III. The terrible third temptation haunts the very best, with its readiness to make use of doubtful and dangerous means in order to secure a good end. The better the end, the sharper the temptation. And if the end be God's kingdom on earth, the temptation is at its strongest. For the end is so high that it seems to justify almost anything.

Do such faults as these seem small and unimportant infirmities to us? Yet, it was in this type of sin that our Lord detected the heart of evil.

When at any time you find yourself tempted to think these swerves of the will to be slight and unimportant, remember that lone Figure in the wilderness with the wild beasts, warring hard against the pressure of evil until He is faint and hungry.—H. Scott Holland, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxxiii. p. 72.

References.—I. 11, 12.—W. Morrison, *Passio Christi*, p. 40. I. 11-13.—J. Martineau, *Hours of Thought*, vol. ii. p. 33. I. 12.—G. Matheson, *Voices of the Spirit*, p. 97.

CHRIST WITH THE WILD BEASTS

'And He was with the wild beasts.'—Mark i. 13.

This was the sudden perception of a soul in stress of conflict. Relaxing one moment from its tense agony, it saw gathered round the wild beasts of the desert. It remembered them in its after-thoughts on the deadly struggle with more terrible foes.

I. Can we recall experiences like this in our own life battle? At night, in a great suspense, when the soul is sick, blind, helpless, and the forces of being are warring with one another, there has come a momentary change of mood. The carving of some picture-frame, a face hung on the wall, the blazonry on some book, the chance phrase on an open page—trifles like these fasten themselves on our minds. We turn dully from them, but the impression is ineffaceable. Even when the memory of the trial grows dim, it is they that keep it living.

Or we have sought under a sudden blow to escape from 'the world's grey soul to the green world'. On the hill-side or the moor we have sat with bowed heads and downcast eyes. It seemed as if we had outlived all loves, buried all hopes. Yet through some chink the flower at our feet enters into the heart, mingles with our thought, and strangely belies our misery. The cup passes from us, and again, again we live. These hours change us, but their memory clings round that single thing: the flower which we never see without the whole sorrow and relief returning.

II. There must be more in the words than this. Was not the presence of the wild beasts an element in our Lord's temptation?

Did He not see in their eyes an appeal from their misery? Was He not quick to behold the earnest expectation of the creatures waiting for the manifestation of the Son of God? Did He not long for the day which Esaias saw in vision, when the wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid, when the lion shall eat straw like the ox, and the sucking-child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child put his hand on the basilisk's den, and they shall not hurt nor destroy in all God's holy mountain,—that day when the knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth as the waters cover the sea? We cannot tell; but surely the wild beasts were to Him as they will be to all in the regeneration. Even yet some men exercise strange powers over them; and when He, the creating Word, the second Adam, the Lord from heaven, beheld them in His dumb agony, did they not cease one moment to groan and travail, as if they saw their hope in His grief?

III. For 'all creatures can be tamed'. The beasts share in our punishment, but not in our guilt. *They* can be won, but man resists. His heart is evil, restless, full of deadly poison. It was to win and purge that heart the Son of God descended, and the arch-temptation was to gain this victory by a shorter and swifter way than the dolorous path. 'All the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them,' if He had these (so the whisper ran), deliverance would come sooner. These mute appeals, these lowly claims of the wild beasts reinforced the Tempter. But He drove the temptation from Him. The kingdom of glory could not be hastened so. The good day would come in God's time and in God's way; the reign of evil would be undone. So, in compassion for all His travailing creation, His soul went on to travail. —W. Robertson Nicoll, *Ten Minute Sermons*, p. 65.

References.—I. 13.—H. Rose Rae, *Christian World Pulpit* vol. xliii. 1893, p. 69. F. R. Brunskill, *ibid.* vol. lxix. 1906, p. 139. J. Farquhar, *The Schools and Schoolmasters of Christ*, p. 115. A. Morris Stewart, *The Temptation of Jesus*, p. 16. I. 14.—A. M. Fairbairn, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xlvii. 1895, p. 305. L. D. Bevan, *ibid.* vol. lxxi. 1907, p. 348. R. W. Church, *Advent Sermons*, 1885, pp. 29, 53. I. 14, 15.—J. Foxley, *People, Places, and Peoples in Relation to the Kingdom of Christ*, p. 24. W. J. Knox-Little, *The Light of Life*, p. 65. I. 14; III. 9.—W. H. Bennett, *The Life of Christ According to St. Mark*, p. 11. I. 14-35.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. lii. No. 2980. I. 15.—D. Brook, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lx. 1901, p. 121. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. viii. No. 460.

'And Jesus said unto them, Come ye after Me, and I will make you fishers of men.'—Mark i. 17 f.

We will not stand motionless like veiled statues on the shore of the torrent which threatens the foundations of the temple, detaching the stones one by one, and hurling them confusedly among the ruins of things doomed to pass away—the hut of the peasant, the palace of the noble, and the throne of the king! Let all who have the things of eternity at heart arise with us! Let all who love God and man with all their heart and soul, and count all else as naught, join their voices and their hearts to ours. Why disturb ourselves if many refuse to unite in action with us? Shall we consume the energy of our hearts in idle tears for this? Faith demands action, not tears; it demands of us the power of sacrifice—sole origin of our salvation; it seeks Christians capable of looking down upon the world from on high, and facing its fatigues without fear; Christians capable of saying, *We will die for this;* above all, Christians capable of saying, *We will live for this.*—Lamennais, *Affaires de Rome.*

References.—I. 16-21.—J. H. Rigg, *Scenes and Studies in the Ministry of Our Lord*, p. 43.

FISHERS OF MEN

'Come ye after Me, and I will make you to become fishers of men.'—Mark i. 17.

It is service, not status, that distinguishes one disciple from another.

I. The Maker of the Workers.—The maker of the workers is the Lord. 'I will make you to become fishers of men'; a living Christianity is one that is dealing with a living Christ. It is in touch with an unseen personality, who is moulding natures, through whom the mind and heart of God bear upon us. We cannot make Christians, Christ does it; and we cannot make fishers of men, Christ does it; and we cannot make successful workers, Christ does it.

The one thing Christ prescribes is companionship with Himself: 'Come ye after Me'. 'He chose twelve that they might be with Him.' Is there any preparation different from the following of Christ here? Is not the following itself the preparation Christ points to? The conditions of successful service are inseparable from the work of preparation wrought by Christ upon us.

II. Following Christ.—Inquiry into the conditions of successful Christian work resolves itself in effect into asking what following Christ means.

It begins in contact. Salvation is effected now as it was in the days of Christ's flesh by the touching of two natures. As many as touch Him are made perfectly whole. Consciousness of His healing presence is the note of all effectual saving work still.

III. Christ's Work Through us.—He becomes to us the Way and Life. Enfranchized we can preach liberty; seeing Jesus we can point men to Him. Religion is not a devout retrospect. It is following the Christ of the Spirit. Our service becomes no longer a series of isolated activities. It is an outflow from a controlled personality.

Following Christ must mean as much as this: communion with His intensity of soul. It means the incoming upon the life of a Christian of a new passion for service. It means an overwhelming sense of the value of spiritual redemption. It means the life, because of this, set and kept loose to the things of time.

This following of Christ that is to qualify for gaining men for God will mean fellowship in the pain inseparable from the work of human saviourhood. For the task is very great and difficult—to change character. It is perfectly easy to understand what is meant by the demand for unselfishness which reforms require, and quite impossible without the regeneration of the Holy Ghost to fulfil it.—J. T. Forbes, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxxii. 1907, p. 251.

References.—I. 17.—C. S. Robinson, *Simon Peter*, p. 161. I. 21-28.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxx. No. 1765. W. M. Taylor, *The Miracles of Our Saviour*, p. 73. John Laidlaw, *The Miracles of Our Lord*, p. 146. I. 21-34.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—St. Mark I.-VIII.* p. 22.

'He taught . . . not as the scribes.'—Mark i. 22.

The man on whom the soul descends, through whom the soul speaks, alone can teach. Courage, piety, love, wisdom can teach; every man can open his door to these angels, and they shall bring him the gift of tongues. But the man who aims to speak as books enable, as synods use, as the fashion guides, and as interest commands, babbles. Let him hush.—Emerson.

See Clough's lines on 'What went ye out for to see?'

References.—I. 22.—S. D. McConnell, *A Year's Sermons*, p. 104. William Knight, *The Dundee Pulpit*, 1872, p. 145.

THE PLEA OF EVIL

'And there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit; and he cried out, saying, Let us alone.'—Mark i. 23, 24.

I. We consider, first, *the plea of evil.* 'Let us alone.' This is the standing plea of evil; it demands that it shall not be meddled with, that no effort shall be made to restrict or dispossess it.

1. It is the plea of *personal* evil. The poor demoniac treated his Saviour as if He had been his tormentor, and in all generations those who are possessed by the spirit of evil resent criticism and interference; they demand toleration and immunity.

And this is the attitude of evil when we come to deal with it in our own heart; confronted by good, it boldly claims right and privilege.

2. It is the plea of *public* evil. The moment reformers attempt to deal with any social wrong, any pernicious institution, or custom, or trade, or law, they are challenged after this fashion. It is so when idolatry is attacked.

And when evil dare not claim absolute immunity, it pleads for toleration and delay.

II. Note *some characteristics of the plea of evil.*

1. The plea is *specious.* The demoniac regarded Christ as an enemy; and so to-day, when Christ comes to save men from their sins, they commonly regard His intervention as an attack on their interests, pleasures, liberty, progress. 'Art Thou come to destroy us?' So blinded are the minds of them that believe not, that they regard an attack on the devil's kingdom as an invasion of their own rights, a confiscation of their own riches.

2. This plea is *impudent.* At the first glance it seems modest, almost pathetic. 'Let us alone.' Can anyone ask for less? Nevertheless, the claim is impudent. When men ask to be let alone in any place, in any course, it is presumed that they have some right to be where they are, to do what they seek to do. Observe these two things:—

First, this world is not the devil's world. It is God's world, and goodness, holiness, beauty, felicity, have no need to apologize for their presence in it.

Secondly, in the development of this world the devil plays no essential part. The Master acknowledged no sort of partnership with these spirits of the night. They claimed no partnership with Him. 'What have we to do with Thee, Thou Jesus of Nazareth?' They had nothing to do with Him. He had nothing to do with them. The disavowal of complicity was distinct and emphatic on both sides. Christ never recognized any necessity for evil in His own personal development.

3. The plea is *cruel.* Under all its speciousness sin is awfully cruel, and to let it alone involves men and nations in the deepest guilt and misery.

III. We contemplate *Christ's rejection of the plea of evil.* Christ always speaks of evil with severe revealing simplicity.

1. We learn *that evil is to be cast out of humanity.* Evil may cry out with a loud voice; it may rage and threaten and tear; but it must go when we cast ourselves at the Redeemer's feet. And in the same almighty grace it shall be expelled from society.

2. We learn *that evil is to be wholly cast out.* The simple, radical, decisive manner in which Christ rejects the plea of evil is full of instruction. Christ did not restrain the infernal power, the evil spirits were to go out; judgment was not deferred, they were to go out at once; the expulsion was total, they were all to go—not one left of all the legion, not a little one.

There is not the most distant suspicion of compromise in Christ's treatment of evil.

3. We learn *that evil is cast out in Christ.* Christ set Himself against the demoniac power, and proved Himself its master. However men may explain it, the only force in the world that is really wrestling with and casting out the fierce, deep, chronic wickedness of the human heart is the truth and love that are in Christ Jesus.—W. L. Watkinson, *The Transfigured Sackcloth*, p. 90.

References.—I. 23-25.—C. Brown, *God and Man*, p. 174; see also *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxvii. 1905, p. 70. I. 23-26.—Archbishop Trench, *Notes on the Miracles of Our Lord*, p. 191. I. 24.—H. J. Wilmot-Buxton, *Sunday Sermonettes for a Year*, p. 214. I. 27.—C. E. Jefferson, *The Character of Jesus*, p. 43. I. 29-31.—W. M. Taylor, *The Miracles of Our Saviour*, p. 86. Archbishop Trench, *Notes on the Miracles of Our Lord*, p. 194. I. 29-33.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxi. No. 1236. I. 29-34.—J. Laidlaw, *The Miracles of Our Lord*, p. 156.

'Now Simon's wife's mother lay sick of a fever; and straightway they tell Him of her.'—Mark i. 30, 31.

Among the four Gospels that of St. Mark became my favourite, from the sudden, direct manner in which it at once brings Christ into contact with a suffering world.—Dora Greenwell, *Colloquia Crucis*, p. 23.

References.—I. 30, 31.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—St. Mark I.-VIII.* p. 32. B. D. Johns, *Pulpit Notes*, p. 49. I. 31.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. lii. No. 2980. I. 32, 33.—W. M. Taylor, *The Miracles of Our Saviour*, p. 98.

'And He healed many that were sick.'—Mark i. 34.

In his last sermon Henri Perreyve spoke thus of Christianity as a social power: 'Let us beware,' he cried, 'of being mere humanitarians, who, losing sight of the soul, aim at naught save material progress. The inefficiency of all such blind benefactors of mankind is too notorious to need demonstration. But, on the other hand, let us beware of that subtle refinement which affects to ignore all save that which is spiritual, and which disdains to care for the physical sufferings of our brethren. Such was not the mind of Christ. Wheresoever Jesus met with human suffering, He paused to give it a heedful pity. . . . Do not aim at being more loosed from earthly ties, more spiritual than the son of God. In this day it seems to me that no intelligent, independent Christian man should suffer himself to be outstripped in the study and practical application of the social sciences. The Christian should not tolerate that the world be better able to deal than ourselves with those great questions which are so powerfully, so inevitably at work amongst us, questions which the Gospel alone has called forth; I mean such as pauperism, labour, family ties, refuges, and asylums, the labour of women and children.'

'He departed into a desert place, and there prayed.'—Mark i. 35.

Go, cherish your soul; expel companions; set your habits to a life of solitude; there will the faculties rise fair and full within, like forest trees and field flowers; you will have results which, when you meet your fellow-men, you can communicate, and they will gladly receive.—Emerson.

He who has the fountain of prayer in him will not complain of hazards. Prayer is the recognition of laws; the soul's exercise and source of strength; its thread of conjunction with them.—George Meredith.

References.—I. 35.—W. H. Murray, *The Fruits of the Spirit*, p. 408. Bishop Percival, *Sermons at Rugby*, p. 64. I. 35-39.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxx. No. 1769. I. 37.—W. L. Watkinson, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xlii. 1892, p. 405. I. 39.—A. B. Bruce, *ibid.* vol. xlix. 1896, p. 172.

A PARABLE IN A MIRACLE

'And there came a leper to Him, beseeching Him, and kneeling down to Him, and saying unto Him, If Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean. And Jesus, moved with compassion, put forth His hand, and touched him, and saith unto him: I will; be thou clean. And as soon as He had spoken, immediately the leprosy departed from him, and he was cleansed.'—Mark i. 40-42.

The parabolic aspect of the miracle is obvious in the case before us. It was taken as an emblem of sin.

I. Notice the Leper's Cry.—Mark's vivid narrative shows him to us flinging himself down before the Lord, and, without waiting for question or pause, interrupting whatever was going on with his piteous cry. Misery and wretchedness make short work of conventional politeness.

1. Note the keen sense of *misery* that impels to the passionate desire for relief. The parallel fails us there. The emblem is all-sufficient, for here is the very misery of our deepest misery, that we are unconscious of it, and sometimes even come to love it.

2. Note this man's *confidence* in Christ's power: 'Thou canst make me clean'.

Sin dominates men by two opposite lies. The lie that we are pure is the first; the lie that we are too black to be purified is the second. Christ's blood atones for all past sin, and has power to bring forgiveness to every one.

3. Note the leper's *hesitation.* 'If Thou wilt.' He had no right to presume on Christ's goodwill. But his hesitation is quite as much entreaty as hesitation. He, as it were, throws the responsibility for his health or disease upon Christ's shoulders, and thereby makes the strongest appeal to that loving heart.

We stand on another level. The leper's hesitation is our certainty. We know that if any men are not healed, it is not because Christ will not, but because they will not.

II. Notice the Lord's Answer.—'Jesus, *moved with compassion*'—a clause which occurs only in Mark's account—'put forth His hand and touched him, and said, I will; be thou clean.'

Note three things—the compassion, the touch, the word.

1. It is a true revelation of the heart of Jesus Christ. Simple pity is its very core. Nor let us forget that it is this swift shoot of pity which underlies all that follows—the touch, the word, and the cure. Christ does not wait to be moved by the prayers that

come from those leprous lips, but He is moved by the leprous lips themselves.

2. The Lord's touch. With swift obedience to the impulse of His pity, Christ thrusts forth His hand and touches the leper. Our Lord thereby does one of two things—either He asserts His authority as overriding that of Moses and all his regulations, or He asserts His sacerdotal character. Either way there is a great claim in the act.

Further, we may take that touch of Christ's as being a parable of His whole work. His touch of the leper symbolizes His identifying of Himself with mankind, the foulest and the most degraded, and in this connexion there is a profound meaning in one of the ordinarily trivial legends of the Rabbis, who, founding upon a word of the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah, tell us that when Messias comes He will be found sitting amongst the lepers at the gate of the city.

3. Note the Lord's word, 'I will; be thou clean'. If His word can tell as a force on material things, what is the conclusion? He who 'speaks and it is done' is Almighty and Divine.

III. Note the Immediate Cure.—Mark tells, with his favourite word, 'straightway,' how as soon as Christ had spoken, the leprosy departed from him. And to turn from the symbol to the fact, the same sudden and complete cleansing is possible for us.—A. Maclaren, *The Unchanging Christ*, p. 291.

References.—I. 40-42.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—St. Mark I.-VIII.* p. 39. S. Cox, *Expositions*, p. 119. I. 40-45.—W. M. Taylor, *The Miracles of Our Saviour*, p. 110. Archbishop Trench, *Notes on the Miracles of Our Lord*, p. 175. I. 41.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—St. Mark I.-VIII.* p. 50. I. 43-45.—S. Cox, *Expositions*, p. 33. I. 45.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxii. No. 1298. II.—*Ibid.* vol. lii. No. 3016.

PERSONALITY

(*For Christmas*)

'And it was noised that He was in the house.'—Mark II. 1.

It was noised that He was in the house. This Christmas morning we may say, It was noised that He was in the world. Never forget that there was a great noise made about this birth. One angel began it, and suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly hosts, singing and shouting and praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest! and all heaven throbbed and quivered under that triumphant anthem. Jesus Christ, then, did not come noiselessly into the world; so far as He Himself was concerned, there was little or no noise, but the moment it was hinted that He was in the world-house, the earth, a visible manifestation of the invisible Deity, there was noise enough, musical noise, a great multitudinous acclaim. There are some times when people cannot be silent; indeed, there are some times when silence would be a species of blasphemy.

I. It was noised that He was in the world to bring you good tidings of great joy; for unto you is born this day in the house of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. And all heaven was not orchestra enough to announce the infinite blessing. Have we ever been caught in that passion? or are we only those cold-blooded folks who have to be carried in the ship as ballast?

II. It was noised, not only that He was in the world, but presently that He was the foremost Man in the world. In a sense the only Man, because without Him there could be no life. People began to say concerning Jesus, 'Never man spake like this Man'. He became the pronoun that stood for the only noun there is, the Deity.

III. It was noised that He was in the house and the world; that He was not only in the house-world or world-house, but that He stood alone in it and gradually drew away from all other men that He might ascend the throne which He created. But in a sweet domestic sense it is often noised that He is in the family circle, in the little house, in our house where the cradle is, and where the little school-books are scattered about, and where the aged folks are that are now wondering what there is just across the river.

IV. Is it noised that Jesus Christ is in our house? What do they say? They say, knowing our family life, that Jesus is in that house because of its order, its temper, its resignation, its whole method and economy of existence; they say that only the presence of Jesus Christ in that house could have made such a death. There never was a death-bed scene like it except under the same circumstances, the same deep consciousness of the same majestic and tender Personality.

V. One day it will be noised that He is on the throne. Tempest shall tell it to tempest, and ocean to ocean, and world to world, and planet to planet; and there shall go forth a great, grand, solemn cry, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdom of our God and of His Christ. And they shall cry in every tongue, Hallelujah! and Bethlehem shall culminate in heaven.—Joseph Parker, *City Temple Pulpit*, vol. II. p. 272.

References.—II. 1-12.—W. M. Taylor, *The Miracles of Our Saviour*, p. 122. Archbishop Trench, *Notes on the Miracles of Our Lord*, p. 166. A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—St. Mark I.-VIII.* p. 61. John Laidlaw, *The Miracles of Our Lord*, p. 178. II. 3.—W. H. Hutchings, *Sermon-Sketches*, p. 83. F. Hastings, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxiv. 1903, p. 132. II. 3-5.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. lii. No. 3016.

VICARIOUS FAITH

'And Jesus seeing their faith saith unto the sick of the palsy, Son, thy sins are forgiven.'—Mark II. 5.

The healing of the man sick of the palsy is an instance of vicarious faith. By 'vicarious' we mean something done for and instead of another. The vicarious sacrifice of Jesus Christ means that Christ suffered in our stead, and died for our sins. This palsied man received both the forgiveness of his sins and the healing of his body, through the faith of the

men who brought him. Seeing *their* faith, He saith, not to them, but 'unto the sick of the palsy, Son, thy sins are forgiven'.

I. Instances of Vicarious Faith.

1. There came to Jesus in Capernaum 'a centurion beseeching Him and saying, Lord, my servant lieth in the house sick of the palsy, grievously tormented. And He saith unto him, I will come and heal him'.

2. On another occasion there came from Capernaum to Cana of Galilee a nobleman whose child was sick, and he besought Jesus 'that He would come down and heal his son; for he was at the point of death'.

3. There is another instance where a father's faith prevailed for an only child. In the incident at the foot of the Mount of Transfiguration Jesus threw back the healing of the demoniac boy upon the faith of the father.

4. Still more striking is the faith of the Greek woman in the district of Tyre and Sidon.

II. The Operations of Vicarious Faith.—Vicarious faith begins by making the needs of another its own. Fellowship of woe precedes vicariousness in faith. The affliction of the child is the continual grief of the parent. The sinless One carried away the world's sin by taking it unto Himself. He was made sin for us.

III. Vicarious Faith in the Work of Salvation.—When Jesus saw the faith of the men who brought their palsied friend, He did not begin by commanding the sick man to take up his bed and walk, but by announcing the forgiveness of his sins. 'Seeing their faith, He saith to the sick of the palsy, Son, thy sins are forgiven.' However startling it may seem, this man received the forgiveness of his sins through the faith of others. It is true no man can be saved by proxy, but it is also true we are saved vicariously. There is a human as well as a Divine element in the process of soul-birth, and every man's salvation begins in the faith of another.

Vicarious faith never despairs. It seeks desperate cases, and delights to bring the palsied and devil-possessed to the feet of Christ.

IV. Vicarious Faith is the Foundation of all Prevailing Intercession.—How often the Apostle Paul entreats the prayers of his spiritual children!

The power of such prayer may be gathered from the promise of Christ to His people. 'Again I say unto you, that if two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of My Father which is in heaven.'

Faith reaches the perfection of its power in vicarious exercise. It seems in its concern for others to attain a Divine quality and to command Divine power.

Doubtless some will say, surely there are limitations to this faith. If by limitations is meant conditions, then there are limitations. That for which faith is exercised must be in the will of God, and must be assured to the soul by the Spirit of God.—S. Chadwick, *Humanity and God*, p. 290.

References.—II. 5.—R. J. Campbell, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxxiv. 1908, p. 36. II. 5-7.—H. Rix, *Sermons, Addresses, and Essays*, p. 90. II. 10.—C. Perren, *Revival Sermons in Outline*, p. 286. F. C. Spurr, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xlv. 1894, p. 117. J. B. Slack, *A Book of Lay Sermons*, p. 19. A. G. Mortimer, *The Church's Lessons for the Christian Year*, part ii. p. 235. II. 10, 11.—C. A. Briggs, *The Incarnation of the Lord*, p. 3. II. 12.—J. McNeill, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxiii. 1903, p. 182. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxi. No. 1269. II. 13-22.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—St. Mark I.-VIII.* p. 70.

THE GUESTS AT CHRIST'S OWN TABLE

'As Jesus sat at meat in His house, many publicans and sinners sat together with Jesus and His disciples.'—Mark II. 15.

I. This is to my mind the most unique passage in the New Testament. It is the only instance I know in which Jesus plays the part of host or entertainer. Everywhere else He is a guest; here, for the first and last time, we meet Him in His own house, at His own table. It was not a communion table. The disciples were there; but publicans and sinners were there also. Around that table there must have been a great diversity of theological opinion. The disciples and the publicans had no dogmas in common; yet they both sat at Christ's board.

II. What enabled them to sit together? We can understand how men can 'sit together in heavenly places'—in the sense of a common faith. But what bound in one these souls so different? It was their love for the Son of Man. It was their love for the earthly Christ—the brother-Christ, the Christ of the street and of the lane. The publicans and sinners were not yet dreaming of salvation. They were seeking no supernatural help. It was the *natural* in Christ which they loved—the voice, the gait, the manner, the countenance. They loved Him for less than He was worth. The private friends of a poet may be unable to appreciate any poetry; yet the man may be very dear to them, and he will accept their outside fondness. So did Jesus accept a love for that which was His least possession. It was a love for something inferior, but it was not an inferior love.

III. Do not measure the strength of love by its cause. Many of these publicans would have gone to the stake as readily as the disciples—though they would have gone for another motive. The love in the disciple was fire on the mount, the love in the publican was fire on the plain; but a fire on the plain may be as hot as a fire on the mount. Jesus saw the difference, but He accepted both.—G. Matheson, *Messages of Hope*, p. 218.

FAILURE

'They that are whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick; I came not to call the righteous, but sinners.'—Mark II. 17.

There is no question that Jesus looked upon His mission as to all men, and yet He says distinctly that it is only a mission for sinners, the obvious inference being that all have sinned.

Although, however, the sinfulness of human

nature is one in different ages, and individuals, it manifests itself in different forms, and in the teaching of Jesus we have very full notice of the forms in which it displayed itself in His time.

I. There were the sins of the *publicans and sinners*. These were sins of the senses, what St. Paul calls the sins of the flesh, as distinguished from what he calls the sins of the mind, open sins that cannot hide themselves. Such sins are most fully described in the parable of the prodigal son; in fact, the prodigal is simply an image of the sins of the flesh, their course, and their consequences.

II. There were the sins of the *Pharisees*. These are what Paul would have called sins of the mind, as distinguished from sins of the flesh, but they are not less deadly. There is another character besides the prodigal in the parable of the prodigal son. It is the prodigal's brother, and shall we not say with truth that he was as far away from his father as even the prodigal was, if not farther? In fact, Jesus Himself said distinctly to the Pharisees, 'The publicans and sinners enter into the kingdom of heaven before you,' meaning that it was easier to make them Christians than to make the Pharisees followers of Christ. The distinctive sin of the Pharisees was hypocrisy. 'Pharisee' and 'hypocrite' are interchangeable terms.

III. The sins of the *Sadducees*. What was the sin of the Sadducees? It is depicted in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus. People sometimes ask what Dives did that he should be consigned to the flames of Gehenna. All that is said about him is that he was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day. Wherein consisted his sin? It was negative, and Jesus was very severe on negative sins. It was just that he did nothing. He made no use of his means and talents. He did nothing for his fellow-men. He did nothing for God. He was wrapped up in Himself.

IV. The sentiments of Jesus on the subject we have before us are most impressively given in the three parables in the fifteenth chapter of St. Luke, and if you want to know the mind of Christ on man's failure, I would say brood deeply upon these three parables—the parable of the lost sheep, the lost coin, and the lost son. As the lost coin has fallen away from its usefulness, so man is not doing the lifework for which his Maker intended him; and as the lost son was wasting his substance in riotous living, so every sinner can be accused of misusing and misspending the talents which God has given him. And yet, just as the lost coin, though hidden among dust and dirt, was not itself a lump of dirt, but a piece of precious metal; and as the prodigal, though far from his home and his father and his obedience, was still a son, so the soul of man, in spite of its sin, is infinitely precious, and its destiny is Divine and eternal.—J. Stalker, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lvii. 1900, p. 76.

References.—II. 17.—D. Fraser, *Metaphors in the Gospels*, p. 95. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxiii. No. 1345. II. 18.—C. H. Thomas, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xlv. 1894, p. 149.

'Can the children of the bride-chamber fast, while the bridegroom is with them?'—Mark ii. 19.

Samuel Rutherford once wrote this sensible advice to Marion M'Naught, after the latter's dangerous illness. 'Remember you are in the body, and it is the lodging-house; and you may not, without offending the Lord, suffer the old walls of that house to fall down through want of necessary food. Your body is the dwelling-place of the spirit; and therefore, for the love you carry to the sweet Guest, give a due regard to His house of clay. When He looseth the wall, why not? Welcome, Lord Jesus! But it is a fearful sin in us, by hurting the body by fasting, to loose one stone or the least piece of timber in it, for the house is not our own. The bridegroom is with you yet; so fast as that also you may feast and rejoice in Him.

References.—II. 19.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—St. Mark I.-VIII.* p. 75. II. 19, 20.—N. Bushnell, *Christ and His Salvation*, p. 176. II. 20.—F. B. Woodward, *Sermons* (1st Series), p. 69. A. G. Mortimer, *The Church's Lessons for the Christian Year*, part ii. p. 235. II. 21, 22.—D. Fraser, *Metaphors in the Gospels*, p. 106. II. 22.—J. Stuart Holden, *The Pre-Eminent Lord*, p. 47. II. 23-28.—W. H. Murray, *The Fruits of the Spirit*, p. 430. II. 23-28; III. 1-5.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—St. Mark I.-VIII.* p. 87. II. 24.—Marcus Dods, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. liii. 1898, p. 43.

THE SABBATH

'The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath.'—Mark ii. 27.

I. You may notice these words in two ways.

1. 'The Sabbath was made for man.' That is, for the benefit of man; just as the golden sun that scatters his light over the world was made for man, so in the same sense was the Sabbath made for man.

2. The Sabbath was made for the whole human race. It does not say that the Sabbath was made only for the Jew; it was made for man. It is like the sun, a universal blessing.

II. In what follows I desire shortly to prove to you the proposition that the Sabbath was made for man.

1. For his *body*. Those who keep horses know quite well that, if they are to be wrought up to their strength, you must give them rest one day in seven. So it is with man; if he has to work up to his strength, he requires one day of rest in seven. Does not this prove that He that made our bodies has also appointed the Sabbath for the whole human race; for had He pleased He could have made our bodies of iron. The greater part of men work up to their strength, therefore they require one day of rest in seven. It is the same with the *mind*, it requires one day of rest in seven. The same thing is true of the *soul*. If there be a God, and if there be a Church of redeemed men, then it is agreeable to reason that they should worship Him with the whole mind and strength and will. Then, if it be agreeable to reason that you are to worship Him with

your whole heart, it requires a time for it, and that a set time, and it requires that it be regular.

2. The Sabbath was made for man according to the example of God. We are told in the second of Genesis of God making the Sabbath. Now it seems to me quite plain that, if God rested on the first Sabbath, it was made for His creatures; it could not be for Himself. 'Hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the Creator, fainteth not, neither is weary?' It is a very common thing for Sabbath-breakers to say that it is a Jewish ordinance. But the first Sabbath dawned on a sinless world two thousand years before ever the mention of a Jew was heard of.

3. I would show you that the Sabbath was made for man from the command that God gave concerning it. When God brought Israel out of Egypt to the rocky mount of Sinai He there gave them a clear revelation of His holy law; and it is said, that 'It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made'. And in the very bosom of it was written, 'Remember the Sabbath Day to keep it holy'. When Christ came into the world, He said, 'I came not to destroy the law, but to fulfil it'.

4. That all God's children love the Sabbath Day. God said to Israel, 'My Sabbaths you shall reverence'. And the Prophet Ezekiel says: 'He gave them a Sabbath to be a sign between them and Him'; it marked them out as God's peculiar people.

5. It is those that are God's enemies who hate the Sabbath Day.—R. Murray McCheyne, *British Weekly Pulpit*, vol. II. p. 63.

References.—II. 27.—T. H. Ball, *Persuasions*, p. 133. C. J. Ridgeway, *Plain Sermons on Sunday Observance*, p. 64. H. D. M. Spence, *Voices and Silences*, p. 259. W. F. Cobb, *Church Times*, vol. xl. 1898, p. 273. II. 27, 28.—M. H. James, *Plain Sermons on Sunday Observance*, p. 52. R. Allen, *The Words of Christ*, p. 231. F. Pickett, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxxiv. 1908, p. 148. III. 1-5.—Archbishop Trench, *Notes on the Miracles of Our Lord*, p. 257. S. A. Tipple, *The Admiring Guest*, p. 44. III. 1-6.—W. M. Taylor, *The Miracles of Our Saviour*, p. 148. J. Laidlaw, *The Miracles of Our Lord*, p. 189. III. 3, 5.—H. E. Brierley, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxxiv. 1908, p. 243.

TRUE LAWFULNESS

'Is it lawful to do good on the Sabbath days, or to do evil?'—Mark III. 4.

This is one of the instances of Christ's power of subtle and at first sight unperceived retort. Have you really collated into one radiant conspectus the answers of Christ to the people who wished to take Him by guile or otherwise? You would make quite a little Bible if you were to collate all those happy and even thrilling instances of Christ's power in retort, in sending back in another form that which had been flung at Him by hostile hands. He was great in asking questions, and peculiarly great in reply. His replies were always on the spur of the moment, He never took any time to consider what answer He would make to anybody.

I. Let us look into this case a little further, and see how it touches us. Learn first that a man may break the law—say, the Sabbath—in the very act of ostentatiously keeping it. You can only keep the Sabbath in the heart, you can only keep it in penitence and in thankfulness; it can only be kept in its own spirit, which is a spirit of peace and meekness, restfulness and love. Christ's resurrection day cannot be kept by finding fault with the way in which other people keep it. When we enter into these deeper sympathies and realizations of the Divine Spirit we shall have a cleansed world.

II. A man may dishonour the Bible in the very act of ostentatiously believing that every dot, every comma, is the punctuation of the almost visible Divine hand. The Bible is alive. You may have taken off its coat or patched it here and there with some historic or syntactical patching, and the coat may be none the worse for it, but the revelation is still alive, the truth is still as energetic in the Bible, as it ever was. He honours, keeps, the Bible who finds its truth, its Gospel, its mighty blood, and holds them up as the ministries and evidences of God. We owe nothing to ignorance. Ignorance is only pardonable when it knows that it is ignorant and wants to be instructed, refined, and ennobled.

III. See then how we are driven back, back into the spirituality of religion. The true religion is not a certificate which you take out annually; the true faith is not a renewal of your registration at a guinea a year: it is something that belongs to the soul, the very soul of the soul, so that religion is an affair between man and God, between God and man, away among the unspeakables, away among the saddest, gladdest ministries. We may keep the letter, and deny the spirit. We may have the book, but not the revelation; a beautifully bound Bible, but no spirit Bible, no spirit Gospel, singing to us and teaching us and helping us along all the way of life.—Joseph Parker, *City Temple Pulpit*, vol. IV. p. 184.

References.—III. 5.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—St. Mark I.-VIII.* p. 94. C. E. Jefferson, *The Character of Jesus*, p. 297. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxxii. No. 1893. III. 6-19.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—St. Mark I.-VIII.* p. 105. III. 8.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxvi. No. 1529. III. 10.—*Ibid.* vol. xiv. No. 841. III. 13-15.—W. Howell Evans, *Sermons for the Church's Year*, p. 304.

'And He appointed twelve.'—Mark III. 14.

The chosen Apostles themselves misunderstand and misinterpret their Master. Peter, after being told that his confession is the rock on which the Church should be built, is spoken of as a tempter and an offence to his Master, as one who savours not of the things which are of God, but of those which are of men. John is twice rebuked, once for his revengeful spirit, once for his short-sighted ambition. Judas's treachery is predicted. All the twelve are warned that they will fail at the hour of Christ's trial, and that warning, like the more individual prediction addressed to Peter, is certainly most unlikely to have been conceived after the event. In a word, from

beginning to end of the Gospels, we have evidence which no one could have managed to forge, that Christ deliberately chose materials of which it would have been impossible for any one to build a great organization, unless he could otherwise provide, and continue to provide, the power by which that organization was to stand.—R. H. Hutton, *Theological Essays*, p. 150.

'That they might be with Him.'—Mark iii. 14.

His hold over all his pupils I know perfectly astonished me. It was not so much an enthusiastic admiration for his genius or learning or eloquence which stirred within them; it was a sympathetic thrill, caught from a spirit that was earnestly at work in the world—whose work was healthy, sustained, and constantly carried forward in the fear of God.—Mr. Price in Stanley's *Life of Arnold*, II.

References.—III. 14.—J. Rendel Harris, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxii. 1902, p. 153. H. C. G. Moule, *My Brethren and Companions*, p. 14. III. 20, 21.—John Watson, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xlvii. 1895, p. 273. III. 20-35.—W. H. Bennett, *The Life of Christ According to St. Mark*, p. 47.

ENTHUSIASM

'They said, He is beside Himself.'—Mark iii. 21.

I. Jesus was counted mad simply because He was enthusiastic, and the incident is therefore typical. Our Master illustrates that passion for religion which is prepared to sacrifice everything, even life itself, in the service of God, and His family represents for the time the worldly mind which regarded Him with angry suspicion and has been pouring cold water on enthusiasm ever since. Two states of mind are contrasted—one inspired and self-forgetful, the other prosaic and self-regarding.

From time to time a tide of emotion has swept through the Church, cleansing her life from the pollution of the world and lifting it to a higher spiritual level, as when the ocean fills the bed of a shrunken river with its wholesome buoyant water. Every such springtime has been a lift to religion, and has been condemned as madness by the world.

II. There are two convincing pleas for enthusiasm and the first is its *reasonableness*. A man may be keen about many interests, but of all things he ought to be keenest about religion. If any one believes that the kingdom of God will remain when this world has disappeared like a shadow, then he is right to fling away all that he possesses, and himself too, for its advancement and victory.

My second plea for enthusiasm is its *success*. Take if you please the enthusiast who has not always been perfectly wise, and whose plans any one can criticize; the man who has not had tangible success. It does not follow that the cause of God is condemned in him or has lost by him. There is something more important than results which can be tabulated in reports, there is the spirit which inspires action and without which there will be no report to write. When a knight dies in his steel armour it does not matter much in the long result whether he lost or won. Every one who saw him fall, fearless to the last, leaves the lists with a higher idea of manhood.

III. We are hag-ridden in the Church of God by the idea of machinery, and we forget that the motive power of religion is inspiration. 'The world,' some one has said, 'is filled with the proverbs of a base prudence which adores the rule of three, which never subscribes, which never gives, which seldom lends, and only asks one question—Will it bake bread?' What we have to search for high and low is imprudent people, self-forgetful, uncalculating, heroic people.—J. Watson (Ian Maclaren), *The Inspiration of Our Faith*, p. 24.

References.—III. 21.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—St. Mark I.-VIII.* p. 112. Vincent Tymms, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxix. 1905, p. 27. Henry Drummond, *The Ideal Life*, p. 9. III. 22-35.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—St. Mark I.-VIII.* p. 122.

AN ETERNAL SIN

'In danger of eternal damnation.'—Mark iii. 29.

Or—'guilty of an eternal sin'. This is almost certainly the true rendering of the words of the Evangelist, from which some transcribers shrank as something strange and unusual, and took refuge in a word more easy to be explained and more closely related to cognate expressions.

I. What may we take it to mean, this description of a state, which men seem to have hesitated even to write down? It means surely, first of all, a *great mistake*. You may notice that our blessed Lord had just been speaking about that mysterious blasphemy against the Holy Ghost, which has so exercised the thoughts and guesses, and even terrors of men. It is this which brings man into the imminent danger of which we are thinking. Surely we are face to face with the possibility of a great mistake where a man gets so entirely out of sympathy with God that where there is God, he can only see an evil spirit; where there is goodness, he can only see malignity; where there is mercy, he can only see cruel tyranny. The great mistake! It begins, perhaps, in the will. Life is presented with all its fascinating material; there is the deadly bias of disposition, while there is the make-weight of grace; and the will gives in. And the dishonoured will now seeks to justify its degradation by an appeal to the intellect. Sin is decried as an ecclesiastical bogey. And then from the intellect it goes to the heart. 'I will pull down my barns, and build greater.' This is the extent of the heart's ambition. See how the great mistake has spread! Self has deflected all the relations of life until the man has become denaturalized. He has made a great mistake—his relations to the world, to God, to self, are inverted unless God interferes, i.e. unless the man allows God to interfere; he is guilty of an eternal sin, in the sense of having made an irreparable mistake, and missed the object for which he was created, the purpose for which he was endowed.

II. But, besides a great mistake, an eternal sin means a *great catastrophe*.

What a terrible consciousness to wake up to the thought that the position which God has given us, the talents, the intellect, the skill, have been abused by a real perversion of life, and that we have been only doing harm when we were meant to be centres of good! See how an eternal sin may mean an eternal catastrophe, where the forces of life have become mutinous and disobedient; where self-control has gone for ever, and anarchy or misrule riot across life, where there is the perversion of blessings which reaches its climax in the fact that man is the great exception in the order of nature; that while every other living thing is striving for its own good, man alone is found choosing what he knows to be for his hurt. There is no ruin to compare to it, no depravity so utterly depraved as that which comes from a disordered and shattered human nature.

III. Lastly, we are face to face with a *great loss*. 'I do not wonder at what people suffer, but I wonder often at what they lose.'

The loss of God out of life, which begins, it may be, with a deprivation, and is a disquieting pang, which, if it is not arrested, becomes death, which, if persisted in, becomes eternal, becomes utter and complete separation from God, which becomes what we know as hell—the condition of an eternal sin.—W. C. E. Newbolt, *Words of Exhortation*, p. 230.

Illustration.—It was only that petty thieving from the bag, which Judas forgot as the miracles flashed before him, in speaking tongues, in unstopped ears, healed lepers, and awakened dead. It was only the selfish love of the world which he forgot, as he listened to the wondrous word of searching power, of veiling parable, or piercing insight, but insensibly it has begun to tell. A rift has begun to open in the lute. He finds himself as he never did before, a critic; he finds himself a grumbler; he finds himself in opposition. He is outside the charmed circle; 'this ointment might have been sold for much, and given to the poor'. He has a policy and a purpose of his own, 'what will ye give me, and I will deliver Him unto you?' Christ has dropped out of his life. He is definitely on the side of His enemies, 'And Judas also, which betrayed Him, stood with them'. 'I have sinned;' remorse pushes out repentance, and he stands in the piteous void of the awful and eternal loss.—W. C. E. Newbolt, *Words of Exhortation*, p. 243.

References.—III. 20.—William Alexander, *Primary Convictions*, p. 133. W. Leighton Grane, *Hard Sayings of Jesus Christ*, p. 133. W. Temple, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxxiv. 1908, p. 214. III. 31-35.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—St. Mark I.-VIII.* p. 129. R. Rainy, *British Weekly Pulpit*, vol. ii. p. 109. III. 33-35.—R. J. Campbell, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lix. 1901, p. 409. T. Vincent Tymms, *ibid.* vol. lxix. 1906, p. 219. III. 34.—R. Rainy, *Sojourning With God*, p. 114. III. 35.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—St. Mark I.-VIII.* p. 138. IV. 1-25.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xliii. No. 2512. IV. 1-34.—W. H. Bennett, *The Life of Christ According to St. Mark*, p. 54. IV. 3-8, 14-20.—C. G. Lang, *Thoughts on Some of the Parables of Jesus*, p. 13. IV. 4.—F. Y. Leggatt, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxxiv. 1908, p. 337. IV. 5, 6.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xix. No. 1132.

'Others fell into the good ground and yielded fruit.'—Mark iv. 8.

The mate of an American whaler, Mr. Whalon, was captured by the cannibals of Hiva-Oa, one of the Marquesan islands, and rescued bravely by the intervention of a native Christian, Kekela, who was subsequently rewarded by President Lincoln for his gallant charity. Mr. Stevenson, in his volume *In the South Seas* (pp. 89, 90), quotes an extract from Kekela's letter of thanks, adding, 'I do not envy the man who can read it without emotion'.

After telling of the rescue, Kekela proceeds: 'As to this friendly deed of mine in saving Mr. Whalon, its seed came from your great land, and was brought by certain of your countrymen, who had received the love of God. It was planted in Hawaii, and I brought it to plant in this land and in these dark regions, that they might receive the best of all that is good and true, which is *love*. . . . This is a great thing for your nation to boast of, before the nations of the earth. From your great land a most precious seed was brought to the land of darkness. It was planted here, not by means of guns and men-of-war and threatenings. It was planted by means of the ignorant, the neglected, the despised. Such was the introduction of the Word of the Almighty God into this group of Nuuhiwa.'

References.—IV. 10-20.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—Mark I.-VIII.* p. 139. IV. 11.—George Tyrrell, *Oil and Wine*, p. 71. IV. 11, 12.—W. Leighton Grane, *Hard Sayings of Jesus Christ*, p. 19.

ONE THING, EVERYTHING

'Know ye not this parable? and how then will ye know all parables?'—Mark iv. 13.

There is a great philosophy in this inquiry, as there is in every inquiry propounded by the Son of God. If you know one, you know all. There is a master-key which opens all the locks; if you fail to lay hold of the master-key you will be fumbling round the locks all your days and never open a single cabinet or a single drawer. That is the great teaching of the text. If you do not know this parable you will know no parable at all.

I. What great lessons this text suggests! See the unity of Christ's teaching. To our poor half-educated eyes the teaching often seems to be disjointed, but who gave us the final vision, what right have we to say that this is correct, and that is only partially correct, or to make any such foolish judgments upon the great scheme of God? You say about a certain man, 'He has been very consistent throughout'. What do you mean? If he has preached the same sermon twice every Sunday and once every Thursday for thirty odd years, would you say he is consistent! Nothing of the kind; quite a blunder and quite an insult offered to the spirit of consistency. Orthodoxy

is not in words; it is in blood-drops, in heart-throbs, in a purpose that cannot be quenched. A man may have verbally contradicted himself every time he has spoken, and yet he may be perfectly consistent in the sight of God as to his purpose and design and holy prayer. I have believed that there is no consistency where there is any growing. Give me the consistency of the growing flower, the expanding, fruit-bearing tree; let the leaves shed themselves every year, and the next year I know the apple will be bonnier, the pear will be sweeter, the tree will be larger and more capacious to receive more sunshine and produce more fruitful benedictions. God bless all growing things. This is the power, this is the beauty of the teaching of Christ; it is all one, it never breaks itself into two opposing and dissevered parts; from the beginning to the end it is one blessing, one gospel, one thought of love and healing and redeeming blood.

II. Notice the surprise of disappointed teachers. What, said Christ, 'Know ye not this parable?' I thought you, even you, so young in discipleship and so green in knowledge, even you would have seen the meaning that I have been endeavouring to convey. How often we are disappointed in our hearers, as well as in our preachers! I do not know that that is a subject much talked of abroad; but, you know, it is quite as possible for you to disappoint the preacher as it is for the preacher to disappoint you. It is so disheartening to talk to people who do not answer you in the great silence of love, in the sublime applause of obedience.

III. And yet see, on the other hand, a right disposition towards Christian knowledge. They went and said to Him, 'What is the meaning of this parable?' Be that said in memory of these men; they went for the meaning. 'Tell us the soul of it.' That is the right disposition of the soul towards all Christian teaching. Now, stripping the whole thing of its surroundings, its shells, and searching into the kernel, what does it mean? It all means one thing; the Lord Himself gathered up the whole speech of His heart into one sentence which reads as two: 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and soul and mind and strength, and thy neighbour as thyself'. It is a poor philosophy that cannot be wrapped up into one cannon-ball sentence; it is a poor sermon that cannot be condensed into the briefest message.—Joseph Parker, *City Temple Pulpit*, vol. vi p. 107.

'The sower soweth the word.'—Mark iv. 14.

The sower who casts in the seed, the father or mother casting in the fruitful Word, are accomplishing a pontifical act and ought to perform it with religious awe, with prayer and gravity, for they are labouring at the kingdom of God. All seed-sowing is a mysterious thing, whether the seed fall into the earth or into souls. Man is a husbandman; his whole work, rightly understood, is to develop life, to sow it everywhere. Such is the mission of humanity, and of this Divine mission the great instrument is speech. We forget too often that language is both a seed-sowing and a revelation.—Amiel's *Journal*, 2 May, 1852.

In describing the impression made by Millet's picture, 'The Sower,' Theophile Gautier writes: 'Night approaches, unfurling its grey veil over the brown earth. The sower, covered with dingy rags, a shapeless cap on his head, goes forth with rhythmic steps, scattering the grain in the furrows, followed by a flight of greedy birds. Although bony, emaciated, and thin under his livery of misery, life flows from his generous hand; with a superb gesture, he who has nothing scatters far and wide the bread of the future.'

'Straightway cometh Satan and taketh away the word which hath been sown in them.'—Mark iv. 15.

Set beside this verse the following entry in Wesley's *Journal* for 1746: 'Fri. May 30th (Bristol). I light upon a poor, pretty, fluttering thing, lately come from Ireland, and going to be a singer at the playhouse. She went in the evening to the chapel, and thence to the watch-night, and was almost persuaded to be a Christian. Her convictions continued strong for a few days; but then her old acquaintance found her, and we saw her no more.'

'With joy.'—Mark iv. 16.

The man should move towards God in Christ in knowledge and understanding, taking up God's device of saving sinners by Christ as the Scripture holds it out; not fancying a Christ to himself, otherwise than the Gospel speaketh of Him, nor another way of relief by Him than the Word of God holdeth out. . . . I mean here also that a man be in calmness of spirit, and, as it were, in his cold blood, in closing with Christ Jesus; not in a single fit of affection which soon vanisheth. *He that receiveth the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word and anon with joy receiveth it.* A man must here act rationally, as being master of himself, in some measure able to judge of the good or evil of the thing as it stands before him.—William Guthrie of Fenwick.

References.—IV. 16, 17.—'Plain Sermons' by contributors to the *Tracts for the Times*, vol. ii. p. 49. IV. 17.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xlix. No. 2846.

'The cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches.'—Mark iv. 19.

'Happy (said I); I was only happy once; that was at Hyères; it came to an end from a variety of reasons, decline of health, change of place, increase of money, age with his stealing steps.'—R. L. Stevenson, *Vailima Letters*.

References.—IV. 21.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—St. Mark I.-VIII.* p. 148. IV. 21-25.—H. Hensley Henson, *Christ and the Nation*, p. 227. IV. 22.—A. Martin, *Winning the Soul*, p. 181. IV. 24.—W. Farquhar Hook, *Take Heed What ye Hear*, p. 15. W. L. Watkinson, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. liv. 1898, p. 252. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xliii. No. 2512. IV. 25.—E. S. Talbot, *Keble College Sermons*, 1870-76, p. 29. W. Lock, *ibid.* p. 240.

SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT

'So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the ground; and should sleep, and rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up, he knoweth not how. For the earth bringeth forth fruit of herself; first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear. But when the fruit is brought forth, immediately he putteth in the sickle, because the harvest is come.'—Mark iv. 26.

I. The beginning of religious life is always an awakening to the greatness that underlies the littleness of our ordinary existence. Now, Christianity was just the greatest of all such awakenings of mankind to the true meaning of life.

II. It is the more remarkable that Jesus Christ, who is in one sense the greatest revolutionist the world ever saw, should so constantly present spiritual life to us, not as the inroad upon our being of something entirely new, but simply as an awakening to something that was always there; not as a sudden revolutionary change by which the link between the past and present was snapped, but simply as the further development and manifestation of a principle which was working in human life and history from its first beginning.

III. And this view of the development of Christianity out of the past is naturally accompanied by a similar view of its future. Several of the parables of the kingdom of God are parables of evolution, in which processes of the spiritual life are compared to the organic processes of nature. We have here a parable which, perhaps more fully than any of the others, brings before us the idea of a spiritual evolution in all its various aspects. By the illustration of the growth of the wheat to the harvest, it calls attention, on one hand, to the quietness, continuity and naturalness of the process whereby spiritual life is developed, which makes it almost entirely escape notice while it is going on; and, on the other hand, to the wonderful transforming power of that process, which we discover when, after a time, we compare the later with the earlier stages of it. A man, or a society of men, sows the seeds of good and evil, conscious of the particular acts they do, but taking no thought of the enormous agencies they are setting in motion. Their minds at the time are occupied with special pleasures or with the gains they think they are making, but they do not attach any great importance to their acts; and, afterwards, they take no thought of what they have done, or perhaps forget all about it. But the spiritual world, like the natural, has its laws of growth, and slowly but certainly within the man or the nation, the seed ripens to the fruit. Inevitably the good or evil act lays the train for the good or evil tendency, and the good or evil tendency spreads out its influence till it permeates the whole life, moulding all the habits, all the manifold ways of thinking or acting, till the development and organization of character in the individual or the nation surprises us with the full-grown harvest of justice or injustice, salvation or moral ruin.—E. Caird, *Lay Sermons and Addresses*, p. 151.

References.—IV. 26, 27.—E. C. Paget, *Silence*, p. 186. J. Burton, *Christian Life and Truth*, p. 293. Lyman Abbott, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lv. 1899, p. 259. IV. 26-28.—H. Jellett, *Sermons on Special and Festival Occasions*, p. 87. G. Matheson, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxiii. p. 195. C. W. Stubbs, *Christus Imperator*, p. 151. IV. 26-29.—J. Brown, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xlvi. 1894, p. 106; see also vol. xlviii. 1895, p. 216. H. Scott Holland, *ibid.* vol. lii. 1897, p. 184. A. B. Davidson, *Waiting Upon God*, p. 205. W. Binnie, *Sermons*, p. 120. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxvii. No. 1603. Rayner Winterbotham, *The Kingdom of Heaven*, p. 16. W. Hay M. H. Aitken, *The Highway of Holiness*, p. 47. R. E. Hutton, *The Crown of Christ*, vol. ii. p. 475. IV. 26-30.—A. G. Mortimer, *The Church's Lessons for the Christian Year*, part iv. p. 225.

'First the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear.'—Mark iv. 28.

The main duty of those who care for the young is to secure their wholesome, their entire growth, for health is just the development of the whole nature in its due sequences and proportions: first the blade, then the ear, then, and not till then, the full corn in the ear.

It is not easy to keep this always before one's mind, that the young 'idea' is in a young body, and that healthy growth and harmless passing of the time are more to be cared for than what is vainly called accomplishment. . . . So cultivate observation, energy, handicraft, ingenuity, outness in boys, so as to give them a pursuit as well as a study. Look after the blade, and don't coax or crush the ear out too soon, and remember that the full corn in the ear is not due till the harvest, when the great School breaks up, and we meet all divisions and go our several ways.—Dr. Brown, *Horæ Subsecivæ*.

'First the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear.'—Mark iv. 28.

Epictetus, at the close of his humorous, sensible remonstrance addressed to people who hastily rush into the use of the philosophic garb, employs this figure thus: 'Man,' he exclaims, 'first strive that it be not known what you are. Be a philosopher to yourself for a little. Fruit grows thus: the seed must be buried for some time, hidden; it must grow slowly if it is to mature. If it produces the ear before the jointed stem, it is imperfect. . . . So do you consider, my man; you have shot up too soon, you have hurried towards a little fame before the proper season.' He uses the same figure elsewhere, as in this paragraph: 'Nothing great is produced suddenly. Not even the grape or the fig is. If you tell me now that you want a fig, my answer will be, that requires time. Let it flower first, then put forth fruit, then ripen. If the fruit of the fig-tree is not matured suddenly, in an hour, would you possess the fruit of a man's mind so quickly and so easily? Do not expect such a thing, not even were I to tell you it could be.'

References.—IV. 28.—R. S. Gregg, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xlvii. 1895, p. 348. W. P. Balfern, *Lessons from Jesus*, p. 129. H. Harris, *Short Sermons*, p. 192. IV. 28, 29.—Edward White, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxxviii. 1890, p. 24.

'And He said, How shall we liken the wisdom of God? It is like a grain of mustard seed.'—MARK IV. 30.

WHAT is a farm but a mute gospel? The chaff and the wheat, weeds and plants, blight, rain, insects, sun—it is a sacred emblem from the first furrow of spring to the last stack which the snow of winter overtakes in the fields. . . . Nor can it be doubted that this moral sentiment which thus scents the air, grows in the grain, and impregnates the waters of the world, is caught by man and sinks into his soul. The moral influence of nature upon every individual is that amount of truth which it illustrates to him.—EMERSON.

WITH WHAT COMPARISON

'With what comparison shall we compare it?'—MARK IV. 30.

MAN must have comparisons. He is a born parabolist; it may take another kind of man to put the parable into shape, but the parable, as to its substance and essence, is in every child and every heart. He is always seeking for a likeness, a comparison, something which will tell of something else than itself. It is peculiarly and eternally so *in* the kingdom of God; it takes up all other subjects, and uses them by first mocking them, by bringing them, in some instances, into ridicule, in order that it may point out the greatness of something else quite beyond words and quite beyond the region of visible picture. We must discover in this, as in all other respects, the way of the Lord.

I. God first belittles that He may afterwards magnify. That is the effect of all great examples. If you have been living amongst little folks you are no doubt a little creature. This is the Lord's way; He takes us into a new atmosphere, a new relationship, and measures us by a new standard. Comparing ourselves with ourselves we become very wise; but comparing ourselves with God, we are foolish and men of no understanding. When the Lord magnifies Himself against us it is not really to reduce us, but to bring us into that temper of mind in which we can receive a just revelation of our own personality; He reduces us to nothingness in our own esteem that He may afterwards put us together again, and begin by the power of the grace of the Cross to build us up in the true manhood.

II. God makes use of contrasts that He may reveal the Source of all strength. Here is a great work to be done, and God calls to it little children. The picture is a picture of ridicule; we say, Where is the proportion? This great work is to be constructed, and a number of little children have been called to do it. God's way! God hath chosen the weak things of this world, God hath chosen the foolish things of this world, God hath chosen things that are not, that no flesh should glory in His presence, but reveal Himself as the true source of strength.

III. God uses the partially impossible to magnify the essentially impossible. The great Teacher says, Heaven and earth shall pass away—meaning they shall not pass away—but My word shall not pass away. The mountains shall melt—yet they will not melt—the meaning is, Sooner shall heaven and earth pass away than My word shall pass away: sooner shall the partially impossible become the actually impossible than My word shall cease to be the life of creation, and the door into the security of true heaven. Sometimes He magnifies the partially impossible that He may magnify the truly impossible. He said, when He saw a mother nursing her child once, Can a woman forget her sucking child? yea, it is partially impossible, but it may be the fact—yet will not I forget Thee. For a small moment have I forsaken Thee, but with everlasting mercies I have gathered Thee. He only speaks of the small moment that He may get your attention to the eternal duration. Thou dost, by thunderstorm or earthquake or great wind or still small voice or in a thousand other ways, strive to get our attention, that foolish man may begin, even late in life, to take his first lesson in the kingdom of God.—JOSEPH PARKER, *City Temple Pulpit*, vol. VII p. 194.

REFERENCES.—IV. 30-32.—J. Laidlaw, *Studies in the Parables*, p. 81. C. G. Lang, *Thoughts on Some of the Parables of Jesus*, p. 41. H. Scott Holland, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xlii. 1892, p. 173. Rayner Winterbotham, *The Kingdom of Heaven*, p. 52. IV. 33.—J. R. Cohu, *The Sermon on the Mount*, p. 11. IV. 33, 34.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxviii. No. 1669.

UNREPORTED INTERVIEWS

'When they were alone, He expounded all things to His disciples.'—MARK IV. 34.

THESE were unreported interviews; these were secret conferences. We do not speak our best things in the public air; our whispers are costlier than our thunder; they may have more life in them, more tenderness, more poetry. We cannot report what we have heard, except in some poor dull way of words. That is hardly a report at all. To hear any man tell over what he has heard you say, that is punishment! He may speak your very words, and leave out your soul; with the best intention, he may report the interview upside down. Communications are not in words, except in some rough, commercial, and debtor-and-creditor way. Communications are in the breathing, in the looking, in the touching, in the invisible and the inaudible.

I. Jesus Christ had two speeches. The one to the great multitude. For them He had toys and stories and miracles and parables; He knew them well, He knew precisely what was adapted to their receptive power and their then state of intellectual culture. He always took out with Him toys enough to amuse and interest and haply instruct the gaping mob. To hear Jesus you must wait until He comes into the house; let Him read the Scriptures to you when your number is but small. His greatest tones are in the minor key; the way in which He finds the heart is a way of His own; never man spake like this Man.

II. I live with Christ, and He has taught me that there are two ways of reading everything. Sometimes I have thought my Lord partly amused at the greatness of us when we were really least. I am not

quite literally sure, but I think I have sometimes seen the outline of a smile upon His face as He has watched the development of what we call our civilization. He has spoken very frankly to me upon this matter, He has told me that civilization must be very carefully watched, or it will become our ruin; He says that civilization unsanctified is a breach of the very first commandment of the decalogue.

III. Jesus takes us one by one, according to our gift and function, and talks to us alone. What lovely, tender, inspiring talks we may have with our Lord! We come out of them filled with His own inspiration, and enriched with His own patience and forbearance. We, being young, inexperienced, and foolish, want to have everything settled to-morrow. Jesus says, It takes a long time to make a rock; I have been a million ages in making this little pebble at the bottom of the stream, and thinkest thou that a man can be made in no time? If it required a million ages to make half a dozen smooth pebbles, how long will it take to make a redeemed and sanctified Church? Be patient, take larger views of things; the whole process is going on; there are first-born sons in knowledge, as well as in nature; first-born sons in prophecy and revelation and song, as well as in estates and titles and inheritances; the whole mystery was settled from the beginning of the creation, and long before the creation was in existence. All things are primordially in God; out of God they come, and God's will must be done on earth as in heaven, but day by day, five thousand more years, fifty thousand more risings of the sun, a million more revolutions of this planet or of that. But all the revolutions, all the silent dancing of the planets mean final music, beauty, rest.—Joseph Parker, *City Temple Pulpit*, vol. II. p. 70.

References.—IV. 35-41.—J. Laidlaw, *The Miracles of Our Lord*, p. 61. A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—St. Mark I.-VIII.* p. 158. W. M. Taylor, *The Miracles of Our Saviour*, p. 202. Walter Smith, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xlii. 1892, p. 340. Archbishop Trench, *Notes on the Miracles of Our Lord*, p. 119. IV. 35; VI. 6.—W. H. Bennett, *The Life of Christ According to St. Mark*, p. 67. IV. 36.—D. Sage Mackay, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxvi. 1904, p. 22. IV. 36-38.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—St. Mark I.-VIII.* p. 162.

'Master, carest Thou not that we perish?'—Mark iv. 38.

Our worries always come from our weaknesses.—Joubert.

Reference.—IV. 38.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xix. No. 1121.

'And He rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, be still.'—Mark iv. 39.

While it is a portentous fact that England still needs, at this stage of history, to be terrified into morality and religion by the threat of temporal retribution, it must be ever a lowering of Carlyle in the scale of greatness that he taught rather like his own Mohammed than like the Master of Light. 'What can you say of him,' asked Ruskin, 'except that he lived in the clouds and was struck by lightning?' a beautiful and true summary of the man's spirit in deed as in word. But struck by lightning he was; he could not wield it with impunity. How much less could he say to the storm raging all through his century, 'Peace, be still!' He spoke mighty words, but he had little in common with that dove-like brooding spirit which drew forth strength out of sweetness, and was able to hush the great waters and rebuke the waves. *Facta est tranquillitas magna.* That is the miracle which Carlyle never wrought on himself or any man that sought his aid.—From Dr. W. Barry's *Heralds of Revolt*, p. 73.

See Wesley's *Journal* for 26 July, 1736.

Mark iv. 39 with vi. 50.

You have of course remarked the rise from the first storm-calming to the second. . . . One of the points of difference is, that He first calms the elements, then the soul, but in the second case the soul and then the elements, which is, in truth, the difference between the Old Testament and the New. And then there is the remarkable difference in the mode of address. To the elements, *Peace, be still!*—the command of a sovereign; to the soul, *It is I; be not afraid*—the approach of a friend. You and I will try to feel that it is under this last and higher treatment we are put, that the troubles are kept round us for a while to have our souls made strong in the midst of them.—Dr. John Ker's *Letters*.

'Peace, be still.'—Mark iv. 39.

We are as safe at sea, safer in the storm which God sends us, than in a calm when we are befriended by the world.—Jeremy Taylor.

PERSONALITY AND POWER

'He arose . . . and there was a great calm.'—Mark iv. 39.

In the thirty-seventh verse we read, 'And there arose a great storm of wind'; in the thirty-ninth verse we read, 'And He arose . . . and there was a great calm'. This is the poetry of life. There is a storm side, and there is a side of great calm.

When Jesus Christ arose there was a great calm. Not only because He rebuked the winds and the waves, but because, primarily and wholly because, He Himself was calm. Peace brings peace; repose is mastery. He arose—but the wind had risen: the wind will retire when its Master arises. Do not consider or concern yourselves about the wind, the storm, the screaming, hurrying tempest. Hope thou in God; thou shalt take thy Saviour's peace as part of thine own tranquillity: My peace I give unto you; not as the world giveth give I unto you; peace, be still; peace, be not afraid. We have a derived peace; tranquillity of our own we have none, but we have the whole river of the grace and peace of God flung through our hearts, and we are at peace because we build our tents for a night by the river of peace.

I. Let us take it in the matter of those little angers, vexations, and bitternesses, that trouble our uncertain and peevish life. When the great Christ-

like considerations come up, rise in the soul, instantly the anger falls away and a sweet calm supervenes. You were not to be reasoned with in the moment of your anger; you felt that you were superior to all argument; in fact, you felt that there was no argument except your own; you looked down with a kind of contempt upon those who thought they could argue you out of your mean condition of mind. They could do nothing with you; but when Christ arose, when you remembered what He was, what He did, what He is, what He expects, you were ashamed; and for anger there came great Christly love. It is just as true, therefore, of us as it was of the sea.

II. Take it in the matter of anxiety. Some people are dying of care, thought; they wonder what will happen to-morrow, in anticipation they meet all the difficulties of the next seven years. They set themselves little problems in moral arithmetic, asking, If this should be equal to that, and a third thing should affect both the things now in opposition, what will possibly happen this day five years? The Lord does not ask you to be arithmeticians in that sense; in fact, very little arithmetic will satisfy the Lord. We do not want all this anticipation and multiplication of difficulties and dangers, losses and crosses. We may never live to see to-morrow; some men die in the night-time; in some nights the bridge is lost that connects the days. What then? Watch; be vigilant, be sober; expect the Lord: the great watchword of the Lord's Church should be, The kingdom of heaven is at hand! The worlds touch one another, not by material tact, but by magnetic, sympathetic, inexpressible relation and ministry. All the wrinkles upon your face were made by thinking about to-morrow.

III. Take it in the matter of social strife. Let Christ arise; Christ will settle all your social disputes, all your trade strikes, all your collisions, oppositions, and competitions. Let the Spirit of Christ work; let this mind be in you that was also in Christ Jesus: and when the Christ Spirit rises in our hearts we will meet one another in mutual apology, in large concession, in noble charity, in generous justice. The storm is not still until Christ calms it, and when He calms it no power can ruffle it again, it is still and tranquil under the sovereignty of Christ.—Joseph Parker, *City Temple Pulpit*, vol. iv. p. 50.

References.—IV. 39.—R. E. Hutton, *The Crown of Christ*, vol. ii. p. 23. IV. 40.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxxiii. No. 1964. IV. 41 (R.V.).—J. Jackson, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxiv. 1903, p. 260. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxviii. No. 1686. V.—J. McNeill, *Regent Square Pulpit*, vol. ii. p. 177. V. 1-20.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxxviii. No. 2262. J. Morley Mills, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxv. 1904, p. 234. W. M. Taylor, *The Miracles of Our Saviour*, p. 212. Archbishop Trench, *Notes on the Miracles of Our Lord*, p. 125. A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—St. Mark I.-VIII.* p. 177. John Laidlaw, *The Miracles of Our Lord*, p. 218. V. 1-24.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xliii. No. 2507. V. 2.—H. Jones, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. liii. 1898, p. 123. V. 6.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xliii. No. 2507. V. 7.—*Ibid.* vol. li. No. 2966. W. Ralph, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxxii. 1907, p. 309. V. 15.—W. P. Balfern, *Lessons from Jesus*, p. 81. V. 17.—W. Gilbert, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxvii. 1905, p. 134. V. 17-19.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxxviii. No. 2262. V. 18, 19.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—St. Mark I.-VIII.* p. 186.

THE SAVIOUR AND THE MANIAC

'He besought Jesus that he might be with Him.'—Mark v. 18.

Of all the encounters of Jesus with men, surely none is more striking than His meeting with the maniac whose home was among the tombs. Jesus had just left the boat, and stepped upon the shore, when from out one of the caves that served for a burying-place among the limestone hills there rushed towards Him a creature that seemed not so much like a human being as like an evil spirit incarnate. Perhaps the unhappy man had been watching the boat coming across the lake; and with the swift bounds of a maniac, he made straight for the Master as He disembarked. It was always so with Jesus. No sooner did He touch the land than He was met by human want and misery.

How very touching is the contrast between these two men—the Saviour and the maniac; immortal symbol of the world, wild and gloomy, hopeless, and homeless, rushing on to offer its instinctive and unconscious homage to the Jesus whom it needs. There stands the Master, with His quiet, fearless bearing, with His sorrowful face and His beautiful eyes; and there, at His feet, is the demoniac, wild and fierce and naked, with the strength of a demon in his right arm and the awful light of madness in his eye. Not only all the day, but all the night, when other men were sleeping, the lonely hills where he made his home would ring with his unearthly cries, and he would gash himself with stones until the blood would spurt. So powerful was he that he could burst the heavy chains with which he had been bound, and so terrible was he that the bravest were afraid to pass that way.

I. No one would pass but Jesus. He was not afraid. Such were the ways He loved to pass. He loved to set the fallen upon their feet, to restore again the ruins of human nature; and to heal this wild misery which rushed towards Him from the hills, and then threw itself impulsively at His feet, was just to do the work which His Father had given Him to do. A brave heart might well have quailed before such an onset, and fled perhaps in terror; but Jesus stood and, looking upon him, loved him. We listen with bated breath to hear what He will say to this poor, unhappy, and dangerous man. Jesus is always simple, serenely and sublimely simple. He does not begin by preaching any gospel, He simply asks the man his name. And we may well believe that the maniac's manner would be instantly transformed. Here was a voice which sounded as perhaps no human voice before or since has sounded—the quiet, gentle, affectionate tone must have gone home with healing to the recesses of that shattered mind; and here were the words of One who spoke to him as a man speaks to his friend. Other men had re-

peatedly come to bind him with their cruel chains; who could this be who came with no chain, but who bound him all the more firmly by the gentle bonds of love?

Is it any wonder that in the quiet, authoritative presence of Jesus the maniac is transformed? He, who before was naked, now is clothed. He, who before rushed with wild frenzy about the desolate hills, now sits quietly at the feet of Jesus. He, who before was possessed by devils, is now possessed by the spirit of Jesus.

II. Why did Jesus refuse the man's request? Partly for the world's sake and partly for the man's own. 'Go,' said Jesus, 'to thy house, to thine own people, and tell them all that the Lord, in pity, hath done for thee.' The saved man has to be, in his turn, a saviour, or at least a preacher. Anything that he knows about Jesus, those who are dear to him should know too. 'Go to thine own people and tell *them*.' Upon the man who has been redeemed, who has passed from insanity to soundness of mind, from lonely misery to fullness of joy, lies the obligation to tell the story to those whom he can influence, first to those of his own household, and then to those beyond it; for if a man has been healed by the shores of the sea of Galilee, then Decapolis has a right to know about it too. Life upon the mountains and among the tombs is no more possible for such an one: he must go with his message among the men who need it. The new power which Jesus has brought into his life is not only for himself but for them. Inspiration has to be translated into action, knowledge and power into service. The work for which he was redeemed will not be done if he sits at Jesus' feet. So, for the world's sake, Jesus says, 'Go'.

But no less for the man's sake. He has to learn that the power which redeemed him can keep him, whether the bodily presence of Jesus is near him or not. Perhaps, like many men, he was anxiously dependent upon a visible support to his faith; and the gracious Jesus, who loved him better than he knew, deliberately sent him away, that he might learn the true meaning of spiritual religion. 'Go and tell what the Lord hath done.' The Lord was the Lord of all the earth, and everywhere He might be found. When Jesus entered into His boat, and was lost to sight across the lake, the power which He represented did not vanish with Him; and Jesus wished to bring home to this redeemed but anxious soul, that the Divine resources were always at the disposal of the man who trusted them—alike upon the sea and land, upon the valleys and the hills, in the crowded city and on the waste and desolate place where no man is. God and His power and His love are everywhere.—J. E. McFadyen, *The City With Foundations*, p. 33.

References.—V. 19.—H. J. Wilmot-Buxton, *God's Heroes*, p. 217. H. Ward Beecher, *Sermons* (4th Series), p. 30. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. iii. No. 109. V. 22-24.—Archbishop Trench, *Notes on the Miracles of Our Lord*, p. 149. V. 22-24, 35-43.—John Laidlaw, *The Miracles of Our Lord*, p. 338. W. M. Taylor, *The Miracles of Our Saviour*, p. 230. A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—St. Mark I.-VIII.* p. 194. V. 25.—J. Halsey, *The Spirit of Truth*, p. 183. V. 25-27.—M. Guy Pearse, *Jesus Christ and the People*, p. 158. J. M. Neale, *Sermons Preached in a Religious House*, vol. i. p. 104. V. 25-28.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—St. Mark I.-VIII.* p. 199. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xlv. No. 827. V. 25-34.—Archbishop Trench, *Notes on the Miracles of Our Lord*, p. 157. J. Laidlaw, *The Miracles of Our Lord*, p. 229. W. M. Taylor, *The Miracles of Our Saviour*, p. 243. V. 26.—J. Service, *Sermons*, p. 73. V. 28.—C. Brown, *God and Man*, p. 236. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxiii. No. 1382. V. 28-34.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—St. Mark I.-VIII.* p. 213.

PERSONAL EXPERIENCE

'She felt that she was healed.'—Mark v. 29.

All Christians have to be witnesses, to be living testimonies, that they have become connected with the eternal fountains, and are no longer in need of supply from inferior streams.

I. What a marvellous picture this is! But there is a counter side, shall we say a corroborative side, strongly and perfectly confirming the woman's own feeling. You have it in the very next verse; that is to say, Mark v. 30, 'And Jesus, immediately knowing in Himself that virtue had gone out of Him'. There you have the double picture: the woman knew she had received something, and Jesus that He had given something; with that double testimony who shall stand up and deny it in either of its aspects? This mystery of intercommunication is going on all the day, the outgoing of faith, the incoming of healing. That is the gracious mystery, and in that mystery we ought to live and grow and become quite strong. Ministers surely know when virtue has gone out of them. There are sermons that cost nothing; there are discourses that are delivered from the lips; there is a fluent ignorance. There are sermons that tear the soul as they come out of it—the upper side of that marvellous demoniacal possession. It may be quite possible for persons to preach and to lose nothing, but if they lose nothing they gain nothing. That is the solemn and all but tragical mystery. Jesus Christ gave Himself; He turned His own soul into wisdom, parable, gospel invitation, and feast of mercy. What wonder that He lived but a little time when the drain or the strain upon Him was so exhausting?

II. What a wonderful testimony we find in the first Epistle of John, chapter one, and the opening of the chapter, 'That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life . . . that which we have seen and heard declare we unto you.' Had they no personally original remarks to make? None. How did they preach? By telling what they knew; not by telling what somebody else knew. That is preaching, preaching that cannot be put down; not preaching in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but in the power of the Spirit and the demonstration of the omnipotent grace of the Cross.

III. Have we touched the Saviour? If so, why not say so? why not be personal witnesses to a Divine experience? If we only have what the books have given us, all that we have can be taken away from our hearts; but if the Spirit itself bear witness with our spirits that we are the children of God, then our religion, if I may so say, is treasured where moth and rust do not corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal.

This also is the true strength. If we have our salvation only in our memory we may lose it at any moment. Salvation is not a recollection only, it is a present experience, it is the joy of the morning, it is the crown of the noonday. This is true joy—what we ourselves have felt and known and seen and handled —Joseph Parker, *City Temple Pulpit*, vol. iv. p. 203.

References.—V. 30, 31.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxviii. No. 1640. V. 32.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture —St. Mark I.-VIII.* p. 215. V. 33.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. ix. No. 514. V. 35-43.—*Ibid.* vol. xliii. No. 2507. V. 36.—'Plain Sermons' by contributors to the *Tracts for the Times*, vol. i. p. 99. S. Martin, *Sermons*, p. 191. J. J. Tayler, *Christian Aspects of Faith and Duty*, p. 169. VI. 1-13.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—St. Mark I.-VIII.* p. 228. VI. 2.—N. Dwight Hillis, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lv. 1899, p. 74. VI. 2, 3.—J. Clifford, *The Dawn of Manhood*, p. 20. VI. 2-4.—H. Scott Holland, *Church Times*, vol. lvii. 1907, p. 53; see also *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxxi. 1907, p. 17.

'Is not this the carpenter.'—Mark vi. 3.

In a letter written from Pavia, during his early mission there, Savonarola explains to his mother why he is working in Lombardy instead of nearer home. 'Seeing that He hath chosen me for this sacred office, rest ye content that I fulfil it far from my native place, for I bear better fruit than I could have borne at Ferrara. There it would be with me as it was with Christ, when His countrymen said: *Is not this man a carpenter, and the son of a carpenter?* But out of my own place this has never been said to me; rather, when I have to depart, men and women shed tears, and hold my words in much esteem.'

References.—VI. 3.—C. Jerdan, *Pastures of Tender Grass*, p. 44. C. W. Stubbs, *Pro Patria*, p. 160; see also *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xlv. 1894, p. 129. J. Farquhar, *The Schools and Schoolmasters of Christ*, p. 61. Mark Guy Pearse, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. li. 1897, p. 118. T. Vincent Tymms, *ibid.* vol. lxvii. 1905, p. 264. J. Clifford, *The Dawn of Manhood*, p. 34. C. New, *The Baptism of the Spirit*, p. 231.

'A prophet is not without honour save in his own country.'—Mark vi. 4.

Mr. Bentham is one of those persons who verify the old adage, that 'a prophet has most honour out of his own country'. His reputation lies at the circumference; and the lights of his understanding are reflected, with increasing lustre, on the other side of the globe. His name is little known in England, better in Europe, best of all in the plains of Chili and the mines of Mexico.—Hazlitt, *Spirit of the Age.*

The following extract from Horace Walpole touches a similar chord: 'Adieu, retrospect! It is as idle as prophecy, the characteristic of which is never to be believed where alone it could be useful, i.e. in its own country.'

Compare Mrs. Oliphant's account of Edward Irving's reception in Annandale in 1828.

References.—VI. 5, 6.—R. Scott, *Oxford University Sermons*, p. 276. A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—St. Mark I.-VIII.* p. 237.

ABNORMAL UNBELIEF

'And He marvelled because of their unbelief.'—Mark vi. 6.

I. As Jesus stood face to face with the unbelief of His townsmen, His kinsfolk, and even of the disciples themselves, He found Himself in a world that jarred His Divine instincts and sensibilities. Although it was true of Him here, as in Jerusalem at a later stage, 'He knew what was in man,' He did not look for such a deadening psychic atmosphere. The crisis through which He passed must have been akin to that of the child trained in a refined and gracious home, who goes forth into the world to find a treasured name bandied about by scoffers and treated as though it were of little worth. 'He marvelled because of their unbelief.'

1. Is not the pained surprise flushing his face as eloquent of Divine Sonship as a glint of transfiguration splendour? Our Lord's amazement at this widespread unbelief is a sign of separateness from His infirm and blemished contemporaries. Could He visit again even those who call themselves by His name the same anomaly would recur.

2. This flash of surprise shows that, during His thirty years' sojourn in Nazareth, Jesus had not been subdued to the temper of doubt abroad, but had kept untarnished the fine bloom of His faith.

3. As we see this surprise reflected in the face of Jesus, may we not infer that He came down to His work amongst men from a holy world, where faith was the all-pervading law? That world had put its enduring imprint upon His personality, or rather His personality had put its sovereign imprint upon the world.

II. Our Lord's amazement must have been aggravated as He marked the frivolous causes which fostered this unbelief, and the poor apology His fellow-townsmen made for themselves. Faith is a spiritual principle, demanding for its growth and fruitful development congruous conditions. It is not intellectual in its origin, although some of the perplexities which assail our faith and test its genuineness can only be dispelled by close and clear thinking. It cannot be created by the methods of logic, or finally destroyed by the processes of criticism. If we analyse current phases of unbelief, we find that many causes have entered into it. It is, perhaps, not to be wondered at when the great tumultuous passions of the flesh blind the eyes, and men refuse to believe what is holy; but it is strange and curious, when the only excuse men offer for their lack of faith is that

the authority which invites it is devoid of pomp and outward trappings. Hands which have held plane and saw can scarcely be Divine. If the townsmen of Nazareth had believed in a man of God because he was a professional scribe, rather than a carpenter, such homage of social rank would have been specious and would have been no better than the unbelief which astonished Jesus. They despised the man who had lived and wrought alongside them, though He was wise in word and holy in deed. In the sacredness of One Who had toiled for His daily bread, and wore homely clothes, they could put no confidence. They had eyes for dress and rank, but none for truth, honour, holiness, transcendent personal force.

Vanity always proves itself a prolific soil for the growth of unbelief.

III. In His dependence upon the co-acting faith of men, Jesus Christ reflects the ways of God in the world to-day. We forget how God conditions His work in our midst, and aim inane reproaches against His dealings with us; whilst all the time we know that, apart from our co-operation, He will not do great things for us. This is an established method of His redemptive government.

Let us see to it that we have a faith which satisfies the Lord upon Whom it takes hold and helps on His redemptive acts.—T. G. Selby, *The Strenuous Gospel*, p. 245.

References.—VI. 6.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xvi. No. 935. VI. 7, 12, 13.—R. E. Hutton, *The Crown of Christ*, vol. ii p. 391. VI. 7; VII. 23.—W. H. Bennett, *The Life of Christ According to St. Mark*, p. 84. VI. 16.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—St. Mark I.-VIII.* p. 247. E. B. Speirs, *A Present Advent*, p. 149. W. H. Hutchings, *Sermon-Sketches*, p. 89. VI. 16, 20.—S. Horton, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lvii. 1900, p. 115. VI. 17-28.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—St. Mark I.-VIII.* p. 256.

'For John had said to Herod, it is not lawful for thee to have her.'—Mark vi. 18.

Speaking of Fénelon's 'Télémaque,' in his *Lectures on the Ancien Régime*, Kingsley protests: 'It is something to have spoken to a prince, in such an age, without servility and without etiquette, of the frailties and dangers which beset rulers; to have told him that royalty, "when assumed to content oneself, is a monstrous tyranny; when assumed to fulfil its duties, and to conduct an innumerable people, as a father conducts his children, a crushing slavery, which demands an heroic courage and patience". Let us honour the courtier who dared to speak such truths.'

If the canker of the age can be traced to any single source, it is to the Princess herself. Its sycophancy had its apotheosis in every word said or written to, or said or written of, and meant to be seen by, the sovereign. An abject form of so-called loyalty vitiates and mars almost all the loftiest prose and verse of the time. . . . A margin of servility remains, either explanation of which is alike distasteful; for, honest or dishonest, it showed an otherwise incredible weakness of judgment or character. Bacon's treatment of Essex was nowise treacherous, but it was not noble; his relation to James was ignoble.—Prof. Nichol's *Bacon*, i. 24, 67.

'He heard him gladly.'—Mark vi. 20.

When George Fox arrived in Edinburgh in 1657, he was summoned by the magistrates, examined, and then ordered to leave Scotland in a week's time. 'I desired them to hear what I had to say to them, but they said they would not hear me. I told them Pharaoh heard Moses and Aaron, and yet he was a heathen and no Christian, and Herod heard John the Baptist; and they should not be worse than these. But they cried, Withdraw, withdraw!'

References.—VI. 20.—W. C. E. Newbolt, *Church Times*, vol. xxxii. 1894, p. 219. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. vi. No. 347; vol. xxvi. No. 1548. VI. 26-29.—G. Salmon, *Non-Miraculous Christianity*, p. 155. VI. 30-44.—W. M. Taylor, *The Miracles of Our Saviour*, p. 268. A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—St. Mark I.-VIII.* p. 262. John Laidlaw, *The Miracles of Our Lord*, p. 74.

A DESERT PLACE

'Come apart into a desert place.'—Mark vi. 31.

Few sentences in the New Testament are more pathetic than this: 'There were many coming and going, and the Apostles of Jesus had no leisure so much as to eat'. Jesus had sent them away to do their beneficent work upon the bodies and the minds of men. They had done it; and now they had come back and gathered about Him to tell Him of all that had befallen them. Jesus listened with an interest mingled with joy and pity. He knew that for the happy prosecution of the work of life men need not only enthusiasm but strength. And so when their tale is told, He simply says, 'Come by yourselves apart into a desert place, and take a little rest'. And in words of simple pathos, the Evangelist adds, 'For crowds were coming and going, and they had not even a chance to eat'. So, at the Master's bidding, they entered a boat and went away to a desert place apart.

This is indeed very touching; but the sequel is more touching still. For the kind wish of Jesus was defeated by the importunity of the crowd; and when they crossed to their desert place where they had hoped to be by themselves apart, they found the place crowded with a waiting throng that had hurried round the lake on foot. The work had to be begun again, and the repose seemed further off than ever. In the attitude of Jesus to this new and unexpected obligation, we get a glimpse into the depths of His great heart. An ordinary man would have resented the appearance of a crowd which so effectively dispelled all hope of repose and deprived Him and His of the rest they so sorely needed. But not so Jesus. 'When He landed and saw the great crowds, He had pity upon them and began to teach them many things.' Those who had come to Him in such a way He could in no wise cast out. The seeming annoyance He accepted as a Divine opportunity, and tired and disappointed as He and His disciples were, He

gladly and uncomplainingly began again the great work which His Father had given Him to do.

I. It is worth pondering that Jesus deliberately sought for Himself and His disciples to escape from the crowd. It is also worth pondering that that escape proved impossible. In such a world as ours we are sometimes compelled by circumstances, or by regard for some high moral law, or for the sake of a needy brother, to act against our better knowledge. We know very well that we must spare ourselves, or our strength—and to that extent, our efficiency—will be impaired. Yet the circumstances of our life so arrange themselves that to spare ourselves is impossible; and so long as we have strength to stand upon our feet, we must go on with our work. These exacting demands, which seem at times so cruel, have no doubt their high compensations both here and hereafter; but while we must learn the stern obligation of service from the willingness of Jesus to do what He could for the crowd at the very time that He so yearned to be alone with His disciples, we have also to learn from His desire that they should go apart—and perhaps many of us need this lesson still more—how indispensable is rest and loneliness to all continued and effective work.

II. It is not without interest that the words for 'come' and 'rest' which Jesus used in His invitation to the disciples are the same as those in which He gave to all that laboured and were heavy laden that other invitation which has rung as an evangel throughout the centuries: 'Come unto Me and I will give you rest'. Perhaps here, too, in the suggestion that they go to a desert place there is a similar undertone. Not merely in the desert place will the inspiration be; for Jesus is to be there too. Nor is it only through going apart by themselves that they will renew their strength; for they are to go apart with Him. But all the same, the passage sounds an immortal warning to men who are consumed by zeal for the work to which they are giving their lives. The strongest and the most zealous need to go apart into a desert place and rest awhile. They need it for their own sake; they need it for their work's sake. Much of the work has to be done 'in the midst of the street'; and we can only possess our souls there in patience and peace if we have rested for awhile apart in the desert place.

III. It was to satisfy two needs that Jesus urged upon His disciples this escape from the crowd—the need of aloofness and the need of rest. First, 'Come by yourselves apart'. The disciples had no doubt enjoyed some measure of success in their mission, and they may have been a little elated by their temporary popularity. At any rate, it was now time for them to go apart by themselves, away from the disturbing illusions of the crowd, to a desert place where they could view themselves and their work in truer perspective. A crowd is a terrible thing and a good man may well fear it. He will fear its false standards of success. He will fear lest he come to measure his worth by the size of his crowd. He will fear lest he come to care more for their applause than to tell them the truth. Yes, the crowd is a menace to a man's true estimate of himself; and as he loves his soul, he will once in a while leave it all for the desert place where there is little to turn his head or distort his vision of the eternal things. 'For my part,' said Stevenson, 'I should try to secure some part of every day for meditation, above all, in the early morning and the open air.' Apart from men, and, above all, in the healthful presence of the primeval things, the sky, the mountains, the sea, we can look ourselves more honestly in the face, lift up our hearts to God, and give our panting lives a chance.

When Père Didon had been banished to Corsica, Pasteur wrote to him: 'You will come back with your soul still loftier, your thought more firm, more disengaged from earthly things'. Most of the world's best work has been done by men who prepared for it in some desert place. Jesus began His own ministry with a season in the wilderness, and often afterwards he sought the loneliness of the mountain-side. Paul had his Arabia, and John Bunyan his prison. The street has its place in the religious life, but so also has the desert. He will work best for the crowd who has rested in the wilderness. And not less needful than when first it was spoken is this healing word of Jesus to the crowded and distracted lives of men today: 'Come by yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest yourselves awhile'.—J. E. McFadyen, *The City With Foundations*, p. 227.

REST THE BASIS OF CHARACTER

'Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest awhile: for there were many coming and going.'—Mark vi. 31.

There are two ways of looking at life, and there are two ways of living. The one attracts but does not satisfy. The other satisfies while it attracts. The former, which is the natural, is broad and shallow. The latter, which is the spiritual, is not less wide, but it is deep. In the one case the man begins with observation and ends in criticism, spending himself in busy activity till there is nothing left but self-disgust. In the other an ever-growing sympathy expands into the life and love of God.

I. The life of prayer—the only real and true life—is one that springs from a profound sympathy with the universe, which sees in the great order of which we form a part not only the length and the breadth, but also, and much more vividly, the depth.

The man of prayer is he whose work in the world is the stronger because it manifests the sense of God's nearness; who, always busy, is yet ever at rest; about whom the casual stranger feels that there is a background, a hidden life, a fountain of living water from wells of salvation that our father Jacob gave us not.

II. And the men of prayer teach their brethren that which is the hardest, while it is the truest lesson of life, how to die.

Why is it that we are so slow to learn the secret of Jesus? When He has bidden us watch and pray; when He has begged that for His sake we will give

Him one last hour; He comes and finds us sleeping, for our eyes are heavy and the flesh is weak.

And yet it is just for these supreme moments that Christ came into the world. He came, that out of the deep of our human character He might cry to the Father in that perfectness of unbroken communion, wherein prayer gathers itself up into words that are the expression of a life—'Thy will be done'. Not once nor twice in that career of tireless activity did He go away and pray, 'saying again the same words'. For Jesus' life meant not to do but to be, not to live but to die. Jesus Christ did most for the world when He was doing nothing. The finished work of Christ is not the bustle of a great activity, but the peace of a surrendered life.—J. G. Simpson, *Christian Ideals*, p. 183.

'Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest awhile.'
—Mark vi. 31.

We must know how to put occupation aside, which does not mean that we must be idle. In an inaction which is meditative and attentive, the wrinkles of the soul are smoothed away. The soul itself spreads, unfolds, and springs afresh, and, like the trodden grass of the roadside or the bruised leaf of a plant, repairs its injuries, becomes new, spontaneous, true, and original.—Amiel.

'A man,' said Carlyle once, 'must not only be able to work, but to give over working.'

References.—VI. 31.—S. Baring-Gould, *Plain Sermons on Sunday Observance*, p. 33. W. Pierce, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxiv. 1903, p. 93. C. F. Aked, *ibid.* vol. lxvi. 1904, p. 85. A. B. Boyd Carpenter, *ibid.* vol. lxx. 1906, p. 180. W. P. Balfern, *Lessons from Jesus*, p. 47. T. Teignmouth Shore, *The Life of the World to Come*, p. 53. C. J. Vaughan, *Last Words in the Parish Church of Doncaster*, p. 259. Stopford A. Brooke, *Short Sermons*, p. 246. G. S. Reaney, *Religion in Common Life*, p. 24.

'He had compassion on them . . . and He began to teach them many things.'—Mark vi. 34, 35.

See P. G. Hamerton's *Intellectual Life*, pp. 350 f.

References.—VI. 34.—R. W. Church, *Village Sermons* (2nd Series), p. 91. C. S. Robinson, *Simon Peter*, p. 211. VI. 34-43.—Mark Guy Pearse, *Jesus Christ and the People*, p. 23. VI. 35-44.—Archbishop Trench, *Notes on the Miracles of Our Lord*, p. 217. VI. 36, 37.—J. C. Edghill, *Church Times*, vol. xxxvii. 1897, p. 641.

'Give ye them to eat.'—Mark vi. 37.

Once, when asked by the rector of his church to subscribe to a fund for erecting ten new churches in Manchester, Cobden replied: 'The first and most pressing need of the poor is for food; all other wants are secondary to this. It is in vain to try and elevate the moral and religious character of a people whose physical condition is degraded by the privation of the first necessaries of life; and hence we are taught to pray for our daily bread before spiritual grace. . . . Until this object [i.e. the repeal of the Corn Laws] be attained, I shall be compelled to deny myself the satisfaction of contributing to other public undertakings of great importance in themselves, and secondary only to the first of all duties—*the feeding of the hungry*. It is for this reason that I am reluctantly obliged to decline to contribute to the fund for building ten new churches. My course is, I submit, in strict harmony with the example afforded me by the Divine Author of Christianity, who preached upon the mountain and in the desert, beneath no other roof than the canopy of heaven, and who yet, we are told, was careful to feed the multitude that flocked around him.

References.—VI. 37.—G. Campbell Morgan, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxxiii. 1908, p. 289. Archdeacon Colley, *ibid.* vol. xliii. 1893, p. 253. J. D. Jones, *ibid.* vol. lix. 1901, p. 144. VI. 45-51.—Eugene Bersier, *Twelve Sermons*, p. 177. VI. 45-52.—Archbishop Trench, *Notes on the Miracles of Our Lord*, p. 228. John Laidlaw, *The Miracles of Our Lord*, p. 87. VI. 45-53.—W. M. Taylor, *The Miracles of Our Saviour*, p. 232. VI. 48.—C. S. Robinson, *Sermons on Neglected Texts*, p. 152. J. S. Wood, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lii. 1897, p. 310.

THE MISUNDERSTOOD CHRIST

'But they, when they saw Him walking on the sea, supposed that it was an apparition and cried out: for they all saw Him, and were troubled.'—Mark vi. 49.

I. The Misunderstood Christ.—Why was it the disciples 'cried out'? Why was it that when they saw Him they were troubled? This is the answer. They took Jesus for other than He was.

Multitudes are troubled by Christ, hate the very name and thought of Christ, because they cleave to their sins and have said to evil—be thou my good. But while admitting all that, I do not believe it wholly meets the case or accounts for the prevailing indifference or hostility to Christ.

Men are indifferent to Christ, not to say hostile to Him, because of the false ideas they have of Him, because of the distorted representations given to them of Him. They imagine, somehow, that He will empty and impoverish life for them. They do not realize that wherever He goes He carries joy and brightness with Him, and always transmutes life's water into wine. And so it comes to pass that multitudes reject their Best Friend, and face life's temptations and trials without Christ's succour; and try to bear life's sorrows without Christ's comfort, and go down into the valley of the shadow of death without His presence to strengthen them.

II. The Welcome Given to the Real Christ.—The disciples were troubled by the phantom Christ they thought they saw, but when He spoke to them, and they realized it was Jesus Himself, they received Him willingly, gladly, eagerly into the ship.

When men see the real Christ their hearts are drawn to Him. This Christ without fleck or fault Himself, but identifying Himself in His love and pity with our sinful race—compassionating men, helping men, hoping for men with an indomitable hope, and dying for them in the might of His sacrificial love—men have no fault to find with this Christ. The Christ of the schools may not attract them very much; the Christ they see in the average Christian may even repel them; but the real Christ always wins admira-

tion, worship, love.—J. D. Jones, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxxii. 1907, p. 257.

References.—VI. 50.—W. Gilbert, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxx. 1906, p. 68. A. Maclaren, *Creed and Conduct*, p. 15. VI. 52.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxi. No. 1218. VI. 54, 55, 56.—H. Scott Holland, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. liv. 1898, p. 193. VI. 56.—A. MacKenzie, *ibid.* vol. lii. 1897, p. 166. VII. 8.—Charles Gore, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xlvii. 1895, p. 145. VII. 9-13.—J. H. Bernard, *From Faith to Faith*, p. 181. VII. 12.—H. Scott Holland, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxxiv. 1908, p. 216.

'Making void the word of God by your tradition.'—Mark vii. 13.

In his declaration to the Irish people, in 1650, Cromwell assails the Roman clergy thus: 'How dare you assume to call these men your "flocks," whom you have plunged into so horrid a Rebellion, by which you have made them and the country almost a ruinous heap? You cannot feed them! You poison them with your false, abominable, and anti-christian doctrines and practices. You keep the Word of God from them; and instead thereof give them your senseless Orders and Traditions.'

References.—VII. 13.—Bishop Percival, *Sermons at Rugby*, p. 32.

THE SPHERE NOT PROHIBITED

'When He had called all the people unto Him, He said unto them, There is nothing from without a man that can defile him.'—Mark vii. 14, 15.

It is not often that Jesus 'calls the people unto Him' for the purpose of giving an address. He commonly finds the people already gathered, and the address is a matter of accident. But here is a solemn exception. I say solemn. If Christ called the people to give them a message, He must have thought it a very important message.

I. 'Nothing from without can defile a man.' It is the sweepingness that startles us. 'Nothing from without.' What!—*nothing?* Not the theatre, not the opera, not the concert-room, not the public dancing-hall? No—not in so far as these are things outside. These buildings are all right until they are painted—and it is the soul that paints them. All the tarnish they ever get is from the brush of the soul.

II. You go to walk on a Sunday because other people are at church; you will show them how you are emancipated from superstition. The walk makes you feel atheistic, reckless, disdainful of sacred things. Have you got harm, then, from the outside landscape? No, it is the landscape that has got harm from *you*. Why did you go out with the belief that your Sunday walk was prohibited! It was that belief which poisoned the whole air.

III. If you had only made your walk a worship, if you had gone, not to repel man but to meet God, the outside world would have smiled upon you. The roses would have been radiant; the grass would have been green; the thrush would have been thrilling; the woods would have waved their welcome. The soul that feels God's presence in the garden will be hurt by no plant of Eden.—G. Matheson, *Messages of Hope*, p. 269.

Reference.—VII. 17.—S. Baring-Gould, *Village Preaching for a Year* (2nd Series), vol. ii. p. 66.

'That which cometh out of the man, that defileth the man.'—Mark vii. 20.

We can run up nearly all faults of conduct into two classes—faults of temper and faults of sensuality; to be referred, nearly all of them, to one or other of these two instincts. Now Jesus not only says that things coming from within a man's heart defile him, He adds expressly what these things that, coming from within a man, defile him are. And what He enumerates are the following: *evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, stealings, greeds, viciousnesses, fraud, dissoluteness, envy, evil-speaking, pride, folly.* These fall into two groups; one, of faults of self-assertion, graspingness, and violence, all of which we may call faults of temper; and the other, of faults of sensuality. . . . This was the method of Jesus; the setting up of a great unceasing inward movement of attention and verification in matters which are three-fourths of human life, where to see true and to verify is not difficult, the difficult thing is to care and to attend. And the inducement to attend was because joy and peace, missed on every other line, were to be reached on this.—M. Arnold, *Literature and Dogma.*

THE GENESIS OF EVIL

'And Jesus said, That which cometh out of the man, that defileth the man. For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: all these evil things come from within, and defile the man.'—Mark vii. 20-23.

Our Lord here declares the human heart to be originative; that the vices which darken the world take their rise within us; in the mystery of the soul He teaches us to seek for the mystery of iniquity.

I. Let us Observe Several Theories of the Origin of Evil which are Condemned by the Text.

1. The theory which finds *the origin of evil in the physical world* is thus condemned. Several sins mentioned in the text have nothing whatever to do with the body, and when fleshly sins are specified they are imputed to interior causes. Sin, then, can never be treated adequately whilst it is treated only medicinally.

2. The text condemns *the theory which finds the origin of evil in the intellectual nature of man.* Intellectual culture does not touch the inertia, the blindness, the ingratitude, the selfishness, the cruelty, the wilfulness, which bring our acutest sense of guilt, our bitterest experiences of woe. And careful observers are beginning to see that the redemption of the intelligence is not the redemption of the heart; that the race will not be saved by intellect; and that it is easy to expect too much from the spread of knowledge.

3. The text condemns *the theory which finds the origin of evil in the power of circumstances.*

Christ taught that human character is a question of soul and not of situation. He taught us to look into the infinite depths of the heart for the reasons of good and evil doing. And sin will not be cured by circumstances.

II. Christ's Treatment of Evil.—In the soul Christ declared that it took its origin, and in the soul Christ sought to deal with it—supplying a spiritual antidote for a spiritual plague. He sets before us the highest thoughts and ideals; He creates within us strong faith in these thoughts and ideals; He strengthens us in the inner man that we may scale the heights thus unveiled. The Cross is the symbol of pure thought; it is the truth, love, righteousness of God, appealing to the reason, heart, and conscience of the race. The New Testament is filled with this idea—the renewal of all things through the renewal of the soul.

1. We must remember the inwardness and spirituality of Christ's treatment of sin *in the culture of our personal life.*

We see here the necessity for that regeneration upon which Christ insists. The heart is the fountain of evil; it must be changed and become the fountain of good. 'Marvel not that I said unto you, ye must be born again.'

The perfecting of character throughout must be from within — must be worked out in sanctified thought, feeling, and will. Says Jacob Boehme in a deep passage, 'All now depends on what I set my imagination upon'. Setting his imagination upon the kingdom of God, upon the highest objects, patterns, and callings of the spiritual universe, the believer conquers successively all selfishness and sensuality, perfecting holiness in the fear of God. Let us set our thought on Christ, who is the Sum of all beauty, and that beauty shall dawn in us.

2. We must remember the spirituality of Christ's treatment of sin as we attempt *the renovation of the world.* It is the habit of some reformers to think very slightingly of what they are pleased to consider the sentimentalism of Christianity. But was not Christ right in trusting everything to the power of sanctified thought and feeling? The history of the world is the history of thought. The catastrophe of the race arose in thought—in a thought from beneath. 'And when the woman saw.' Out of that look, imagination, desire, arose the vast tragedy. The great redeeming system began in a thought—in a thought from above. 'It came into His heart to visit His brethren.' Out of that generous thought arose the whole magnificent history of Israel.—W. L. Watkinson, *The Transfigured Sackcloth*, p. 25.

Reference.—VII. 20-23.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxxii. No. 1911.

'Covetousness.'—Mark vii. 22.

A slave unto mammon makes no servant unto God. Covetousness cracks the sinews of faith; numbs the apprehension of anything above sense; and, only affected with the certainty of things present, makes a peradventure of things to come; lives but unto one world, nor hopes but fears another; makes their own death sweet unto others, bitter unto themselves; brings formal sadness, scenical mourning, and no wet eyes at the grave.—Sir Thomas Browne, *Christian Morals.*

In Peking captured concessions were bragged about as the Indians used to pride themselves on the number of scalps they had made. Nowhere as in China have I been so conscious of the infiniteness of space, yet nowhere as in Peking did it seem as if the wide world were not sufficient for the demands of men. The battle of existence was carried on there with that envious jealousy which would rather see a country waste and barren than leave it to the hands of others. However rich and big the world is, the weak will always be empty-handed, for the covetousness of the strong is larger than the largest space.—*The Letters Which Never Reached Him*, pp. 9, 10.

THE MYSTERY OF CHRIST'S FAME

'He could not be hid.'—Mark vii. 24.

I. There is a great peculiarity about the fame of Jesus: it came to Him through shut doors. For one thing, His own *will* shut the door against it. He wanted to be hid—to do good by stealth and escape the praise of it; He was afraid lest Divine Majesty should crush human love. When He performed a benevolent action He charged His followers that they should not make it known; when He was accidentally revealed in glory He said, 'Tell the vision to no man until the Son of Man be risen'—removed from human sight.

II. The men who win fame in this world are usually the men who strive for it. But the peculiarity of Jesus is that worldly fame beset Him when He was striving to avoid it. That is the paradox which Paul points out in the Epistle to the Philippians. He says that God gave Him a name that is above every name at the very time when He was performing an act of self-burial—when He was emptying Himself, assuming the form of a servant, wearing the fashion of human poverty, taking a lowly place, carrying the burden of the Cross, closing His career by a premature death.

III. And then, every natural *circumstance* in the life of Jesus was unfavourable to His fame. His birth was humble, His surroundings poor, His home isolated, His youth toiling, His brothers adverse, His era prosaic, His country a Roman province, His auditors unlettered, His enemies influential, His ideal unshared. Is anything conceivable more opposed to fame! And yet, in spite of all, 'He could not be hid'. He has broken through the thickest cloud in the universe—the cloud of social obscurity. Truly was it written 'at *midnight* there was a cry heard, "Behold, the bridegroom cometh!"' His sunshine was unheralded by dawn; it flashed from a rayless sky. It was by *night* that Bethlehem's plains were flooded with His glory. His light shone from darkness, and the darkness comprehended it not—never has comprehended it. It has been the mystery of mysteries how a bad world has glorified

a great soul. If there had been physical ornaments round that soul, we could have understood it; but it passes human knowledge to explain how in a field consecrated to materialism a life of spiritual beauty 'could not be hid'.—G. MATHESON, *Messages of Hope*, p. 277.

THE EVER-EVIDENT CHRIST

'He could not be hid.'—MARK VII. 24.

I. Christ's Personality Prevents His being Hid.—How could or can such a personality be hid? He was evidently man, but He was all but as evidently God. He was more than 'Rabbi' to those who were in the secret of His presence. He was 'the Christ' and 'Lord' and 'God'.

This is an *eternal* circumstance. Jesus Christ never has been and never can be absolutely hid. Jesus may have been, but Jesus *Christ* never. The Saviour was the Saviour or ever He was historified. Before His Incarnation He could not be hid. He was not hid from prophets and kings and priests and psalmists and lowly souls in the dispensation of imperfect times.

As in Old Testament times and as in New Testament times, so now, in these times, Jesus Christ cannot be hid. Here is the Christ's future history as well as His past history—'He could not be hid'. My text is prophecy, and not history alone. In heaven Christ cannot be hid. He never was hidden there.

II. Some Things in Christ are Hid.—Being man we can perceive much of His personality, but being God-man we realize that there is in Him much we cannot discern. Christ becomes less and less 'hid' to His followers as they follow on to know Him. He discovers Himself to them. They see Him in His own light.

III. Sometimes Christ Seeks to be Hid.—There is a sense in which Christ can and will be hid. He wills to be hid from those who have grieved Him, but He longingly awaits their penitence that He may disclose Himself to them again. He at times seeks to be hid that He may save and help. He did thus to His disciples when He was here. Often He hides Himself in *events*. He hides Himself in *persons*. Christ hides Himself in *influences*.

IV. There are Those who Cause Christ to be Hid. They who do not preach Him are such. The pulpit may extinguish the Saviour it was built to uplift. When Christ is not lived He is hid. They who obey Him reveal Him.

V. There are Hallowed Spheres in which Christ cannot be Hid.—In a truly Christian Church He cannot be hid. In a truly Christian life Christ cannot be hid. There are few scenes in which it is more impossible to hide Christ than a Christian home. In a Christian sick chamber Christ cannot be hid. In the death of a saint Christ cannot be hid. —DINSDALE T. YOUNG, *The Crimson Book*, p. 190.

REFERENCES.—VII. 24-30.—W. M. Taylor, *The Miracles of Our Saviour*, p. 295. Archbishop Trench, *Notes on the Miracles of Our Lord*, p. 280. A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—St. Mark I.-VIII.* p. 268. John Laidlaw, *The Miracles of Our Lord*, p. 247. VII. 24-37; VIII. 22; IX. 29.—W. H. Bennett, *The Life of Christ According to St. Mark*, p. 99. VII. 26-28.—C. Holland, *Gleanings from a Ministry of Fifty Years*, p. 253. VII. 27, 28.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxii. No. 1309. VII. 28, 29.—'Plain Sermons' by contributors to the *Tracts for the Times*, vol. vii. p. 28. VII. 31.—John Laidlaw, *The Miracles of Our Lord*, p. 258 VII. 31-37.—W. M. Taylor, *The Miracles of Our Saviour*, p. 187. Archbishop Trench, *Notes on the Miracles of Our Lord*, p. 288. VII. 32.—R. W. Hiley, *A Year's Sermons*, vol. ii. p. 100. W. C. E. Newbolt, *Church Times*, vol. lviii. 1907, p. 229. A. G. Mortimer, *One Hundred Miniature Sermons*, vol. ii. p. 76. VII. 33, 34.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—St. Mark I.-VIII.* p. 273.

DOES GOD SUFFER?

'And looking up to heaven, He sighed, and saith unto him, Ephphatha, that is, Be opened.'—MARK VII. 34.

I. JESUS sighed when He said 'Ephphatha'—He sighed at the new possibilities of temptation, suffering, and sin that He was conferring by opening channels to a mind that had hitherto been closed, and empowering a tongue hitherto silent, but in spite of the sigh He spoke the Ephphatha. Whatever the risk, the gift must be given that the end may be attained.

I think that we have in this consideration the assurance of the unconditional responsibility of Almighty God for the final consummation of His purpose upon each one of us. He knew how much the gift of life would cost us. He did not give it frivolously and carelessly. He gave it because of the magnificent result that He purposes from it. And this knowledge, in our higher moods, should encourage us in unquestioning submission to His blessed will, even when it seems most sharply to cross our human will.

II. Jesus is unceasingly saying 'Ephphatha' to every human soul. He is saying, 'Be opened' to those dormant faculties of our spiritual nature which we have overlaid with the flesh. The circumstances of the daily life of each one of us provide the medium through which the call comes. But we are not automata, we are not machines; and constantly the sigh of the Divine Humanity is intensified by our miserable human perversity, which enables us to go on hardening ourselves year after year against the influence of the God within us.

Human goodness, or character, is like the beauty that you admire in a flower; it is from within and not from without. You cannot make a flower beautiful by paint and enamel; you cannot make a life beautiful by external moralities and austerities, and the like—the beauty that is on the flower was in the flower first. The sun shining in its power speaks the 'Ephphatha, Be opened,' to the bud, and it obeys. And when that bud opens, when that Divine potentiality begins to spring within you, when those aspirations are felt struggling, when the heart, half-shrinkingly, turns Godward, when it recognizes fitfully the truth of Divine Sonship, when it begins

to say, 'My Jesus, I love Thee, I know Thou art mine,' must not its capacities be stimulated and its life be fed? If you could see through a very powerful microscope the surface of a leaf, you would find that it was covered with tiny mouths, with lips like human lips seizing the invisible carbonic acid gas from sunbeam and air, and incorporating it into itself. It is as though the sunbeam had said to the flower, 'He that eateth me, the same shall live by me'. Similarly, the will, forcing the spirit upwards, drinks in and absorbs the life of God.

III. Finally, every opened flower speaks its Ephphatha to all that is around it; it appeals to the sense of beauty and to the sense of smell. And so every opened heart must be lifted above timidity, fear of criticism, moral cowardice, and must strive to help others. The first law of a converted soul is effort for the brethren. — Basil Wilberforce. *Sermons Preached in Westminster Abbey*, p. 30.

THE CONDITIONS OF SUCCESSFUL WORK

'Looking up to heaven, He sighed, and saith unto him, Ephphatha, that is, Be opened.'—Mark vii. 34.

Having regard to the text and to our Lord's actions we discern three things.

The first is, fellowship with God. 'Looking up to heaven.'

Second, sympathy with man. 'He sighed.'

Third, these are the conditions of successful work. He spake the word of power. 'Be opened.'

I. Fellowship with God.—'He looked up to heaven.' It is a way our Lord had. When He felt that any work required to be done, or when He had to make a fresh departure in His work, He always looked up to heaven. He felt He was doing the Father's work, and as He did the work He looked to the Father for help and guidance.

Heaven was always open to Jesus. It was His home, and its presence was always felt. To other men the atmosphere of heaven seems strange. 'If a flower fell now and then from heaven,' says Mrs. Browning, 'we soon would catch the trick of looking up.' There is intercourse between earth and heaven, or there may be. Moment by moment the thoughts and prayers of man may ascend to God, and swiftly the answers of God may return to man. The example of habitual fellowship is one to follow. The example of looking up to heaven when any work has to be done, or when we are thinking of any new undertaking, is also one to follow.

II. Sympathy with Man.—'He sighed.' It is the outcome of the deepest sympathy with the wretched, miserable condition of man. This pity finds expression in that natural sign of an oppressed spirit—the sigh. It is also the expression of compassion, and of the hope that in some way they may be able to remove the causes of misery. But this feeling of compassion does not rest in mere feeling. With our Lord it is always the prelude to action for the removal of the causes of sorrow. Observe, however, that the conditions of successful work always go together. Fellowship with God and sympathy with man are the two conditions of successful work.

III. The man who has fellowship with God and sympathy with man can speak the word of power, and say to the darkened eye, 'Be opened,' and to the stammering tongue 'speak'. This is no mere expectation, no mere enthusiastic expression of hope. It is a fact which is as well attested as any fact within human experience. It is a fact guaranteed to us many times and often in the history of Christ's Church.—J. Iverach, *The Other Side of Greatness*, p. 203.

'And looking up to heaven, He sighed.'—Mark vii. 34.

See Keble's lines on 'The Twelfth Sunday after Trinity'.

THE SAVIOUR'S SIGH

'Looking up to heaven, He sighed.'—Mark vii. 34.

It would seem that while our Lord was doing acts of mercy publicly, intending them to impress the minds of the people as the prophetic marks of the Messiah (Is. xxxv. 5-7), this miracle He reserved to be a private act of charity. He took the poor afflicted man aside from the multitude, and so effected his cure in private. The friends of the afflicted man entreated our Lord to 'put His hands upon him'. This our Lord did not do; perhaps there was superstition in their request. They may have attributed a magical charm to this particular action, instead of ascribing the cure of disease to the Divine power acting through the visible sign. But though our Lord would not perform this cure precisely in the manner dictated, yet nevertheless, on this as on other occasions He had recourse to an outward and visible sign. As in the Sacraments of His Church, which He instituted, our Blessed Lord seems to have kept in view a congruity between the outward and visible thing signifying, and the inward and spiritual gift signified, so, in this miracle, we may discern a propriety in putting His fingers into the man's ears, when He intended to pierce them; and in loosening the tongue, which had so long cleaved to the dumb man's mouth, by moisture taken from His own. The ceremonies were alike suggestive to the man himself, and must have awakened in him that degree of faith in Christ of which he was capable.

And now we come to what is very striking in this miracle: 'Looking up to heaven, He sighed'.

I. It may be that He sighed because there was some struggle or exhaustion in His human nature, and whenever He exerted His omnipotence He felt the virtue to go out of Him. But, passing by this consideration, may we not suppose that the sigh was occasioned by His foreknowledge of the abuse of that good gift He was about to bestow—an abuse which could scarcely fail to happen when the blessing was conferred upon a fallen man?

It is a cause of sadness at all times that no good can be done without its being mingled and clogged with evil. When, for instance, a child is baptized, there is joy and gladness in the Church. But, alas!

that very child may, in after years, sin away baptismal grace, may crucify afresh the Lord of Life, and become twofold more the child of hell than before. Beyond all other thoughts, consider when God the Son became Incarnate, while the angels were praising God; was there not, think you, something of sadness in the praises of Simeon? Surely he must have sighed whilst, looking up to heaven in thanksgiving, he said: 'Behold this Child (our Incarnate God) is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel'. It was given him to foreknow that what would be 'a savour of life unto life' to some, would be to others 'a savour of death unto death'.

II. Our Saviour sighed, then, to think how the gift He was conferring might be abused. He sighed at contemplating the various temptations to wrong with which the blessing could not fail to be attended. But He looked to heaven, to have the comfort of seeing there the joys awaiting all the blessed, who, having been redeemed by His Blood, shall have passed faithfully the time of their probation here, and so, through much tribulation, have entered into glory.

What was present to the omniscient Saviour is still future to us; and, when that future comes, God grant that we may be among the redeemed, and bear our parts in the celestial song. Let us pray to our gracious Lord that He will open our ears to hear His commandments; that He will write His laws upon our hearts; and that out of the fullness of the heart our lips may speak words of devotion to Him, and of brotherly kindness to our neighbour.

References.—VII. 34.—H. J. Wilmot-Buxton, *Sunday Sermonettes for a Year*, p. 109. C. S. Robinson, *Sermons on Neglected Texts*, p. 281. W. Boyd Carpenter, *The Burning Bush*, p. 111.

CHRIST THE GOOD MAKER AND DOER

(*Epiphany*)

'He hath done all things well: He maketh both the deaf to hear, and the dumb to speak.'—Mark vii. 37.

I. St. Mark probably saw in the saying of the multitude an unintended likeness to the language which the book of Genesis uses about the finishing of the work of Creation. 'God saw everything that He had made, and behold it was very good.' The words as given by St. Mark are nearly the same, though not obviously so in English: He hath made all things in a good manner: but the later saying goes further than the earlier.

For who is the 'He' in each case? In the book of Genesis we are told that *God* saw everything that He had made. God therefore was the maker. In St. Mark when the multitude said, 'He hath done all things well,' they were speaking of Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of Mary. Jesus therefore was the maker and the doer. We have all been taught not only that Jesus of Nazareth was Himself God, but that the Creation was especially His work. We, who already believe that He who restored speech and hearing to that poor man was the Son of God Himself, may gather from it much that we ought never to forget both about creation and about the work of Christ on earth, that is, the very substance of the Gospel itself.

II. Creation, in the way we usually think of it, cannot appear otherwise than a very cold and distant thing. But the Gospel brings near to us Him who once was afar off, and with Him all His works. When He in whom the world was made became man, every man might henceforth feel that the world belonged to himself in a way that was impossible before. All Christ's acts as man were so many signs that the powers which so plainly and wonderfully obeyed Him had in truth been obeying Him from the time they came into being.

III. 'God saw everything that He had made, and behold it was very *good*;' 'Christ hath done all things *well*' is the Gospel comment upon His miracles. In the time between these two sayings the fall of man had come to pass. In some way or other men fancied that the fall had touched God and His dealings with us men. But no. The Son of God doth all things well now no less than before man had fallen. He knows of man's fall and all the miseries that it has brought on body and spirit far better than man can do. Therefore He came from heaven to become a suffering man Himself. The virtue which went forth from His hands to cure those diseases of ear and tongue was but a faint token of the virtue which should hereafter go forth from His Cross to heal the more grievous hurts which sin had brought upon men's spirits.—F. J. A. Hort, *Village Sermons* (2nd Series), p. 73.

References.—VII. 37.—C. Parsons Reichel, *Sermons*, p. 277. H. Scott Holland, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lviii. 1895, p. 200. S. Baring-Gould, *Village Preaching for a Year* (2nd Series), vol. ii. p. 99. C. W. Furse, *Sermons Preached at Richmond*, p. 121.

THE COMPASSION OF THE CHRIST

'Jesus called His disciples unto Him, and saith unto them, I have compassion on the multitude.'—Mark viii. 1, 2.

So spake the Christ; so wrote the Holy Spirit; short, simple words, 'I have compassion'; pregnant with strength and with comfort for the toiling and heaving crowds of each succeeding age. There was nothing attractive then, even as there is nothing attractive now, in an eastern crowd. The motive power of the miracle was the eternal love of God manifest in the flesh.

I. Observe how Christ takes the disciples into His confidence. Then, as now, He demanded with a tender urgency the sympathy of His people.

Observe the tender, condescending attention to detail; hour by hour the little store gradually failing; the perplexity creeping over them as to the future. 'They have nothing to eat; they have been with Me three days; I have compassion.'

Very feeble is the faith; very poor—oh, there is such comfort in that!—very poor is the response of those earth-bound disciples. 'Whence can a man satisfy these men with bread here in the wilderness?'

Gently He strengthens their faith; patiently the

great Teacher develops their slowly dawning intelligence. He will not dispense with their help. He will not deprive them of the new teaching that they will gain from co-operating with His Divine wisdom. He will not deny to Himself, in His great heart of love, the joy of their co-operation. 'How many loaves have ye? Go and see!'

II. It was not a mere passing emotion by which the heart of Jesus was stirred in that desert place. You find the same compassion all through His life on earth. In the forty days after His resurrection you find it still the same. He is 'the same' in the Acts of the Apostles. When St. Paul was in great perplexity the Lord stood by him and strengthened him.

III. Do you feel that if only you were good—if only you had done right all your life, if only you had loved God as you ought to have loved Him—that then you could look up to Jesus Christ, and ask Him to have compassion upon you?

Do you understand this: that when Christ died on the Cross, it was God and Man Who was there; and that all your life was known to Him, even then? What has surprised you in your failures does not surprise Him. What weighs down your spirit has weighed on the Spirit of Jesus of Nazareth all through the long ages. He has borne your griefs and carried your sorrows; from the beginning your sins were all present to Him. But He says, 'I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins: return unto Me; for I have redeemed thee'. 'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.'—Bishop Howard Wilkinson, *The Invisible Glory*, p. 38.

References.—VIII. 1, 2.—H. M. Butler, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xlviii. 1895, p. 94. VIII. 1-9.—Archbishop Trench, *Notes on the Miracles of Our Lord*, p. 293. John Laidlaw, *The Miracles of Our Lord*, p. 105. VIII. 1-10.—W. M. Taylor, *The Miracles of Our Saviour*, p. 307. VIII. 1-30.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xlviii. No. 2761. VIII. 2.—B. Wilberforce, *Feeling After Him*, p. 94. W. Boyd Carpenter, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lvi. 1899, p. 65. S. Baring-Gould, *Village Preaching for a Year* (2nd Series), vol. ii. p. 58. E. S. Talbot, 'Considerateness,' *Sermons*, 1828-93.

'From whence can a man satisfy these men with bread here in the wilderness?'—Mark viii. 4.

See Keble's lines on 'The Seventh Sunday after Trinity'.

The multiplication of readers is the multiplication of loaves. On the day when Christ created that symbol, He caught a glimpse of printing. His miracle is this marvel. Here is a book; with it I will feed five thousand souls, a hundred thousand souls, a million souls—all humanity. In the action of Christ bringing forth the loaves, there is Gutenberg bringing forth books. One sower heralds the other.—Victor Hugo.

BREAD IN THE WILDERNESS

'And His disciples answered Him, From whence can a man satisfy these men with bread here in the wilderness?'—Mark viii. 4.

The question of the disciples is one which we often ask, at least in spirit, when we contrast our work with what may seem the nobler work of others, our circumstances with the more favourable circumstances in which they are placed.

I. **From Whence can a Man Satisfy these Men with Bread Here in the Wilderness?**—It appears to us to be impossible to fulfil Christ's commands. The very nature of our work is against us. We would labour much if we might choose our own field, but here the return is uncertain and at best scanty. Whatever lies before us, poor and mean and trivial as it may seem, is the work of God. We dare not weigh in our earthly balance the issues of life. Fame, honour, reputation, eminence are only reflections, or too often shadows, of worth and heroism. Great and small are terms relative to our little world. We can labour honestly and heartily though we know not to what end. When David kept his few sheep in the wilderness he was gaining strength to rule over Israel.

II. **From Whence can a Man Satisfy these Men with Bread Here in the Wilderness?**—Our situation, we think, is peculiarly difficult. The tone of our surroundings is uncongenial to devotion. Temptations are many and powerful. There is no quarter to which we can look for immediate help. If it were otherwise we too should be changed. And yet shall we allow that right has no inalienable power: that truth and purity are mere accidents of outward things. It was in the wilderness that Christ revealed Himself as the supporter of His fainting people. Let us not doubt. The sense of our need is the condition of God's help.

III. For let us not be mistaken. If the wilderness is to be crowned for us with the beauty of Eden; if our difficulties and trials are to be changed into blessings, we must first be found waiting upon Christ. He will not remove our wants, but He will satisfy them. He will not take away our temptations, but He will give us strength to conquer them. He will bless the little which we offer Him, and so it will overflow with a rich increase.—B. F. Westcott, *Village Sermons*, p. 280.

References.—VIII. 4.—F. E. Paget, *Helps and Hindrances to the Christian Life*, vol. ii. p. 100. R. Winterbotham, *Sermons and Expositions*, p. 173. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxxii. No. 1885.

THE VEILING FROM MAN OF DIVINE ENERGY

'He commanded the people to sit down, and He took the seven loaves, and gave to His disciples to set before them.'—Mark viii. 6.

I. Such was Christ's method of distributing the bread among a starving multitude. From a physical point of view it must have been highly satisfactory to them—they were hungry. But from a religious point of view it was perhaps a little disconcerting. I think they would have liked better to have been served by His own hand.

II. From a Christian standpoint one is disposed to ask, If Jesus had 'compassion on the multitude,' why did He consult the disciples at all? *They* certainly had very little compassion; they did all they could to

damp His benevolence. Why make use of such miserable agents, such retarding agents? These could only carry His bequest in *wagons;* He could have borne it Himself on wings. Why did he not use the wings? Why commit an errand so momentous into hands so sluggish when His own hand was burning to fulfil the deed?

III. It was because, great as was His compassion for the multitude, He had a compassion greater still for His own disciples. It was sad the multitude should be hungry; it was sadder still that His followers should be blunted to that hunger. We all know that the Divine mercy could at any time take a short road to the land of Canaan—could send showers of manna in a moment and banish want at a word. That would be compassion on the multitude, but not compassion on me. The multitude would have the broken bread; but I should lose the *breaking* of the bread—the greater blessing of the two.—G. MATHESON, *Messages of Hope*, p. 284.

REFERENCES.—VIII. 8.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons Preached in Sackville College Chapel*, vol. ii. p. 214. VIII. 11, 12.—R. Duckworth, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxxviii. 1890, p. 209.

THE SPONTANEITY OF TRUE CHARITY

'He sighed deeply in His spirit, and saith, Why doth this generation seek after a sign?'—MARK VIII. 12.

I. THE Pharisees had asked Christ for a sign from heaven—that is to say, a sign from the sky. It was as if they had said, 'We see a great deal of bodily healing by your hand. Yet, after all, there is nothing supernatural in bodily healing. We all know that mind has influence over body—that faith can strengthen the physical, that hope can aid health, that love can cure lassitude, that novelty can divert from nerves. All this happens quite naturally. But let us see you arrest a star, let us behold you turn the course of a planet, let us witness you bringing the rain after drought or the sunshine after rain, and then we shall believe in you.'

II. Now, where lay the sting of this to Jesus; what was there in it that made Him sigh in spirit? Was it because men doubted His power to work a sign in heaven? No; it was because they attributed His benevolence to the desire of working a sign upon *earth*. Such an imputation would make *any* philanthropist sigh. Imagine a child meeting with an accident when a doctor was passing and that the doctor offered his services. Imagine that the next morning a paragraph appeared in the newspapers stating that he offered his help with a view to manifest his medical skill. Would not this physician feel that he had been misrepresented in character and depreciated in the moral scale.

III. That is an exact parallel. When Jesus saw an accident in the streets of life He offered His services; but He did not offer His services as a proof of His Messianic skill. He offered them because He could not help it. He brought succour, not to show that He was master of Divine power, but because the sorrows of human nature mastered *Him*. He was never more passive than in His acts of healing. Our calamities overwhelmed Him. His charities taught a lesson, but He did not *bestow* them to teach a lesson. He bestowed them to ease His own pain. Cana's poverty made Him uncomfortable. Bethany's grief bowed Him. The leper's fate lacerated Him. The demoniac's cry disturbed Him. The task of the toilers tired Him. The burdens of the worldly wearied Him. The pain of Dives's thirst parched Him. The remorse of Magdalene marred His visage. He gave because He must.—G. MATHESON, *Messages of Hope*, p. 226.

REFERENCES.—VIII. 12-25.—J. Parker, *Wednesday Evenings at Cavendish Chapel*, p. 110. VIII. 13-21.—J. Laidlaw, *The Miracles of Our Lord*, p. 105.

ON MEMORY

'Now the disciples had forgotten.'—MARK VIII. 14.

MEMORY is man's link with the past, with his own past and with the past of the world. Further, it is one of the great factors of character. It is our past history which makes us what we are, and every incident as it occurs, before it slips into the past, has a distinct influence on us. It is like the little stroke of the sculptor's chisel on the statue, the little touch of the painter's brush on the canvas. It helps or mars the general effect.

I. All this shows the importance of educating the memory, for *all* our faculties should be enlisted in the service of Christ, and memory is not always on Christ's side. It is sometimes in active mutiny against Him. How, then, may we best train the memory?

1. One of the best ways of training the memory is to *learn good things by heart*.

2. But in this, as in all else that concerns the spiritual life, you can have no better aid than *prayer*. Offer this prayer every morning of your life: 'Grant, I beseech Thee, Lord, that I may forget what I ought to forget, and remember what I ought to remember'. Does this seem to you too small a thing to pray about? It is not small, for is it not memory that gives half their strength to promptings of evil—books read which have given us evil suggestions, words spoken which we had better never have heard?

3. That you may forget what you ought to forget! Yes. This is one of the ways in which our memory most needs training. What *not* to remember!

Forget all injuries, slights, and grounds of offence, all unkindness done to us or hasty words. In nine cases out of ten we have provoked the injury ourselves, magnified the slight, taken offence where none was intended. In such cases forgetfulness is a duty.

4. There is One who remembers. God knows everything, sees everything, and forgets nothing. Our idea of Godhead involves of necessity a wakeful and unerring memory.

5. Forget, also, any unkind story you may have heard about others. If you remember it, you may be tempted to repeat it; even if you refrain from this, the memory is apt to prejudice you against the person, perhaps quite unfairly.

II. Then the second half of the prayer: 'That I may remember what I ought to remember'.

Have you ever reflected on the extraordinary difference it would make in the world's happiness if every one remembered the right thing at the right time? What terrible mischief is sometimes caused by a simple act of forgetfulness!

Pray to remember others. Think how what you say and do will affect them.

III. 'Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report: if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on *these* things.'—C. H. Butcher, *The Sound of a Voice that is Still*, p. 154.

References.—VIII. 15.—D. Fraser, *Metaphors in the Gospels*, p. 135. VIII. 17, 18.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—St. Mark I.-VIII.* p. 302.

'Having eyes, see ye not.'—Mark viii. 18.

Vision is essentially personal and individual, involving selection and interpretation. . . . All our knowledge is affected by our personality, and this really makes it knowledge. The naked reflection of a mirror is not knowledge.—F. J. A. Hort.

'With rich munificence,' says Carlyle of Mirabeau, 'in a most bespectacled, logic-chopping generation, nature has gifted this man with an eye.'

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THE GRIEF THAT IMPLIES GLORY

'He began to teach them, that the Son of Man must suffer many things.'—Mark viii. 31.

I. 'He *began* to teach them.' It was indeed the beginning of a new lesson for humanity. The old lesson for humanity had been that a 'Son of Man' must suffer nothing—that the higher the life the more exempt should it be from pain. That belief was embedded deep in the heart both of Gentile and Jew. The Gentile deified massive strength—strength on which the woes of the world could make no impression and which was incapable of tears. The Jew exalted the sons of the morning—the men who basked in fortune's radiant smile; he deemed that the most dowered must be to God the dearest.

II. Christianity began to paint a fresh ideal of humanity—an opposite ideal. It said that the test of a man's height was not his inability, but his capacity, to feel. 'The Son of Man *must* suffer many things.' It is not merely that He may, but that He must. Suffering is involved in the fact that He *is* the Son of Man—that He is at the top of the hill. If He were lower down, He would be protected. The very elevation of His person has put Him in collision with the full sweep of the blast and the full coldness of the air. Remember, that was the very source of Christ's temptation in the wilderness.

III. And though He stands at the top, the principle is in measure true for those who are climbing. There is a suffering which the good alone can know. There is a furnace which is only heated for the man of God, a den of lions which only awaits the holy. Not every eye can weep over Jerusalem—that is a *Divine* gift of tears. Men said of Jesus, 'Let God deliver Him if He delighted in Him!'—if He is good, why is He so burdened! Had He been less good He would have been less burdened. His purity made His pain; His tenderness made His tears; His selflessness made His sorrow; His righteousness made Him restless; His lustre made Him lonely; His kindness made Him kinless; His crown made His cross. It was because He was the Son of Man He had not where to lay His head.—G. Matheson, *Messages of Hope*, p. 11.

Reference.—VIII. 33.—C. S. Robinson, *Simon Peter*, p. 267.

'Let him deny himself.'—Mark viii. 34.

Compare the following passage from Samuel Rutherford's letters, which curiously resembles the tone of the *Theologia Germanica*. 'Oh that I were free of that idol which they call *myself*; and that *Christ* were for *myself*; and *myself* a decourted cypher, and a denied and forsworn thing! But that proud thing, *myself*, will not play, except it ride up side by side with Christ, or rather have place before Him. . . . Oh, but we have much need to be ransomed and redeemed by Christ from that master-tyrant, that cruel and lawless lord, *myself*. Nay, when I am seeking Christ, and am out of myself, I have the third part of a squint eye upon that vain, vain thing, *myself*, *myself*, and something of mine own.

'O blessed are they that can deny themselves, and put Christ in the room of themselves! Oh, would to the Lord that I had not a *myself* but Christ; nor a *my lust* but Christ; nor a *my ease* but Christ; nor a *my honour* but Christ!'

'Let him take up his cross.'—Mark viii. 34.

People who saw only the weaker side of his studies in religion were apt to think of him as diluting Christianity with a kind of sentiment, half philosophic and half poetic. Yet what we find here is that the things most quoted from the Gospels are the things most uniquely and sternly Christian. Those tremendous sayings, which so few of us dare really face, *Whosoever will save his life shall lose it; whosoever taketh not up his cross, and cometh after Me, he cannot be My disciple*, are just the texts that he set down to have before him again and again.—*Fortnightly Review*, 1903, p. 462, on 'Matthew Arnold's Notebooks'.

References.—VIII. 34.—C. Parsons Reichel, *Sermons*, p. 294. W. J. Butler, *The Oxford Sermon Library, Sermons for*

Working Men, p. 177. W. Scott Page, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lvi. 1899, p. 45. H. Montagu Butler, *Harrow School Sermons* (2nd Series), p. 197. VIII. 35.—E. H. Bickersteth, *Thoughts in Past Years*, p. 261. C. Jerdan, *Pastures of Tender Grass*, p. 277. VIII. 35, 36.—J. B. Lightfoot, *Ordination Addresses*, p. 271.

'What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?'—Mark viii. 36.

An arctic torpor seizes upon men. Although built of nerves, and set adrift in a stimulating world, they develop a tendency to go bodily to sleep; consciousness becomes engrossed among the reflex and mechanical parts of life, and soon loses both the will and the power to look higher considerations in the face. This is ruin; this is the last failure in life; this is temporal damnation, damnation on the spot and without the form of judgment. *What shall it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, and lose himself?*—R. L. Stevenson, *Lay Morals.*

That Wrong is not only different from Right, but that it is in strict scientific terms *infinitely* different; even as the gaining of the whole world set against the losing of one's own soul, or (as Johnson had it) a Heaven set against a Hell; that in all situations out of the Pit of Tophet, wherein a living man has stood or can stand, there is actually a Prize of quite *infinite* value placed within his reach, namely a *Duty* for him to do; this highest Gospel, which forms the basis and worth of all other gospels whatsoever, had been revealed to Samuel Johnson; the man had believed it, and laid it faithfully to heart.—Carlyle.

PROFIT AND LOSS

'What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?'—Mark viii. 36.

I shall place side by side the world and the soul, and shortly compare their respective value.

I. What then shall I say of the things of this world, which men appear to think so valuable—money, houses, land, clothes, food, drink, learning, honours, titles, pleasures, and the like? I shall say two things. First, they are all really worthless: capable, no doubt, of being turned to a good use (every creature of God, says the Bible, is good if sanctified by the Word of God and prayer), but I mean this, that if you suppose they are in themselves able to make you really happy, you are woefully deceived.

Secondly, I say that all the things of the world are perishable.

II. Such is the world; and now what shall I say of the soul, which people appear to hold so cheap?

1. It is the most valuable part of man, because it is the part in which we differ from the brute creation. It is that wonderful principle by which God made a distinction between ourselves and the other works of His hand, for we read that 'God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life,' and then what was the grand conclusion?—'man became a living soul'. It was the soul for which Christ was content to take our nature on Him, and suffer death upon the cross.

2. It is eternal. The soul shall never perish, and when the earth and all that it contains are burning up, the soul shall enter upon a new state of existence, which shall never change, and that state shall be everlasting life or everlasting fire.

III. You wish to be saved. There are few that do not; but unfortunately men generally want to be saved in their own way, and not according to the Bible; they love the crown, although they will seldom take up the cross. You need not be in any uncertainty about it; you may soon know what your state is; it is all to be found in this little book; the marks, the signs, the tokens, the evidences are so clearly recorded, that he who runs may read. And what are they?

1. It is written here: 'All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God'; 'There is not a just man upon earth that doeth good and sinneth not'. Do you know this?

2. Again it is written: 'Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God'; 'Ye must be born again'. Have you gone through that mighty change?

3. Again it is written: 'He that believeth not shall be damned'. 'Without faith it is impossible to please Him.' Have you any of this faith?

4. Lastly, it is written: 'Be ye holy, for I am holy'. 'Without holiness no man shall see the Lord.' What do you know of this holiness?—J. C. Ryle, *The Christian Race*, p. 231.

'What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?'—Mark viii. 36.

These words, spoken by Ignatius Loyola, had a deep influence on Francis Xavier. The two were walking one day in the gardens belonging to the University of Paris. 'Francis's thoughts were full of the applause his last lecture had gained him, in which he had even outdone himself. Ignatius was thinking of it too; and as they walked up and down they talked of learning and talents and of the glory which is earned by them,' and then having proved to his companion, by the interest he showed, how fully he entered into his feelings, Ignatius said softly, as if halt to himself, 'But what shall it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?'

References.—VIII. 36.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. ii. No. 92. VIII. 36, 37.—C. Gore, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xlvii. 1895, p. 161. R. W. Dale, *ibid.* vol. l. 1896, p. 36. J. R. Wilkin, *ibid.* vol. liii. 1898, p. 252. N. Montagu Butler, *Harrow School Sermons* (2nd Series), p. 259.

'What shall a man give in exchange for his soul?'—Mark viii. 37.

It is remarkable that notwithstanding the universal favour with which the New Testament is outwardly received, and even the bigotry with which it is defended, there is no hospitality shown to, there is no appreciation of, the order of truth with which it deals. I know of no book that has so few readers. There is none so truly strange and heretical and unpopular. To Christians, no less than Greeks and Jews, it is foolishness and a stumb-

ling-block. There are, indeed, some things in it which no man should read aloud more than once. *Seek first the kingdom of heaven. Lay not up for yourselves treasures on earth. If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven. For what is a man profited if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?* Think of this, Yankees! . . . Think of repeating these things to a New England audience! . . . Who, without cant, can read them aloud? Who, without cant, can hear them and not go out of the meeting-house? They never *were* read, they never *were* heard.—From Thoreau's *Week on the Concord.*

References.—IX. 1.—A. T. Pierson, *The Heights of the Gospel*, p. 141. IX. 1-8.—A. B. Davidson, *Waiting Upon God*, p. 139. IX. 2.—A. G. Mortimer, *The Church's Lessons for the Christian Year*, part ii. p. 277. W. Ernest Beet, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxvi. 1904, p. 396. IX. 2, 3.—G. Campbell Morgan, *ibid.* vol. lix. 1901, p. 365. IX. 2-8.—C. S. Macfarland, *ibid.* vol. lxii. 1902, p. 39. IX. 2-13.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—St. Mark IX.-XVI.* p. 1. IX. 2-29.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xlii. No. 2454; vol. l. No. 2881. IX. 6.—George Tyrrell, *Oil and Wine*, p. 174.

'This is My beloved Son: hear Him.'—Mark ix. 7.

Oh that this misled and blindfolded world would see that Christ doth not rise and fall, stand or lie by men's apprehensions! What is Christ the lighter, that men do with Him by open proclamation as men do with clipped and light money? They are now crying down Christ. . . . But the Lord hath weighed Him and balanced Him already: *This is My beloved Son in Whom I am well pleased: hear ye Him!* This worth and weight stand still. It is our part to cry: 'Up, up with Christ, and down, down with all created glory before Him!' Oh that I could heighten Him, and heighten His name, and heighten His throne!—Samuel Rutherford.

References.—IX. 7.—'Plain Sermons' by contributors to the *Tracts for the Times*, vol. i. p. 259. A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—St. Mark IX.-XVI.* p. 7.

JESUS ONLY

'Jesus only with themselves.'—Mark ix. 8.

These words conclude St. Mark's narrative of our Lord being transfigured upon the Holy Mount. St. Luke's words, concluding the same narrative, are very closely like those of St. Mark, 'Jesus was found alone'. St. Matthew's words contain this same striking expression; 'They saw no man save Jesus only,' but omits 'with themselves,' which St. Mark uses to show how Jesus was found, identified by the three chosen Apostles, who were participators in that mysterious and glorious scene: St. Peter, St. James, and St. John. Of the three St. James was not permitted to contribute to the New Testament, for he fell by the sword of Herod. St. Peter refers in his Second Epistle in explicit terms to the Transfiguration; St. John in a passage in the opening of his Gospel speaks of the same event. This is a very striking and magnificent part of the Scriptures, and the event itself was a very striking and magnificent event in the Lord's life on earth, and the narratives of St. Matthew, St. Mark, and St. Luke are very striking and beautiful. The more we consider them the more do we see the import of the closing sentence. Evidently the three Evangelists were guided by the Holy Spirit to put particular emphasis upon that little sentence, 'Jesus only'. It cannot be by accident, it cannot be a mere coincidence, and it cannot be—as it might have been if it had been mentioned by only one of the Evangelists—only a subordinate phase of the Transfiguration. It is clear that this is one of the most solemn and suggestive passages in the whole Scriptures. Let us take a view of the Transfiguration as a whole, so that we may understand this concluding lesson of it.

I. Historical Meaning of the Transfiguration.—We shall see that it was a very real event in our Lord's history. It is recorded in detail by three Evangelists and with absolute independence. Each Evangelist compares the brightness of Christ to three things. That shows how deeply rooted in fact it was. It was no fiction; it was no illusion, no mere vision. It was an actual sight seen by the eyes of the three chosen Evangelists. This was a great and real event, and it is only when you grasp what a real thing it was that you will understand the concluding meaning of it. We must lay hold of the fact that our Lord was transfigured visibly, physically, so that the brightness of His Transfiguration passed through His raiment. We must lay hold of the reality of the Transfiguration. Of what value is the reality of the Transfiguration? It is first of all valuable as history.

II. Doctrinal Significance of the Transfiguration.—The Transfiguration is also important doctrinally. St. Peter said, in answer to our Lord, 'Let us make three tabernacles, one for Thee, one for Moses, and one for Elias'. But then came the Divine voice, which peremptorily forbade the making of the tabernacles. 'This,' said the Father's voice, 'is My beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased: hear ye Him,' and you will observe that whenever St. Peter refers to the Transfiguration he makes no reference to Moses and Elijah. He did not want to learn the lesson twice. 'This is My beloved Son: hear ye Him.' Now you see the meaning of the text, 'They saw no man but Jesus only'.

III. Personal Application.—'Jesus only with themselves.' Christ must be all in all to each one of us. That is the lesson of the Transfiguration. Our Lord Jesus Christ must be the chief among ten thousand. It seems as if St. Peter was thinking of the Transfiguration when he said, 'There is none other name under heaven given amongst men whereby we must be saved'. Jesus Christ must take first place before everything else. We must remember that Jesus Christ alone can save us. This is true, simple, evangelical religion. I think that is why the whole of the Evangelists wrote the text like this in order that they might put down their testimony to what

the great voice of the Father meant. What Jesus is this? This is the Jesus Who was transfigured. This is the Jesus Who can save, keep, console, and sanctify us, if we commit ourselves to Him in the simplicity of faith and the strength of obedience to that great word which is God's own word: 'This is My beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased: hear ye Him'.

References.—IX. 8.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xlv. No. 2634. A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—St. Mark IX.-XVI.* p. 11. IX. 14.—J. McNeill, *Regent Square Pulpit*, vol. iii. p. 137. IX. 14-29.—A. B. Davidson, *Waiting Upon God*, p. 163. W. M. Taylor, *The Miracles of Our Saviour*, p. 319. Archbishop Trench, *Notes on the Miracles of Our Lord*, p. 200. John Laidlaw, *The Miracles of Our Lord*, p. 278. IX. 14-32 and 43-48.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xlix. No. 2844. IX. 17.—H. Scott Holland, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxxiv. 1908, p. 216. IX. 17-20.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xlvii. No. 2731. C. Holland, *Gleanings from a Ministry of Fifty Years*, p. 190. IX. 19.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—St. Mark IX.-XVI.* p. 13.

THE PRICE I PAY FOR SEEING CHRIST

'When he saw Him, straightway the spirit tare him.'—Mark ix. 20.

I. This invalid only knew himself to be a weakling when he saw Jesus. There is nothing which rends the spirit like the sight of a high ideal. Spiritual stagnancy is the result of a low standard. There is a phrase we often hear: 'He is on very good terms with himself'. We apply it to a man who has never had any rending of the spirit. I can never be on bad terms with myself as long as there is only one man within me. If in my heart there hangs the picture of a second self, a higher self, a self which mimics my errors and tells me how things ought to be done—if there is in my soul a man who sings after me the song I have spoiled, reads after me the piece I have ruined, performs after me the service I have poorly rendered—that presence makes me small. It puts me on bad terms with myself—on wrestling terms, the terms on which Jacob stood with his angel.

II. It will not in the least soothe my struggle to know that I am the first man in the company, in the village, or even in the kingdom. There was not a man of his day so good as Jacob—he was the chosen patriarch of God. But he was far below his angel—the ideal of what he would like to have been. It was his angel that made him miserable.

III. When Paul met a storm at sea, the men of Malta said he must be a bad man. We are all apt to feel like the men of Malta. When we see a storm-tossed spirit toiling with its own waves and battling with its own breezes, we say, Surely he is a child of the darkness! We are wrong; he is a child of the light. It is only because he is a child of the light that he wrestles with the deep. He felt no discord till he heard the music. He knew no midnight till he saw the morning. He dreamed not of his mean attire till he gazed on the seamless robe. He got his cross from Christ, his lademess from light, his burden from seeing beauty.—G. Matheson, *Messages of Hope*, p. 117.

References.—IX. 20-22.—J. S. Swan, *Short Sermons*, p. 242. IX. 21.—H. Scott Holland, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxxiv. 1908, p. 216. IX. 22, 23.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxxvii. No. 2224. IX. 22-24.—H. M. Butler, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lvi. 1899, p. 81. IX. 23.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. viii. No. 474; vol. xxix. No. 1744. A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—St. Mark IX.-XVI.* p. 22. J. M. Neale, *Sermons for the Church Year*, vol. ii. p. 193. J. W. Diggle, *Sermons for Daily Life*, p. 239. IX. 23, 24.—J. Leckie, *Sermons Preached at Ibrox*, p. 362.

'Lord, I believe; help Thou mine unbelief.'—Mark ix. 24.

According to Dr. Oncken, Bismarck's last words were: 'Dear Lord, I believe. Help Thou my unbelief, and receive me into Thy heavenly kingdom.'

See also R. H. Hutton's *Theological Essays*, pp. 245, 246.

I have sometimes, in looking back on the doubts and questionings of this period, thought and perhaps even spoken of myself as an infidel. But an infidel I assuredly was not: my belief was at least as real as my incredulity, and had, I am inclined to think, a much deeper seat in my mind. But, wavering between the two extremes—now a believer, and now a sceptic—the belief usually exhibiting itself as a strongly based instinct, the scepticism as the result of some intellectual process—I lived on for years in a sort of uneasy, see-saw condition, without any middle ground between the two extremes, on which I could at once reason and believe.—Hugh Miller, *My Schools and Schoolmasters*, xvii.

UNBELIEVING BELIEF

'And straightway the father of the child cried out, and said with tears, Lord, I believe; help Thou mine unbelief.'—Mark ix. 24.

I think in these wonderful words we have four things—the birth, the infancy, the cry, and the education of faith.

I. The Birth of Faith.

There are three elements here: eager desire, the sense of utter helplessness, and the acceptance of Christ's calm assurances.

This man knew what he wanted, and he wanted it very sorely. Whosoever has any intensity and reality of desire for the great gifts which Jesus Christ comes to bestow, has taken at least one step on the way to faith. Conversely, the hindrances which block the path of a great many of us are simply that we do not care to possess the blessings which Jesus Christ in His Gospel offers. If we saw things as they are, and our needs as they are, nothing would kindle such intensity of longing in our hearts as that rejected or neglected promise of life eternal and Divine, which Jesus Christ brings.

Further, we have here the other element of a sense of utter helplessness. If we understand what is wanted in order to bring one soul into harmony and fellowship with God, we shall recognize that we ourselves can do nothing to save, and little to help ourselves.

And the last of the elements here is listening to the calm assurance of Jesus Christ. He stands at

the door of each of our hearts and speaks to each of our needs, and says: 'I can satisfy it'. His assurance helps trembling confidence to be born, and out of doubt the great, calm word of the Master smites the fire of trust.

II. The Infancy of Faith.

As soon as the consciousness of belief dawned upon the father, and the effort to exercise it was put forth, there sprang up the consciousness of its own imperfection. He would never have known that he did not believe unless he had tried to believe.

Thus, then, in its infancy, faith may and does co-exist with much unfaith and doubt. The same state of mind, looked at from its two opposite ends, as it were, may be designated faith or unbelief; just as a piece of shot silk, according to the angle at which you hold it, may show you only the bright colours of its warp or the dark ones of its weft.

There follows from that thought this practical lesson, that the discovery of much unbelief should never make a man doubt the reality or genuineness of his little faith.

III. Notice the Cry of Infant Faith.

'Help Thou mine unbelief.'

The lesson is that, even when we are conscious of much tremulousness in our faith, we have a right to ask and expect that it shall be answered. Weak faith *is* faith. The tremulous hand *does* touch. The cord may be slender as a spider's web that binds a heart to Jesus, but it *does* bind.

But let us remember that, whilst thus the cry of infant faith is heard, the stronger voice of stronger faith is more abundantly heard. The measure of our belief is the measure of our blessing.

IV. We have here the Education of Faith.

Christ paid no heed in words to this confession of unbelief, but proceeded to do the work which answered the prayer in both its possible meanings.

Thus He educates us by His answers—His over-answers—to our poor desires; and the abundance of His gifts rebukes the poverty of our petitions, more emphatically than any words of remonstrance beforehand could have done. He does not lecture us into faith, but He blesses us into it.—A. MACLAREN, *The Wearied Christ*, p. 125.

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DEFENDERS OF THE FAITH

'He followeth not with us.'—MARK IX. 38.

A STRANGELY pathetic interest attaches to a great disciple when we find him making a great mistake. For even loyal disciples are not infallible. Sometimes they seriously misrepresent the mind of Jesus, and have to be brought back to wisdom by the stern way of rebuke. Such a rebuke was once administered to John the beloved. And it was very necessary, for he had been betrayed by his zeal into a great error. He had misread the large charity of Jesus. He had taken it upon him to rebuke one who had been doing beneficent work in the name of Jesus; and Jesus had been constrained to rebuke him in the memorable words, 'Forbid him not'.

The attitude of John is remarkable; more remarkable still is the reason for that attitude. 'Master, we saw one casting out devils in Thy name; and we forbade him, because he followeth not with us.' One would have supposed that John might well have felt sure of this man, for he had given two indubitable proofs of being on the side of Jesus. He was casting out devils—and was not that part of the very work which Jesus had commissioned His disciples to do? And he was doing this in Jesus' name, proving thereby that he was a believer in the power of that name and a disciple at heart; for, as Jesus said, no man could do a mighty work in His name and thereafter lightly revile Him. But John, with sublime indifference to these conclusive marks of discipleship, condemns and forbids him for no better reason than that 'he followeth not with us'. We would say it was amazing if we did not know that it was the way of the human heart always. It is indeed the commonplace of Church history. We forbade him, because he followeth not with us.

I. Apparently, then, it is possible for those who love Jesus dearly to misunderstand Him seriously, and to hamper the work of others who are serving Him with as much zeal as themselves and with more intelligence; for we cannot help feeling that the unknown man who owes his place in history to John's foolish rebuke, had an instinctive penetration into the essential conditions of discipleship far superior to John's own. For John's measure of discipleship was, at any rate for the moment, a purely external one—he followeth not with us—whereas

this man felt that the true disciple is one who does the work of the Master, and that whether he follows 'with us' or not is a matter of the most utter indifference. Of course there were reasons at that time why John should have so completely, though mistakenly, identified the cause of his Master with that of His little disciple band; all the same, there is struck here the first note of that well-intentioned arrogance which has seldom been wanting in the history of the Church. It has too often seemed to the powers that be that because some one 'followeth not with us,' does not share their opinions or endorse their methods, he is necessarily wrong, and must therefore be denounced, censured, or excommunicated, as the temper of the age suggests; whereas all the time it may be he that is right and they that are wrong. He may be, by his actions or words, interpreting the spirit of his Master far more profoundly than they; and they may need the solemn rebuke, 'Forbid him not'.

II. In this spirit which is ever ready to rebuke unconventional service, there is something not altogether to be despised, for it is animated by jealousy for the honour of the Lord. Nevertheless, it is one of the most hateful sins of which a disciple of Christ can be guilty. For in insisting upon external standards, it displays a lack of insight into the real conditions of service; in rebuking a man who is doing the work of Jesus in the name of Jesus it displays an utter lack of charity as well as of intelligence; and in hampering the work of a sincere, devoted, and intelligent servant, it is injuring the work of Christ Himself, and retarding the progress of the world.

III. The spirit of Jesus is slowly working, and there are signs that the day is perhaps not so very far distant when men who are casting out devils in His name will be free to do their work serenely, none either daring or desiring to make them afraid. Then the true Church union will be consummated; for then men will be more eager to welcome than to forbid, more ready to accentuate the glorious hopes they share in common than the relatively trivial speculations which divide them. They will care more for the person of Christ than for a particular view of His person, and more for truth than for a specific formulation of it. So long as we refuse to welcome other disciples of Christ—be they men or churches—simply because they 'follow not with us,' we shall have to remain in an isolation that is anything but splendid—the poorer for the lack of the resources and stimulus which they might bring us. When we recognize the relative unimportance of the things which separate us, and what Reville has called 'the inanity of all these discussions in matters which exceed the capacity of our intelligence,' then will be seen the folly of saying, 'We forbade him, because he followeth not with us'; and such a whisper will not be heard in all the land.—J. E. McFadyen, *The City With Foundations*, p. 87

'And John answered, . . . We forbade him because he followeth not us.'—Mark ix. 38.

I remember one instance of Keble's narrowness extremely characteristic of him. A member of a family with which he had been intimate had adopted liberal opinions in theology. Keble probably did not know what these opinions were, but regarded this person as an apostate who had sinned against light. He came to call one day when the erring brother happened to be at home; and learning that he was in the house, he refused to enter, and remained sitting in the porch. St. John is reported to have fled out of a bath at Ephesus on hearing that the heretic Cerinthus was under the roof. Keble, I presume, remembered the story, and acted like the Apostle.—Froude's *Short Studies*, vi. p. 269.

References.—IX. 38-42.—J. Adderley, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxiv. 1903, p. 284. IX. 39, 40.—Newman Smyth, *ibid.* vol. xlvi. 1894, p. 38. IX. 40.—Hugh Black, *ibid.* vol. lxxi. 1907, p. 20. W. J. Knox-Little, *Church Times*, vol. xxx. 1892, p. 338.

'If thy hand cause thee to stumble, cut it off.'—Mark ix. 43 f.

Prescott, in the opening chapters of his *Mexico*, observes that the magnificent table-land of forest-trees in Mexico had to be destroyed for prudential reasons. 'The early Spaniards made as indiscriminate war upon the forest as did our Puritan ancestors, though with much less reason. After once conquering the country, they had no lurking ambush to fear from the submissive, semi-civilized Indian, and were not, like our forefathers, obliged to keep watch and ward for a century.'

References.—IX. 43, 44.—J. E. Roberts, *Studies in the Lord's Prayer*, p. 94. R. J. Campbell, *Sermons Addressed to Individuals*, p. 151. IX. 43, 47, and 48.—W. Leighton Grane, *Hard Sayings of Jesus Christ*, p. 179. IX. 49.—George Jamieson, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xlii. 1892, p. 377. A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—St. Mark IX.-XVI.* p. 55. IX. 49, 50.—Stopford A. Brooke, *Short Sermons*, p. 30. IX. 50.—E. E. Lark, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxii. 1902, p. 21. E. M. Goulburn, *Occasional Sermons*, p. 390. R. Waddy Moss, *The Discipline of the Soul*, p. 137. F. E. Paget, *Sermons on Duties of Daily Life*, p. 103. F. J. Jayne, *Keble College Sermons*, 1870-76, p. 229. A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—St. Mark IX.-XVI.* p. 64. X. 1.-31.—W. H. Bennett, *The Life of Christ According to St. Mark*, p. 144. X. 2-9.—H. Hensley Henson, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxix. 1906, p. 177. X. 6.—J. Parker, *Studies in Texts*, vol. i. p. 84. X. 6-9.—R. E. Hutton, *The Crown of Christ*, vol. ii. p. 417. X. 7, 8, 9.—J. Phillips Dickson, *Church Times*, vol. xxxvi. 1896, p. 640.

THE DIRECTING OF THE EARLY MIND

'They brought young children to Him, that He should touch them.'—Mark x. 13.

I. 'That He should touch them'—not simply 'that they should touch Him'. This latter was quite unnecessary. Touching is the metaphor for influence. There was no difficulty in the heart of Jesus being touched by the children; but it was extremely difficult to arrange that the heart of the children should be touched by Jesus.

II. It is easy for the developed mind to understand

the child—the developed mind has itself been a child and retains a memory of its beginning. But it is not at all easy for the child to understand the developed mind—that is a stage still in its future. Yet it is by higher models that the child must be touched if it is to have any mental growth. It is not enough that it should be thrown into the company of its equals. Two children of equal age and capacity might play for ever in the Garden of Eden without rising a step higher, if there were not heard betimes a more mature voice walking through the garden in the cool of the day. And I would add that, the more mature the new voice is, the better will it be for the child. A boy's best chance of growth is in associating with people already grown. If you want to make him a poet, do not point him to the model of the village rhymster. Point him to the greatest. It is always the voice of the Lord God that develops young Adam.

III. The element of childhood remains in the greatest. The perfected soul gathers up its past. It has many mansions in its nature and it prepares a place for all surmounted stages. It can understand the child better than the youth can, for it has a mansion for childhood—which the youth has not. The youth is ever pressing onward and upward; he fain would forget. But the mature soul goes back. It lives in sympathy with the things beneath it. There is no model so fitted to the heart of the child as that which is planted at the summit of the hill.—G. Matheson, *Messages of Hope*, p. 181.

References.—X. 13, 14.—'Plain Sermons' by contributors to the *Tracts for the Times*, vol. iii. p. 241. X. 13-15.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—St. Mark IX.-XVI.* p. 70. X. 13-16.—C. Holland, *Gleanings from a Ministry of Fifty Years*, p. 60. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. x. No. 581; vol. xxxii. No. 1925.

'Suffer the little children to come unto Me.'—Mark x. 14.

Tenderness is as necessary as courage if a life of sorrow is to be made wholly heroic. The very unselfishness of such a man's work for others is in danger of bringing with it something of isolation as well as of sympathy. Against his will a certain sternness and aridity will infuse itself into his manner and his style. . . .

It is against such an impression of Mazzini as this that his friends are at most pains to guard. They wish us to imagine him as a man kept in deep peace by aspiration only, and by such simple pleasures as are inseparable from the childlike heart. They tell us of his playful humour, of the mild brightness of his friendly eyes, of his delight in birds, in flowers, in children.—F. W. H. Myers, *Modern Essays*.

Luther is said to have remarked upon this text: 'We must not look at this text with the eyes of a calf or of a cow vaguely gaping at a new gate, but do with it as at court we do with the prince's letters, read it and weigh it again and again, with our most earnest attention'. He particularly refers to its sanction of infant baptism.

Goethe once gave the amazing dictum to Eckermann that 'if Christ were painted suffering the little children to come unto Him, it would be a picture that expressed nothing—at any rate nothing of importance'. Much truer is the remark of Maeterlinck in *Wisdom and Destiny*: 'When Christ Jesus met the Samaritan woman, met a few children, and the woman who had been an adulteress, then did humanity rise three times in succession to the level of God'.

THE CHILDREN'S FRIEND

'Suffer the little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God.'—Mark x. 14.

As we read the narrative of Christ's life, you will find that not many miracles are recorded to us in anything like fullness of detail, and yet of those miracles you will find that four are given to the children. In four of those miracles do we have a child brought in the arms of faith to a loving Saviour. You will find that they occupy different social stations, from a nobleman's son to an outcast's daughter, and yet each one can claim the loving sympathy and ready help of the Children's Friend.

What then more appropriate sequel to all this interest and kindness could you have than that, on His last journey, His tragical journey to death, there should be a troop of these little children brought to the Children's Friend? His disciples rebuked those that brought them. 'But when Jesus saw it, He was much displeased.' This is a very strong word used of Jesus Christ. In fact it is the only time in the whole of the Gospel narrative that such a strong word is ever used of Him. 'Much displeased;' you will find the same Greek word used in the Gospel narrative of the ten disciples when they heard that James and John had tried to secure the best places in the coming kingdom, and there it is translated 'Moved with indignation'. We can therefore quite consistently translate our passage, 'When Jesus saw it, He was moved with indignation'.

I. Take Heed lest you Stand in the Way of a Little One Coming to Jesus, or He will be moved with indignation. Through three long years He had borne with them with infinite patience; misunderstandings He had tolerated, ignorance He had enlightened, jealousy He had put on one side; but when at last they would stand in the way of the children and keep the children from Him, then He seemed to be overpowered with a sense of the injustice and the wrong, and He was moved with indignation. In the light of this narrative let us be careful what we do in the interests of the children. For if this patient Christ could be moved with indignation at the men who would keep the children back from Him, I pity the men to-day who are doing the like thing. I pity the man who has first polluted the child-like innocence.

II. What is the Reason for this Sympathy?—We have it in the words, 'Of such is the kingdom of God'. A traveller in a far-off country comes across a piece of scenery that is just like that to

which he is familiar in his homeland. Among strangers, speaking an unknown tongue, he one day comes across one with whom he can hold converse, and he says, 'How refreshing this is. It reminds me of home.' And so it was with Jesus Christ. Moving along this earth of ours, desolated through sin, where He was indeed a lonely stranger, ever and again He came across these fragrant little flowers, which reminded Him of those which grow on the mossy banks of the heavenly kingdom, and when He saw their innocence and guilelessness and purity, He felt, 'That is like home,' and He grasped the treasure in His embrace. 'Of such is the kingdom of God.' And so we thank those disciples for their interruption and their action, if only for the gracious response which it drew out from the Saviour.

References.—X. 14.—W. C. E. Newbolt, *Counsels of Faith and Practice*, p. 104. X. 14-16.—R. E. Hutton, *The Crown of Christ*, vol. ii. p. 357. X. 15.—H. J. Wilmot-Buxton, *Holy-Tide Teaching*, p. 35. X. 15, 16.—'Plain Sermons' by contributors to the *Tracts for the Times*, vol. x. p. 275.

'And He took them in His arms.'—Mark x. 16.

'Artists,' says Dostoieffsky in one of his novels, 'always draw the Saviour as one who is acting in some story related in the Gospels. I should do differently. I should represent Christ alone—the disciples did leave Him alone occasionally. I should paint one little child left with Him; this child had been playing about with Him, and had probably just been telling the Saviour something in its pretty, baby prattle. Christ had listened to it, but was now musing—one hand rested on the child's bright head; His eyes gazing out with a far-off expression. Thought—great as the universe—was in His eyes. His face was sad. The little one leant its elbow on Christ's knee, and with its cheek resting on its hand, gazed up at Him as only children gaze. The sun was setting. And there you have my picture.'

References.—X. 16.—H. Jones, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxxvii. 1890, p. 86. R. Collyer, *Where the Light Dwelleth*, p. 105.

'THEN JESUS, BEHOLDING HIM, LOVED HIM'

'And when He was gone forth into the way, there came one running, and kneeled to Him, and asked Him, Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?'—Mark x. 17.

Let us consider the subject of the young man of great possessions coming to our Lord, and the wonderful fact that is recorded of him, that Jesus beholding him, loved him.

I. What was There that Attracted this Divine Love in this young man? Was it not that every word of the young man was verily and indeed true? But there was in his heart a feeling of insufficiency. There was something more to be done, to be learned. He had tried to keep his life pure, he had tried to keep away from the allurements of wealth, and he had done well, but somehow there was something lacking. He felt that his character was not yet formed, that there was some trial, some treatment from on high, that was necessary to perfect his character, and a perfect character he would have. So he comes to our Lord with that desire in his heart, and our Lord gives him the answer, and his heart leaps. 'One thing thou lackest: go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor.'

II. A Tremendous Charge.—This young man wanted an answer to his question, and expected a hard one, but not so hard, and he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions. Tradition tells us that this young man was Lazarus, of whom it is said again that the Lord loved Lazarus and his sisters, and we can see how his heart was touched. 'And the Lord, beholding him, loved him,' and that love would not let him go. It followed him even through death, and coming back from death it caught him, and Lazarus in the end gave up all. Not for reward. We never hear of him again. He disappears from our sight after the wonder of his recall from the dead. No, no great reward, but only the fact that he did give up all and followed Jesus.

III. Self-sacrifice must Mark the Life of Every Christian.—The life that is not marked by self-sacrifice is not the life of a true disciple of the Lord. To some the call comes to-day just as it did to that young man, but this is not the case with everybody. The call comes in different ways to every person, and it is for every soul to realize the voice of Jesus in guiding his life.

(*a*) *Sometimes the command will come to us at a crisis in our life.*

(*b*) *Sometimes in the most sacred moments of our Eucharistic Feast.*

(*c*) *Sometimes in the still, small, persistent voice of our conscience.*

Then somehow we get to know that our Lord would have us give up something for His sake and we must be ready.

They who learn the power of giving up for the Master and giving up for others learn indeed the secret of true joy.

References.—X. 17.—C. Stanford, *Expository Sermons on the New Testament*, p. 57. T. Sadler, *Sunday Thoughts*, pp. 201, 250. W. Webb-Peploe, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. liii. 1898, p. 368. R. Duckworth, *ibid.* vol. xliv. 1893, p. 267. X. 17-21.—J. B. M. Grimes, *ibid.* vol. lxxii. 1907, p. 346. X. 17-22.—A. B. Davidson, *The Called of God*, p. 301. Richard Glover, *British Weekly Pulpit*, vol. ii. p. 350. J. McNeill, *Regent Square Pulpit*, vol. ii. p. 49; see also *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxv. 1904, p. 131. X. 17-27.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—St. Mark IX.-XVI.* p. 74. X. 17-45.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. li. No. 2946. X. 18.—A. B. Bruce, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxxvii. 1890, p. 219.

THE DISTINCTIVENESS OF CHRISTIAN MORALITY

'He answered and said unto Him, Master, all these have I observed from my youth. Then Jesus said unto him, One thing thou lackest: sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor.'—Mark x. 20, 21.

These are the words of that young man who won the love of Jesus before he had embraced the cause of

Jesus. It is something to know that one can win the love of Christ before he calls himself a Christian—that the Divine eye recognizes a virtue conferred by nature as well as a virtue derived from grace.

I. The question the young man asked was really this: In what respect does Christianity differ from the Ten Commandments? What is there in your doctrine that can give it a more permanent life than can be claimed by these precepts of Moses? He tells Jesus that, so far as his consciousness goes, he has kept undeviatingly the law of these commandments. He asks what more can be wanted to make him a Christian.

II. The answer of Christ is striking: 'Go, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor'. If we would see its significance, we must look at the Spirit, and not the mere form of the words. Let me try to paraphrase what our Lord means: 'You say you have given to every one his due. It is well; I admit your integrity in this respect. But is this the measure of all possible integrity? Is it the climax of goodness when a man can say that he has rendered to every one his due? It is the climax of *justice*; but is justice the highest step on the ladder of goodness? No; there is a step beyond justice—generosity. It is not enough that you give to your brother what he has a legal right to; you must impart to him that to which he has no legal right. You have done well to respect his person, to keep your hands from his property, to abstain from calumniating his name. But after all, that is only a *refraining* of the hand. Is there to be no outstretching of the hand?

III. Are you content with doing your brother no wrong? Is there no good that you can do him? You have not killed your brother; but have you enlarged his life? You have not stolen; but have you added to his store? You have not defamed; but have you spread his virtues? You have brought him no domestic dispeace; but have you brought him domestic joy? You have refused to covet his possessions; but have you ever coveted possessions *for him*? If not, there remaineth for you a rest that is still unachieved.—G. Matheson, *Messages of Hope*, p. 185.

Reference.—X. 20-22.—James Martineau, *Endeavours After the Christian Life* (2nd Series), p. 13.

JESUS' APPRECIATION OF MORALITY

'Then Jesus beholding him loved him.'—Mark x. 21.

When it is recorded in this vivid Gospel, as by one who had seen the affection in the Master's eye, that Jesus loved the young ruler, we ought to allow their full meaning to the words.

I. Upon the face of it Jesus did not regard a person who is moral, but not religious, as utterly depraved.

To say that people who are not pious are depraved is an absurdity, for we know that many persons who are not religious practise higher morals, in business especially, than some who are. When Jesus considered this young man's life the Master loved him, and He did not love what was not good.

II. Jesus' appreciation of the young ruler also reminds us that the more morality there is in the community, the better both for Church and State.

III. And Jesus' treatment of this excellent young man suggests that one object of Jesus' mission is to raise morality into spirituality. Morality is like the clean and well-chiselled marble of the ancient story, beautiful, but cold. When the Spirit of Jesus touches it the stone reddens and lives. Religion is morality touched with emotion, till, instead of duty we speak of love, and to the treasure of a good conscience and an honourable life are added the peace which passeth all understanding, the joy unspeakable and full of glory and that vision of God which in itself is life everlasting.

It was not in vain that the young ruler kept the commandments; it was because he kept them that Jesus loved him. It is not in vain that any man has lived bravely outside religion, it is because he has done so well that Jesus desires to have him for a disciple. Our Lord has a welcome for all men who will come to Him, even the thief upon the cross; but of only one seeker in the Gospels is it written that Jesus loved him. He was not a reprobate, nor was he a Pharisee, he was a well-living and high-minded man. When, therefore, one like the young ruler approaches Jesus, the Master sees a man after His own heart. When such a man refuses the cross which alone can raise him to his full manhood the Master is bitterly disappointed. And that man suffers the chief loss of life.—J. Watson (Ian Maclaren), *The Inspiration of Our Faith*, p. 98.

'Give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven.'—Mark x. 21.

In the morning my servant brought me word that Levett was called to another state, a state for which, I think, he was not unprepared, for he was very useful to the poor.—Dr. Johnson's *Letters*.

The purest forms of our own religion have always consisted in sacrificing less things to win greater; time, to win eternity; the world, to win the skies. The order, *sell that thou hast*, is not given without the promise—*thou shalt have treasure in heaven*: and well for the modern Christian if he accepts the alternative as his Master left it—and does not practically read the command and promise thus: *Sell that thou hast in the best market, and thou shalt have treasure in eternity also.*—Ruskin's *Queen of the Air*, sec. 50.

References.—X. 21.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. li. No. 2946. J. Clifford, *The Dawn of Manhood*, p. 1. Caroline Fry, *Christ Our Example*, p. 102. R. W. Church, *The Gifts of Civilization*, p. 27. David Ross, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. li. 1897, p. 42. A. Balmain Bruce, *ibid.* vol. liv. 1898, p. 359. George Tyrrell, *Oil and Wine*, p. 246. X. 21, 22.—J. H. Gurney, *Plain Preaching to Poor People* (5th Series), p. 13. X. 21, 28-30.—Stopford A. Brooke, *The Fight of Fate*, p. 254. X. 22.—C. A. Berry, *Vision and Duty*, p. 217; see also *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xli. 1892, p. 264. X. 23.—W. Hudson Shaw, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxxii. 1907, p. 131. X. 23-26.—C. Gore, *The New Theology and*

the Old Religion, p. 274; see also *Church Times*, vol. lvi. 1906, p. 393, and *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxx. 1906, p. 209. X. 23-27.—J. S. Swan, *Short Sermons*, p. 55.

'It is easier for a camel to go through a needle's eye, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.'—Mark x. 25.

Even a desirable mansion may come in useful for some purpose. But you, if any way possible, clear out of it, your place is not there, and between these walls, built on the despair and degradation of others, you will find it as hard to lead a pure life as is it *for a camel to go through the eye of a needle.* The evil base of our society eats right through. That our wealthy homes are founded on the spoliation of the poor vitiates all the life that goes on within them.—From Edward Carpenter, *England's Ideal.*

Of riches, in particular, as of all the grossest species of prosperity, the perils are recorded by all moralists; and ever, as of old, must the sad observation from time to time occur: Easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle! Riches in a cultured community . . . are the readiest to become a great blessing or a great curse. 'Beneath gold thrones and mountains,' says Jean Paul, 'who knows how many giant spirits lie entombed?' The first fruit of riches, especially for the man born rich, is to teach him faith in them, and all but hide from him that there is any other faith.—Carlyle on *Goethe's Works.*

Avarice is rarely the vice of a young man: it is rarely the vice of a great man: but Marlborough was one of the few who have, in the bloom of youth, loved lucre more than wine or women, and who have, at the height of greatness, loved lucre more than power or fame. All the precious gifts which nature had lavished on him he valued chiefly for what they would fetch. At twenty he made money of his beauty and vigour. At sixty he made money of his genius and glory.—Macaulay's *History of England*, xiv.

THE OMNIPOTENCE OF FAITH

'Jesus looking upon them saith, With men it is impossible, but not with God: for all things are possible with God.'—Mark x. 27.

I. Man with God.—Perhaps in no passage has a preposition been more persistently misread than in this saying of Christ. It is usually interpreted as if 'with' were the equivalent of 'to'. Jesus did not say 'to' but 'with': and the distinction is important. One sets forth the contrast between man's impotence and God's power. The other links the impotent man with the omnipotent God, and makes him strong in the strength of God.

The subject under discussion is salvation. All the resources of humanity at its best are inadequate for salvation; but in salvation we are dealing not with the resources of man but of God, and all things are possible with God.

II. The Only Condition of this Fellowship is Power in Faith.—The promise is to him that believes. The Scriptures attribute to faith the power of the Infinite. This is not true of all faith, for all faith is not all-powerful. There are some who trust God whom God cannot trust. It is the faith that commands confidence to which all things are possible.

There are three stages of faith. There is the faith that receives, the faith that reckons, and the faith that risks. By the first we are justified. By the second we are sanctified. By the third we are endued with the gift of power. Faith that goes forward triumphs. The man of faith is omnipotent. Being with God, he becomes as God.

III. What do we Mean by Omnipotence?—The explanation of this power in man must be the same as that given to the attribute of omnipotence in God. When we say all things are possible to God, we mean all things consistent with Himself and with the nature of that on which He works. There is nothing of the magician in God. He does not work by magic, but by law.

So with man. When Jesus assures men that all things are possible through faith, because faith links man with God, He does not mean that there is given him unlimited power for capricious use. Power is subject to law, and is to be exercised according to the will of God.

With God, all man ought to be he can be, and with God, all man ought to do he can do.

IV. The Impossible Demands of the Kingdom.—The kingdom makes impossible demands of all men. Every man finds in his life that which corresponds to the young ruler's possessions. The last conflict is over some possession whose roots are buried in our hearts, or some call for which we have no strength. Take hold of God, and nothing shall be impossible to you.

The kingdom demands the impossible in character as well as in its conditions of entrance.

The fig-tree that Jesus cursed is a parable. The kingdom of Christ demands that every false and unholy thing shall be destroyed from the root. He did not come to regulate sin, but to destroy it.

God's call is always to the impossible, but He blots the word out of the Christian's vocabulary by making all things possible with him.—S. Chadwick, *Humanity and God*, p. 157.

References.—X. 28-30.—Eugene Bersier, *Sermons*, p. 311. X. 29.—E. H. Bickersteth, *Thoughts in Past Years*, p. 261. X. 30.—B. Wilberforce, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xlvi. 1894, p. 291. X. 32.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—St. Mark IX.-XVI.* p. 81. X. 32-52.—W. H. Bennett, *The Life of Christ According to St. Mark*, p. 157. X. 33.—A. Baker, *Addresses and Sermons*, p. 66.

'Master, we would that Thou shouldest do for us whatever we ask of Thee.'—Mark x. 35.

In society and politics we call those great who have devoted their energies to some noble course, or have influenced the course of things in some extraordinary way. But in every instance, whether in art, science, or religion, or public life, there is an universal condition, that a man shall have forgotten himself in his

work. If any fraction of his attention is given to the honours or rewards which success will bring him, there will be a taint of weakness in what he does.—Froude's *Beaconsfield*, p. 259.

References.—X. 35.—E. E. Cleal, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxxiii. 1908, p. 295. X. 35-45.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—St. Mark IX.-XVI.* p. 90.

'Ye shall indeed drink of the cup that I drink of.'—Mark x. 39.

'I bless my God,' Samuel Rutherford once wrote, 'that there is a death and a heaven. I would weary to begin again to be a Christian, so bitter is it to drink of the cup that Christ drank of, if I knew not that there is no poison in it.'

And again: 'There is no question but that our King and Lord shall be master of the fields at length. And we would all be glad to divide the spoil with Christ, and to ride in triumph with Him; but, oh, how few will take a cold bed of straw in the camp with Him!'

References.—X. 42-45.—H. C. Beeching, *The Grace of Episcopacy*, p. 1. X. 43, 44.—N. Boynton, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxxii. 1907, p. 136. X. 43-45.—A. Pearson, *Sermons for the People* (2nd Series), vol. ii. p. 193.

'Whosoever would be first among you, shall be servant of all.'—Mark x. 44.

With Hildebrand . . . the action of the Church as a party or a power came before all thoughts of its higher duties.—Freeman, *William the Conqueror*, vi.

References.—X. 44.—G. Campbell Morgan, *The Missionary Manifesto*, p. 143. X. 45.—J. E. Carpenter, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxi. 1902, p. 346. H. Hensley Henson, *ibid.* vol. lxv. 1904, p. 177. X. 46.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—St. Mark IX.-XVI.* p. 95. X. 46-48.—H. Scott Holland, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lvii. 1900, p. 344. X. 46-52.—J. Laidlaw, *The Miracles of Our Lord*, p. 323. W. M. Taylor, *The Miracles of Our Saviour*, p. 400. B. D. Johns, *Pulpit Notes*, p. 24. Archbishop Trench, *Notes on the Miracles of Our Lord*, p. 351. R. Higinbotham, *Sermons*, p. 122. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. li. No. 2955; vol. v. No. 266. X. 47.—M. Guy Pearse, *Jesus Christ and the People*, p. 177. X. 47, 48.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xi. No. 645.

THE PRINCIPLE OF CHRIST'S SELECTION

'Jesus stood still, and commanded him to be called. And they call the blind man, saying unto him, Be of good comfort, rise; He calleth thee.'—Mark x. 49.

You will observe Jesus called the blind man while he was yet in his blindness. This is the most significant and the most suggestive feature of the narrative.

I. We all feel the value and the glory of religious light; but it is a great mistake to imagine that religious light is essential to a man's call. We have come to look upon the intellectual perplexities of a human soul as a sign that this soul is unconverted. They are no such sign. This man in the streets of Jericho is a typical case. The typical thing about him is not that he regains his sight, but that he comes to Christ *before* he has regained his sight. The thing that makes him spiritually fit for the kingdom of God is not his vision of the light but his contact with Jesus.

II. The moral would to my mind have been equally effective *without* the cure. All the men in the streets of Jericho were saying, 'This man's darkness proves him to be outside the kingdom of God'. Jesus says, 'I will refute that belief; bring the man to Me in his present state of dilapidation; bring him with the burden unrelieved and the night unbroken, and even thus I will let him in'.

III. Christ is the only Master that has membership for the *benighted*. All others cry, 'Get your sight and come'. He says, 'Come and get your sight'. Moses asks cleansing; Socrates desires knowledge; Plato needs philosophy; Buddha seeks worldly renunciation; Confucius demands orderly life; John Baptist requires the fruits of repentance. But Christ will accept the hearing of a voice in the night. He does not ask preliminary morning. He does not ask antecedent vision. He does not ask, for the opening miles, a knowledge of the way. He only appeals to the ear; He says, 'Come'.—G. Matheson, *Messages of Hope*, p. 89.

References.—X. 49.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxiii. No. 1389; vol. xxvii. No. 1587. X. 50.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—St. Mark IX.-XVI.* p. 106.

'Lord, that I might receive my sight.'—Mark x. 51.

Compare Longfellow's lines on Bartimæus. Also George Macdonald's saying about prayer: 'Him 'at gangs to God wi' a sair heid 'ill the suner gang til 'im wi' a sair hert'.

References.—X. 51.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xlii. No. 2458. H. J. Wilmot-Buxton, *Plain Preaching to Poor People* (9th Series), p. 102. A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—St. Mark IX.-XVI.* p. 107. XI. 1; XII. 44.—W. H. Bennett, *The Life of Christ According to St. Mark*, p. 169. XI. 2.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—St. Mark IX.-XVI.* p. 109. XI. 2-6.—Father Benson, *Eight Sermons and Addresses*, p. 11. XI. 3.—S. Baring Gould, *Plain Preaching for a Year*, vol. i. p. 314. A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—St. Mark IX.-XVI.* p. 119.

'And they bring the colt to Jesus, and He sat upon him.'—Mark xi. 7.

Nature is thoroughly mediate. It is made to serve. It receives the dominion of man as meekly as the ass on which the Saviour rode. It offers all its kingdoms to man as the raw material which he may mould into what is useful.—Emerson.

Reference.—XI. 9, 10.—W. J. Butler, *Sermons for Working Men, The Oxford Sermon Library*, vol. ii. p. 200.

THE PROFANATION OF THE TEMPLE

'And Jesus entered into Jerusalem, and into the temple: and when He had looked round about upon all things, and now the eventide was come, He went out unto Bethany with the twelve.'—Mark xi. 11.

What was it that Jesus Christ saw in the Temple? What was it that He determined to cleanse on that day of His wrath which was coming, that day which began with the withered fig-tree and ended with flying barterers, overturned counters, scattered sheep and oxen?

I. He saw *meaningless formalism*. The sheep and oxen were in the Temple courts for a religious purpose, and the changers are there that nothing but

the Temple shekel might intrude upon the reverence due to holy things, and yet Jesus Christ turns out both one and the other. Why is it? There is nothing to compare with the irreverence of habit when we let religion get into a mechanical groove to such an extent that we lose all sense of the object of our religious worship. Surely it has reached the height of irony when He to Whom all worship pointed, He Who was the true Lamb of God, He Who initiated and appointed the service of the Temple for Himself, must stand there alone and unknown in His Temple, and He to Whom Israel looked as their peace, should be constrained to visit Israel only in wrath.

II. His eye lightens on a more positive insult still to His Father's house. The sheep and the oxen, as they herded together in the Temple courts, were a living proof that the Jew had forgotten the great *reverence* due to holy places and holy things.

We feel we must ask ourselves with some earnestness, Does He trace in my worship itself that reverence which He ought to find for the presence of God and the honour of His holy house? We do not drive out the sheep and oxen of unworthy, wandering, irreverent thoughts which prevent our worship because we do not really feel the presence of God.

III. But besides the irreverence which profanes the sanctuary, our Blessed Lord, as He gazes round the magnificent Temple, cannot but have seen the sight, painful to His holy eyes, of men who had *grown away from religion*, men in whom religion contributed nothing to the solid welfare of their life, but rather stood outside it: railed off, shut in, like some church in a busy city rarely used, and thinly attended, by worshippers. It must have stood out with a sharp and ghastly contrast before the eyes of Christ on this Palm Sunday evening—the sacrifice of the whole burnt-offering, symbolizing the exhaustion of God's wrath on sin; the trespass-offering as if to do away with the recurrent burden of sin; the peace-offering of a soul at peace with God, this was the meaning of the oxen, and the sheep, and of the doves for purification—this on the one hand; and on the other, there were the loose lives, the broken morality, the cruelty, the deceit, the injustice, the inability to recognize the higher life. Everything to symbolize, and to effect the complete extirpation of sin, with sin scientifically encamped in high places before the very forces which were meant to overthrow it.

Is our religion touching our life? This is the vital question for us all. Or is it merely a crowd of sheep and oxen, a multiplicity of sacrifices outside us, which leave us uninfluenced and untouched? Christ surely looks from the Temple to the life, from the life to the Temple, to see in life sin pursued with an exhaustion of hatred until it is consumed, to see the soul gradually gaining peace with God through Jesus Christ.—W. C. E. Newbolt, *Words of Exhortation*, p. 131.

References.—XI. 11.—J. S. Maver, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxxiii. 1908, p. 247. J. Bannerman, *Sermons*, p. 153. Mandell Creighton, *University and other Sermons*, p. 48. XI. 12-14.—Archbishop Trench, *Notes on the Miracles of Our Lord*, p. 357. XI. 12-14, 20-24.—John Laidlaw, *The Miracles of Our Lord*, p. 125. XI. 12-14, 20-26.—W. M. Taylor, *The Miracles of Our Saviour*, p. 413. XI. 13.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. x. No. 555. XI. 13, 14.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—St. Mark IX.-XVI.* p. 127. XI. 14.—J. S. Swan, *Short Sermons*, p. 202.

'And Jesus went into the temple, and began to cast out them that sold and bought.'—Mark xi. 15.

'One is struck,' says Dr. John Ker (*Thoughts*, pp. 102, 103), 'in reading the account of the purifying of the Temple by Christ that He should have bestowed so much thought on what was so sure to become obsolete by His own word, *It is finished*. We do not read elsewhere of the indignation of our Lord rising to such a height, and taking the form of actual compulsion. It is the seal of Christ set on the sacredness of the old Temple worship, all the more needed that He was about to remove it; but still more is it a vivid warning against the union between covetousness and religion or rather the form of religion. That evil reached a visible height when the sale of indulgences and the building of St. Peter's went hand in hand. But it has appeared so often, and in all sections of the Church, that the entrance of the money-changers into the Temple may be called the normal danger of Christianity. Drunkenness and sensuality, which had their shrines in the old pagan pantheon, have still a place in the hearts of many professed worshippers in the house of God, but it is Mammon who still sets up his tables in the open court.'

WORKING TOWARDS IDEALS

'For all nations.'—Mark xi. 17.

'All nations,' 'of all nations'. It was a great reading of the Scriptures: this was a thunder sermon. Jesus Christ was no patriot, Jesus Christ was a philanthropist; the Son of God was no politician, He was a statesman, He grasped the whole situation, and allotted to everyone, east or west, north or south, what was proper to the occasion and the environment.

I. Jesus Christ looked over all the walls of the Temple and the outside parts of the Temple, the low walls that marked definitions of space and in a certain sense of consecration and proprietorship. He recognized the Temple in its unity, the Temple in its ideality, in its high poetic spiritual meaning, and, making a lash, He scourged these fellows from the purlieus of the holy place; for, said He, My Father's house is for all nations; every bit of it is sanctified, every stone has been purified in the fire of the Divine acceptance; be off! go! and the thong made itself heard in the air. What a blessed and comforting thought that Jesus Christ saw the whole house, the whole idea, and that He foresaw a day when that idea would spread amongst all nations, and king and peasant of this land and of that shall be equally welcome and equally recognized as members of the Father's household.

Now in this instance Jesus Christ accuses the intruders, and those who permitted the intrusion, of narrow-minded ideas, and He accuses them of being imperfect and misleading interpreters of the Divine revelation and purpose. To have Jesus Christ read the Bible with us, that would be educational, spiritual instruction, Divine inspiration. He would take us into the roots of things, He would get behind the north wind of words and fill us with the spirit of wisdom and of grace.

II. Jesus Christ included the whole human race in the Temple idea. God never commanded any temples to be built for twos and threes, and to end their purpose in these trivial numbers. When He saved the twos and threes it was that He might save the world through them. Sometimes the number was very small, but it was a vital number; there was enough saved, sometimes called the remnant, out of which to get the biggest forests that ever waved on the hill-sides of the world. He said He would save a city, He would save a remnant, He would save one little child, He would save eight persons, He would save an Isaac; He would do a wonder of this kind, but always having before His eyes the world, the whole world, all nations, every creature. That is the Divine love, and it is useless our endeavouring to whittle it away by verbal criticism and by some monstrous display of our ignorance or our selfishness.

III. If we take this principle and carry it round the whole area of human life, it will be a light to lighten the narrowest mind. We are to regard the child in the light of his manhood. See the man in the child; see all the rights of property in any little bit of string which the child calls his own; see the citizenship of heaven in the child nestling trustfully in your breast and heart. Thus take the larger view; thus interpret all things ideally and transcendentally.—Joseph Parker, *City Temple Pulpit*, vol. iii. p. 78.

References.—XI. 17.—G. C. Lorimer, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. liv. 1898, p. 259. J. Parker, *City Temple Pulpit*, vol. iii. p. 78. XI. 19.—W. L. Watkinson, *Noon-Day Addresses*, p. 85. C. F. Aked, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxxviii. 1890, p. 408. XI. 20-23.—H. Scott Holland, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lx. 1901, p. 153; see also *Church Times*, vol. xlvi. 1901, p. 260.

'Have faith in God.'—Mark xi. 22-24.

If man has in all ages had enough to encounter, there has, in most civilized ages, been an inward force vouchsafed him, whereby the pressure of things outward might be withstood. Obstruction abounded; but faith also was not wanting. It is by faith that man removes mountains; while he had faith his limbs might be wearied with toiling, his back galled with bearing; but the heart within him was peaceable and resolved. . . . Faith gave him an inward willingness; a world of strength wherewith to confront a world of difficulty. The true wretchedness is here: that the difficulty remain and the strength be lost; that we have the labour and want the willingness.—Carlyle on *Characteristics*.

References.—XI. 22.—J. Marshall Lang, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. l. 1896, p. 390. Ambrose Shepherd, *ibid.* vol. lxiv. 1903, p. 267. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxiv. No. 1444. XI. 22, 23.—J. Hamilton, *Faith in God*, p. 43. R. E. Hutton, *The Crown of Christ*, vol. i. p. 187. XI. 23, 24.—J. G. James, *Problems of Prayer*, p. 91.

'What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them.'—Mark xi. 24.

What an awful weapon prayer is! Mark xi. 24 saved me from madness in my twelve months' sorrows; and it is so simple and so wide—wide as eternity, simple as light, true as God Himself; and yet it is just the last text of Scripture which is talked of, or preached on, or used.—Charles Kingsley.

PRAYER

'What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them.'—Mark xi. 24.

I. It is not quite easy to see what our Lord meant. It is quite easy, however, to see one thing that He did not mean. His disciples certainly did not understand their Teacher to offer them the wishing-cap of a children's tale; they did not understand Him to say that all who pray can get what they want. For they must constantly have prayed as they felt to no purpose; yet they prayed and believed in prayer; they could not have disbelieved in it without throwing over their faith altogether.

May not the explanation be something of this kind? Our instinct bears witness to the fact and the belief that prayer is a beneficent force. We realize this dimly, but our Lord with His infinitely greater spiritual sensitiveness and His infinitely clearer spiritual insight saw this as we do not see it—saw it so clearly and so certainly that He can hardly find words strong enough to express His meaning or to impress it on the minds of His followers.

II. Prayer is an instinct; that which we desire deeply enough we pray for.

We may by wilful neglect, by careless indifference, have fallen from the habit; we may have almost persuaded ourselves that it is, from the theistic point of view, illogical or irreverent, when suddenly we are caught, as it were unawares; some great crisis has arisen, some great desire has seized us, and before we have time to think, we are praying—a poor kind of praying this, but yet praying.

Why is not the momentary mood of a crisis the constant habit of a lifetime? Is it because desire is absent? It certainly is so in many cases. We do not pray, not because we doubt, but because we do not desire, or because we do not desire persistently. While desire compels us to pray, prayer also limits and directs, stimulates and strengthens desire.

So our Lord teaches that prayer is not only a privilege, but a duty; not only that we *may* pray, but that we *must* pray; not only *occasional* prayer as the outcome of a great and special need, but *habitual* prayer as the consequence of our continued necessities.

If the first is a spiritual instinct which our Lord

recognizes and encourages, the second is a spiritual effort which He urges and assists.

III. Christ laid down no value as to the times and seasons of prayer—these He leaves to the individual conscience—but He offers us a pattern, very short, but very comprehensive, of what our habitual prayer should be.

The beginning and the end of it is God. We may tell God of our bodily wants, plead for the forgiveness our souls need. But it is upon God's will, not ours, that the emphasis is laid; His will is our sanctification.—F. Ealand, *The Spirit of Life*, p. 38.

References.—XI. 24.—R. J. Campbell, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxxiii. 1908, p. 248. J. G. James, *Problems of Prayer*, p. 67. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. vi. No. 328.

'Forgive . . . that your heavenly Father may forgive you.'—Mark xi. 25.

'Forgive us,' say we, 'our offences, as we forgive them that trespasse against us.' What else inferre we by that petition, but that we offer Him our soule voide of all revenge and free from all rancour? We nevertheless invoke God and call on His aid, even in the complot of our grievousest faults, and desire His assistance in all manner of injustice and iniquitie.—Montaigne (Florio's version).

Can you conceive Jesus Christ—nay, any wise man you have happened to meet—amid the unnatural gloom of Elsinore? Is not every action of Hamlet prompted by a fanatical impulse, which tells him that duty consists in revenge alone? And does it require a superhuman effort to recognize that revenge never can be a duty?—Maeterlinck.

Prayer is the peace of our spirit, the stillness of our thoughts, the evenness of recollection, the seat of meditation, the rest of our cares, and the calm of our tempest; prayer is the issue of a quiet mind, of untroubled thoughts, it is the daughter of charity, and the sister of meekness; and he that prays to God with an angry, that is, with a troubled and discomposed spirit, is like him that retires into a battle to meditate, and sets up his closet in the outquarters of an army.—Jeremy Taylor.

References.—XI. 32.—C. Gore, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xlix. 1896, p. 161. XI. 33.—E. B. Speirs, *A Present Advent*, p. 307. XII. 1-9.—W. Gray Elmslie, *Expository Lectures and Sermons*, p. 230. XII. 1-12.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—St. Mark IX.-XVI.* p. 137.

THE SACRIFICE OF GOD

'He had yet one, a beloved son; He sent him last unto them, saying, They will reverence my son.'—Mark xii. 6.

In this brief and simple verse I find two great things, the things that constitute the very core and heart of the Gospel. I find in it the *glory of Christ* and *the infinite love of the Father.*

I. The Glory of Christ.—You remember the comment John makes, in the very opening verses of his Gospel, upon the earthly life of our Lord. John and the other disciples had lived for two or three years in closest intimacy with the Word made flesh. And looking back upon that marvellous life, John says that the dominant impression created by it was that of *glory*, and the glory was that of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. Now that is the glory that Jesus in this parable claims for Himself. He declares Himself to be 'the only begotten of the Father'. Look at the words, 'He had yet one, a beloved Son,' or as the old version puts it, 'He had yet one Son, His well-beloved'. This sentence, as Dr. A. B. Bruce says, has a most important and vital bearing on the self-consciousness of Jesus. It shows us that Jesus thought of Himself as holding an *absolutely unique relationship to God.*

II. The Love of the Father.—God is the real subject of this verse. 'He had yet one, a beloved son: He sent Him last unto them, saying, "They will reverence my Son".' And the 'He' who did all this is God. The subject of it all, you may say, is God's care and love for Israel. Israel is the vineyard around which He has set a hedge, in which He has digged a pit, and to defend which He has built a tower; and the Israelites are the people to whom He sends servant after servant, and as a last device His Son. And He sent servant after servant and at last His Son because of His great and unspeakable love for them. But though primarily it sets forth the love of God for Israel, it is a picture, too, of God's love for all men. With the great love of which this parable speaks He besets us and pursues us and seeks to save us. And there are two characteristics of this love which my text emphasizes.

1. This is the first—*its persistency.* Of all the dimensions of the Divine love I marvel most at its *length*, at its persistency, at its endurance. I know of human loves that have reached down deep and have stretched out wide, and have lifted up their objects high. But I know no human love that can last, and persist, and endure, like the love of God. It is the *length* of it that fills me with wonder and amazement. It is the *length* of it that passes knowledge. It *out*-lasts, and *out*-persists, and *out*-endures every human love. 'When father and mother forsake me, *the Lord will take me up.*' That is a true word that Peter says, that the *long-suffering of our Lord is salvation.* The long-suffering of the Lord, the patience and persistence of the love of God, the *length* of it, that is our salvation.

2. And the second characteristic of the love of God I find in the text is *the self-sacrifice of it.* 'He had yet one,' the text says, 'a beloved Son; He sent Him'. What a world of almost heart-breaking pathos there is in that little sentence! 'He had yet *One*, a beloved Son; He sent *Him.*' How eager and anxious that master of the vineyard must have been for those husbandmen when, to restore right relations between himself and them, He sent His only *Son*, His *well-beloved Son*, knowing to what He was sending Him. And this is just a symbol and suggestion of the love of God. How God must have loved us men, who had so grievously sinned against Him, when, to save us, He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever be-

lieveth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. I have no plummet to fathom a love like that. You ask me how great is God's love. I can only answer, it is as great as the Cross of His only Son.—J. D. Jones, *The Gospel of Grace*, p. 102.

References.—XII. 6.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—St. Mark IX.-XVI.* p. 144. XII. 6-9.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxxiii. No. 1951. XII. 12-44.—*Ibid.* vol. lii. No. 2989.

PHARISAISM STILL ALIVE

'They knew that He had spoken the parable against them: and they left Him, and went their way.'—Mark xii. 12.

Towards the very end of our great Master's ministry, He seems, almost of set purpose, to come to quite close quarters with the various recognized authorities of His own Jewish Church, as well as with the self-constituted authority of its various parties.

His object, I take it, was twofold. First, He must assert the supremacy of Divine principle over human rule, and secondly, He must be the Divine Champion on behalf of humanity of its own responsible mental and moral freedom.

I. He is not afraid of human nature, though He is 'grieved at the hardness of their hearts'. He challenges it to come out into the open away from all mere temporary expedients and mechanical rules. He even challenges by His actions conventional authority, conventional opinions, views, and prejudices. There is a suspicion of a mighty claim as He faces Pharisees, Sadducees, and Herodians, and their current, highly reputable, yet self-centred rules of life and ways of thought and action.

II. And in the rule of life and service to Himself, and, on His behalf, to humanity, there is the same avoidance of all party formulas and party definitions. He strikes home to the very heart of humanity from the Heart of Divinity. 'Preach the Gospel' to every creature—we might almost say to 'all creation'.

In each parable we hear a voice behind the voice, a mystic note within the music, that attracts without violence and subdues without force, until we find our own souls answering. We, too, perceive, like the Pharisees, that 'He has spoken this parable against ourselves'.

III. And each time the voice comes home to conscience as a final issue, as an eternal principle. The Divine Master, the consummate Teacher, the Good Physician, the Eternal Wisdom of God has cut clean through our sophistries, swept aside our partialities, torn off the soothing poultice of self-flattery and opened the wound itself, the wound of pride, and let out the deadly matter, and pours in the wine of penitential grace and the healing unction of His forgiveness; and brings us by His own transporting grace to the House of Rest, where He leaves us His own Incarnate life and the virtue of that life, in sacramental, healing, strengthening, perfecting power; and yet so greatly does He respect our moral freedom that this glory of a perfect life only results—so far as we co-operate in faith and effort. The Pharisees, mask-wearers—as all are tempted to be—recognizing the Voice of Eternal Truth, avoided it; perceiving the final issue laid at their feet, yet spurned it, and 'left Him and went their way' into the outer darkness.—Bishop Gaul, *The Church Family Newspaper*, 18 September, 1908, p. 795.

'Render to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and to God the things that are God's.'—Mark xii. 17.

Christ answered the Herodians according to their condition. 'Show me the tribute-money,' said He—and one took a penny out of his pocket—if you use money which has the image of Cæsar upon it, and which he has made current and valuable—that is, *if you are men of the state*, and gladly enjoy the advantages of Cæsar's government, then pay him back some of his own when he demands it. 'Render therefore to Cæsar that which is Cæsar's, and to God those things which are God's'—leaving them no wiser than before as to which was which, for they did not wish to know.—Thoreau on *Civil Disobedience*.

References.—XII. 17.—S. King, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxiii. 1903, p. 359. G. D. Hooper, *ibid.* vol. xl. 1891, p. 358. XII. 18-27.—J. Denney, *ibid.* vol. xlvi. 1894, p. 365. XII. 21-31. (R.V.).—J. Martin, *ibid.* vol. lii. 1897, p. 36.

'When they shall rise from the dead, they neither marry nor are given in marriage; but are as the angels which are in heaven.'—Mark xii. 25.

See Mrs. Berry's remarks in the forty-fourth chapter of *The Ordeal of Richard Feverel*.

References.—XII. 26, 27.—C. Gore, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xlix. 1896, p. 251. XII. 28.—J. A. Bain, *Questions Answered by Christ*, p. 88. XII. 28-31.—T. F. Lockyer, *Inspirations of the Christian Life*, p. 35.

'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God.'—Mark xii. 30.

Chaucer's remarkably trustful and affectionate character appears in his familiar, yet innocent and reverent manner of speaking of his God. He comes into his thought without any false reverence, and with no more parade than the zephyr to his ear. If Nature is our mother, then God is our father. There is less love and simple practical trust in Shakespeare and Milton. How rarely in our English tongue do we find expressed any affection for God! Certainly, there is no sentiment so rare as the love of God. Herbert almost alone expresses it, 'Ah, my dear God'.—Thoreau, *A Week on the Concord* (Friday).

'With all thy mind.'—Mark xii. 30.

The queen (Caroline) had some higher intellectual interests, which to Walpole probably seemed as pure nonsense as they seemed to King George. She often tried to make him read Butler's *Analogy*, but he told her that his religion was fixed, and that he had no desire either to change or to improve it.—Morley's *Walpole*, p. 97.

While I was in that country, viz. of the Penpont district, I had advantage of converse with Mr. Murray, a learned and holy man; the meeting of which two in a character was not very frequent there.—Thomas Boston.

References.—XII. 30.—L. R. Rawnsley, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxxviii. 1890, p. 38. E. W. Attwood, *Sermons*

for Clergy and Laity, p. 223. J. H. Thom, *A Spiritual Faith*, p. 99. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. iii. No. 162. XII. 30, 31.—W. H. Murray, *The Fruits of the Spirit*, pp. 246, 257.

MARK XII. 31.

ANY one associated with Lord Aberdeen might always rest assured that he was safe in his hands. When our law did not allow prisoners the benefit of counsel, it was commonly said that the judge was counsel for the prisoner. Lord Aberdeen was always counsel for the absent. Doubtless he had pondered much upon the law, *Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.* It had entered profoundly into his being, and formed a large part of it.—GLADSTONE, quoted in Morley's *Life*, II. pp. 639, 640).

REFERENCES.—XII. 33.—W. Brock, *The Religious Difficulty in the Schools and the Education Bill*, Sermons, 1900-1902. C. Silvester Horne, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxxi. 1907, p. 355.

NOT FAR FROM THE KINGDOM

'Thou art not far from the kingdom of God.'—MARK XII. 34.

WHAT became of this hopeful young lawyer I cannot tell. Whether he actually reached and entered the kingdom he was so near to, we are not informed.

I. He was 'not far from the kingdom,' because he had begun to think seriously on religion.

II. Because he had already begun to attach greater importance to the spirit than to the letter.

III. Because he was sincerely desirous of acting up to the measure of light which he possessed.

IV. Because he was amiable and virtuous. He was strictly moral, circumspect, and pure.—J. THAIN DAVIDSON, *The City Youth*, p. 267.

NOT FAR OFF

'Thou art not far from the kingdom of God.'—MARK XII. 34.

THE man to whom these words were addressed was a candid inquirer.

I. The Characteristics of those who are not far from the Kingdom.

1. They may possess considerable knowledge of Scripture.
2. They may make a candid confession of their belief.
3. They may have strong convictions of sin.
4. They may have a desire to amend their lives.
5. They may have partially reformed.

They only need *Repentance* and *Faith*.

II. The Reasons why they do not Enter the Kingdom.

1. Difficulties in the way.
2. Advantages in a middle course.
3. Belief that they are Christians already.
4. Reluctance to observe the needful conditions.

III. The Inducements to Enter.

1. The blessedness of those who do.
2. The misery of those who do not.—F. J. AUSTIN, *Seeds and Saplings*, p. 38.

REFERENCES.—XII. 34.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—St. Mark IX.-XVI.* p. 148. C. Perren, *Revival Sermons in Outline*, p. 258. R. L. Drummond, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxi. 1902, p. 85. W. L. Watkinson, *ibid.* vol. lxi. 1902, p. 259. H. Hensley Henson, *ibid.* vol. lxiii. 1903, p. 180. H. Montagu Butler, *Harrow School Sermons* (2nd Series), p. 63. J. S. Swan, *Short Sermons*, p. 213. 'Plain Sermons' by contributors to the *Tracts for the Times*, vol. v. p. 297. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxvi. No. 1517; vol. lii. No. 2989. XII. 37.—A. B. Bruce, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxxvii. p. 42. P. M. Muir, *ibid.* vol. xliv. 1893, p. 107. J. H. Jellett, *The Elder Son*, p. 141. Mark Guy Pearse, *Jesus Christ and the People*, p. 57.

CASTING INTO THE TREASURY

'And Jesus sat down over against the treasury, and beheld how the multitude cast money into the treasury, and many that were rich cast in much. And there came a poor widow, and she cast in two mites, which make a farthing.' —MARK XII. 41.

TAKE the incident of this Gospel story. May it not suggest to us a special fact of immense significance not apparent on the surface of things? That Temple court, those thirteen brazen chests, that procession of contributors, each with his special offering—may they not represent to us, in idea at least, a picture or parable of what is going on perpetually in the drama of human life, and at the same time bring before us a vision of the unseen, unheard judgment of Christ upon the works and ways of men?

I. Every single life is in itself an offertory, a contribution, made to the great sum of human influences and examples. Some faint resemblance to this idea of a common treasury to which all in their several ways contribute may be seen in the demands and expectations of men and women when united in social groups. The rich and powerful are welcome as the 'benefactors' of society, and society rewards them with its smiles. Modest and humble goodness may pass by with its slender offering, rich only in the coin of love and self-sacrifice, but such coinage has no appreciable value in the eyes of the 'children of this world'.

II. As a contrast, let us look at the spirit in which our Lord appraised the two types of character that passed before Him in the Temple court, and notice which of the two appeared to Him to be the pure gold and which the showy tinsel.

1. First, we cannot fail to see that the test applied by Christ to human conduct, here as always, was a spiritual test. In the matter of giving He pronounced that the vital question is not how much you give, but what element of sacrifice enters into your gift. Love and self-surrender are the core of practical Christianity. 'My son, give Me thy heart,' is the sum and substance of all the commandments. In God's sight he who does not give himself as the best part of his offering, with no eye to any future recompense, gives what has no spiritual value.

2. Another point is that there may be more spiritual nobleness, more of the morally sublime, in some obscure, hidden life that hardly anyone notices than in many of the conspicuous acts of distinguished persons which are recorded in the pages of history. We are reminded by our Lord's praise of the poor widow that obscurity is a condition, sometimes the

necessary condition, of much of the most self-denying work that is done in the world.

III. Our own experience may teach the lesson that it is not often to the wealthy, the powerful, or the brilliant that we owe the deepest gratitude for timely aid, generous sympathy, or ennobling influence.

It should never be forgotten that the true givers, the true helpers of mankind, are those whose efforts cost them much labour and suffering, and who, in seeking the good of others, purchase it with their own heart's blood. Only in those who cast into life's treasury their love and sympathy, the most precious of offerings, charged with sore travail of soul and much inward pain, does Christ recognize the image and likeness of His own perfect sacrifice of Himself. —J. W. Shepard, *Light and Life*, p. 192.

References.—XII. 41-44.—C. H. Parkhurst, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxiv. 1903, p. 179. T. Martin, *ibid.* vol. lxix. 1906, p. 397. John McNeill, *Regent Square Pulpit*, vol. li. p. 65. S. Martin, *Rain Upon the Mown Grass*, p. 380. Lynch, *Three Months' Ministry*, p. 118.

Mark xii. 42.

In 'the book of the Three Maiden Sisters' (*Professor at the Breakfast Table*, x.), Oliver Wendell Holmes tells of a poor widow who, 'fighting hard to feed and clothe and educate her children, had not forgotten the poorer ancient maidens,' sending the three spinsters 'a fractional pudding from her own table. I remembered it the other day as I stood by the place of rest, and I felt sure that it was remembered elsewhere. I know there are prettier words than *pudding*, but I can't help it—the pudding went upon the record, I feel sure, with the mite which was cast into the treasury by that other poor widow whose deed the world shall remember for ever.'

References.—XII. 43.—M. Guy Pearse, *Jesus Christ and the People*, p. 238. XII. 43, 44.—R. Collyer, *Where the Light Dwelleth*, p. 122. E. L. Hull, *Sermons Preached at King's Lynn* (3rd Series), p. 213. XIII.—W. H. Bennett, *The Life of Christ According to St. Mark*, p. 208.

THE MATERIAL AND THE SPIRITUAL

'And as He went out of the temple, one of His disciples saith unto Him: Master, see what manner of stones and what buildings are here!'—Mark xiii. 1.

It stands out clearly in our story that Jesus did not care for the Titanic stones on which the Jewish Temple rested. They were crying out to the disciples of man's power over matter, and the disciples were full of wonder at it, but Jesus did not care for it. There was a higher, fuller power of man, another conquest of the world which these men had missed, and, because of their missing that, this mere material triumph did not interest or move Him. He prophesied how transitory it was all to prove, and so passed on and left it.

I. We need to know that that is always true. It is something which we who call ourselves the servants of Jesus Christ have no right ever to forget—that He never is impressed by merely material success or power any more than He was when He saw them in Jerusalem. It was not what He came into the world to bring to pass.

II. Christ *does* value the material, but always with an outlook beyond it to the spiritual. If we keep this in view, I think we may believe, with the profoundest reverence, that there is no work upon material things faithfully done by man which God does not look upon with pleasure. Thoroughness and beauty are the two excellent qualities of man's work upon material things. God is the Creator, and if in the creation we can read anything of the Creator, these two dispositions, thoroughness and beauty, must lie at the very centre of His Being; for they everywhere pervade the world that He has made.

No man can read the Gospels and not catch the tone of such a sympathy as proves that wherever the eye of Christ fell upon any man in Palestine who in those days was doing thorough or beautiful work in any department of activity, the Man of men honoured him for it and rejoiced in it. Do not think of Him who brought our nature to its best as being totally estranged from those things which ninety-nine-hundredths of our race are doing all the time. Think of Him as caring for it all, as caring for what they did and for what you are doing; but always as being preserved from the slavery of material things by two principles which were absolutely despotic and invariable with Him—the principle that no material thing was entirely satisfactory unless it could reveal some spiritual usefulness, and the principle that if any material thing, however beautiful, hindered any spirituality, there should be no hesitation about sacrificing it. Look at those two principles. See if they did not both absolutely rule in Christ, and see if they are not just what we need to save us from the tyranny of material things.

III. How shall one reach that freedom? It is only by entering into the higher anxieties of Jesus that one is freed from the lower anxieties of men. You must care with all your soul that God should be glorified and that men should be saved. And you can do that only by letting God first glorify Himself in you by saving you. Let Christ be your Saviour. Then, tasting His salvation, your one great wish will be that all men may be saved, and, wishing that intensely, you will be free from every other wish that does not harmonize with that.—Phillips Brooks, *The Law of Growth*, p. 150.

'Master, behold what manner of stones and what manner of buildings!'—Mark xiii. 1.

Let every dawn of morning be to you as the beginning of life, and every setting sun be to you as its close; then let every one of these short lives leave its sure record of some kindly thing done for others, some goodly strength or knowledge gained for yourselves; so, from day to day, and strength to strength, you shall build up indeed, by art, by thought, and by just will, an Ecclesia of England, of which it shall not be said, 'See what manner of stones are

here!' but, 'See what manner of men'.—Ruskin, *Lectures on Art*, iv.

References.—XIII. 1.—Phillips Brooks, *The Law of Growth*, p. 150. XIII. 6.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—St. Mark IX.-XVI.* p. 151.

'He that shall endure to the end, the same shall be saved.'—Mark xiii. 13.

The great thing is not to be discouraged by seeming reverse or relapse. The victory is to *endurance*, and there would be no endurance if we were always gaining. So we shall endure hardness as good soldiers of Jesus Christ, and be sure of success.—Dr. John Ker's *Letters*.

Reference.—XIII. 13.—*Christian World Pulpit*, vol. I. 1896, p. 10.

'If any man say to you, Lo, here is the Christ; or lo, there; believe it not.'—Mark xiii. 21.

Each people has its own periods of national life, with their own characters. The period which is now ending for England is that which began when, after the sensuous tumult of the Renaissance, Catholicism being discredited and gone, a serious nation desired, as had been foretold, to see one of the days of the Son of Man, and did not see it; but men said to them *See here* or *See there*, and they went after the blind guides and followed the false direction; and the actual civilization of England and of America is the result.—M. Arnold, in 1882.

'Now from the fig-tree learn her parable.'—Mark xiii. 28.

All things are moral and in their boundless changes have an unceasing reference to spiritual nature. Therefore is nature glorious with form, colour, and motion, that every globe in the remotest heaven; every chemical change from the rudest crystal up to the laws of life; every change of vegetation from the first principle of growth in the eye of a leaf, to the tropical forest and antediluvian gold-mine; every animal function from the sponge up to Hercules, shall hint or thunder to man the laws of right and wrong, and echo the Ten Commandments. Therefore is nature ever the ally of religion: lends all her pomp and riches to the religious sentiment. Prophet and priest, David, Isaiah, Jesus have drawn deeply from this source.—Emerson.

'Heaven and earth shall pass away: but My words shall not pass away.'—Mark xiii. 31.

'One of the strongest pieces of objective evidence in favour of Christianity is not sufficiently enforced by apologists. Indeed, I am not aware that I have ever seen it mentioned. It is the absence from the biography of Christ of any doctrines which the subsequent growth of human knowledge — whether in natural science, ethics, political economy, or elsewhere —has had to discount. This negative argument is really almost as strong as is the positive one from what Christ did teach. For when we consider what a large number of sayings are recorded of—or at least attributed to Him, it becomes most remarkable that in literal truth there is no reason why any of His words should ever pass away in the sense of becoming obsolete. "Not even now could it be easy," says John Stuart Mill, "even for an unbeliever, to find a better translation of the rule of virtue from the abstract into the concrete, than to endeavour so to live that Christ would approve our life." Contrast Jesus Christ in this respect with other thinkers of like antiquity.' Mr. G. J. Romanes, from whom these words are quoted, goes on to instance Plato, in whose dialogues there occur errors 'reaching even to absurdity in respect of reason, and to sayings shocking to the moral sense'.

THE INCARNATE SON OF GOD

'Of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father.'—Mark xiii. 32.

I. God became man. The Incarnation of our Lord is a mystery which, like that of the creation of all things, or that of the immanency of the great Creator in His works, can never be comprehended by human thought. The will of God is a will to love, to seek and to save the lost, and for such reasons God became man.

II. How far were the limitations of the Lord's manhood affected by its union with the Godhead? We affirm in the person of Christ two perfect natures —the human and the Divine. If we admit the true and limited humanity of our Lord, how are we to reconcile His Divine omniscience therewith? I cannot understand what transcends my finite capacity, but neither will I deny this mysterious truth. The same difficulty is presented by the uniformity of nature and the freedom of the human will. I believe that the eternal Son of God had during His human life so emptied Himself of all those Divine attributes which would have interfered with the reality of His manhood that He was really affected by human sorrow, that He really felt the seductive strain of temptation, that when He quoted passages from the Old Testament He might have no more knowledge of their age and actual authors than that which was current in His own time.—Bishop Moorhouse, *The Sermon Year Book*, 1891, p. 349.

Reference.—XIII. 32.—R. J. Campbell, *Sermons Addressed to Individuals*, p. 277.

WATCHING

'Take ye heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is.'—Mark xiii. 33.

He watches for Christ who has a sensitive, eager, apprehensive mind; who is awake, alive, quick-sighted, zealous in seeking and honouring Him; who looks out for Him in all that happens, and who would not be surprised, who would not be over-agitated or overwhelmed, if he found that He was coming at once.—J. H. Newman.

References.—XIII. 33.—Sir G. R. Fetherston, *The Shortness of Time, Sermons*, 1842-79. XIII. 33, 34.—Henry Housman, *Seven Sermon Stories*, p. 97.

OUR WORK FOR CHRIST

'To every man his work.'—Mark xiii. 34.

The Lord Jesus is Himself the great Worker. He is the Head of the body, the Church; and He needs members, as the medium through which He may convey His purposes of grace and power towards the world.

Note a few hints which may be of assistance to Christian workers.

I. Work from Pure Motives.—Legends tell us that when the Emperor Justinian had built the Byzantine Church with a view to his own aggrandizement and glory, on the day of dedication he looked in vain for his own name on the memorial stone. Angel hands had obliterated it, and substituted for it that of the widow, Euphrasia—whose only merit was, that out of pure devotion she had strewn a little straw in front of the beasts that drew the heavily-laden trucks of marble from the quarry to the sacred pile. His motive was so ignoble that heaven ignored his gift; hers was so pure and lovely that she received credit for the whole.

II. Work on God's Plan.—One of the most suggestive texts in the Bible, far-reaching in its many applications, is that in which God says to Moses, 'See that thou make all things according to the pattern showed thee in the Mount'. Not a stake, or a curtain, or an atom of fragrant spice was left to the genius of the artificer, or the fancy of the lawgiver. All was unfolded to Moses in elaborate detail; and all he had to do was to produce that plan in careful and exact obedience, until at last it stood complete before the wondering host of Israel.

III. Work as Those Freshly Cleansed.—The priests must wash in the laver before they perform the service of the sanctuary. They must be clean who bear the vessels of the Lord.

In our hospitals the instruments used in operations are constantly kept in carbolic acid, that they may not carry the slightest contagion to the open wound; and we cannot touch the open and festering wounds which sin has caused without injury to ourselves and others, unless we are ever in the flow of the Blood and Water of which St. John speaks.

IV. Work in God's Strength.—He does not want our strength—it is often a hindrance to Him; because we are so apt to rely on it, to the exclusion of Himself. He wants our weakness, our infirmities, our nothingness—'that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us'.

And there is no way so good of getting God's strength as being diligent students of His precious Word.

V. Work in Believing Expectancy.—In this, as in all other spiritual work, we are governed by one unchanging law: according to your faith be it done unto you. 'Only be thou strong and very courageous.'—F. B. Meyer, *Christian Living*, p. 114.

THE CALL TO WORK AND WATCH

'For the Son of Man is as a man taking a far journey, who left his house, and gave authority to his servants, and to every man his work, and commanded the porter to watch.'—Mark xiii. 34.

The text reminds us of the state in which Christ has left, during His absence, what He is graciously pleased to call 'His house,' i.e. His Church. He has not left His Church without giving most express and definite instructions what everybody is to do while He is away. The household of the Church ought to be, according to the intention of its Lord, a system of beautiful order and arrangement, as long as He is away from it. And yet, if He were to come to-day, would He find it as He left it?

Three things Christ appointed to His servants: an authority—a work—and a watch.

I. The Authority.—First, then, we have to look at the Church's authority; and remark that this authority is given expressly to servants—'He gave authority to His servants'. The more we serve and the lowlier the place we take, the more is the authority given. For what is authority? Not position, not office, but a certain moral power: the power of truth, the power of the affections, the power of virtue over vice, the power of the true over the false, the power of faith over sight, the essential power of the great Head delegated to all His members, which is ultimately to command the universe. Let a man be deeply convinced of the truth of the Gospel by the best of all evidences, the experience of his own soul—i.e. in other words, let him really be a member of the household of faith, and immediately that man carries with him an authority. He has a commission, and a power by which that commission is to be fulfilled—the commission is to glorify Christ by extending His kingdom, and the power is the Holy Ghost, given to him for this very end.

II. The Work.—And now what is the work?—for authority is never given in the Church of Christ for any other end but work. And here again I note that every man's work is special. The authority was general—the work is specific; for He says 'he gave authority to his servants, and to every man *his work*'. There is scarcely anything more important that any Christian has to do than to pray that he may see, and not rest till he has found out, what the particular work is which God has assigned him to do in this present life. And when he has once found it, do not let him wheedle and destroy it by trying to do everybody's work besides; but let him do his own with fixedness and wholeheartedness.

III. The Watch.—There are two ways of watching. There is a watching against a thing we fear; and there is a watching for a thing we love. Most persons when they are told to watch, think chiefly of what they are to watch against; but I conceive it was far more in our Saviour's mind to bid us to be full of what we are to watch for. For, if we watch against sin, is it not for this very reason because we are watching for Christ? Watch, therefore, for the second advent, and you will be sure to be vigilant

against slothfulness and sin. In all, therefore, you do, and in all you suffer, you are to be in the spirit of a man who, expecting a dear friend, has taken his stand at the gate to meet him when he arrives.

References.—XIII. 34.—John Ker, *Sermons*, p. 139. A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—St. Mark IX.-XVI.* p. 157. XIII. 35 37.—C. Parsons Reichel, *Sermons*, p. 162. D. Fraser, *Metaphors in the Gospels*, p. 243. XIII. 36.—R. T. Davidson, *Promise and Fulfilment*, p. 21. XIII. 37.—T. McCrie, *Sermons*, p. 205. H. J. Wilmot-Buxton, *Sunday Sermonettes for a Year*, p. 8. Washington Gladden, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xl. p. 227. J. Stalker, *ibid.* vol. lviii. 1900, p. 390. J. Addison Alexander, *The Gospel of Jesus Christ*, p. 262. J. Fraser, *University Sermons*, p. 41. A. G. Mortimer, *The Church's Lessons for the Christian Year*, part iv. p. 237. XIV. 1-11.—J. Laidlaw, *Studies in the Parables*, p. 161. XIV. 1-41.—W. H. Bennett, *The Life of Christ According to St. Mark*, p. 212. XIV. 3.—W. H. Brookfield, *Sermons*, p. 158. F. F. Shannon, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxvii. 1905, p. 238.

FOREIGN MISSIONS

'Why was this waste of ointment made.'—Mark xiv. 4.

The incident from which our text is taken is distinguished above all others by the fact that Jesus mentions it as one that shall be held in world-wide and undying remembrance (v. 9). What is there said has been realized wherever missions have been established.

But, unfortunately, the obvious moral of the story has not prevented the application to foreign missions of a question, oft repeated and loud sounding, which amounts almost in so many words to the question of Judas, 'Why was this waste?'

I. Its Apparent Justification.

(*a*) In the face of home needs, is it not a waste that thousands are spent yearly on missions to the heathen?

(*b*) In face of the great mortality in Africa and elsewhere, is it not a waste to be constantly sending out missionaries to these fever-stricken countries?

(*c*) In face of the great dearth of faithful pastors at home, is it not a waste to send so many capable and trained clergy to places where their services are not appreciated?

II. Its Absolute Injustice.

(*a*) The motive of the question is entirely wrong: as shown by Judas himself, who was not concerned on account of the poor, but was a thief (John xii. 6). Some opponents of missions are actuated by selfishness, and so ask this question simply out of a spirit of narrowness, not because of their zeal for the glory of God's kingdom.

(*b*) The very idea itself is wrong, viz. that Mary's offering was lost, wasted, and thus profitless. The most convincing instance of this is the life, sufferings, and death of Jesus Himself; thirty years in the quiet of Nazareth, only three years of public life, hidden away in a little corner of the earth—what a waste of a beautiful life! But see John xii. 24. Though Mary's example is very similar, so-called waste in God's service is justified.

(*c*) The question is especially wrong when asked in connexion with missions to the heathen. While the amount spent in this way is compared with other objects of expenditure—war, luxuries, vice—it is a mere trifle, and it must be remembered it brings a fruitful return in increased scientific knowledge, commerce, and colonial extension. The support of foreign missions has a beneficial effect on the Church at home by deepening the feeling of devotion, and the rich blessings of all sorts reflected.

III. Similarly as to the Deaths of Missionaries in the Field.

(*a*) No one exclaims against a man who accepts a lucrative trade or official appointment to a pestilential climate, or is ordered off on military service to a post of danger.

(*b*) The number of missionary deaths is as nothing compared with the losses in even a minor war.

(*c*) The deaths of missionaries stimulate the devotion of the Church; e.g. how many men and women have been led to give themselves to God's work at home as well as abroad by such deaths as those of Livingstone, Patteson, and Hannington?

References.—XIV. 4-6.—'Plain Sermons' by contributors to the *Tracts for the Times*, vol. x. p. 98. XIV. 5.—D. T. Young, *The Travels of the Heart*, p. 69. XIV. 6.—J. Coats Shanks, *God Within Us*, p. 10. John Clifford, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lix. 1901, p. 79. G. W. Herbert, *Notes of Sermons*, p. 76. Bishop F. Temple, *Church Times*, vol. xxviii. 1890, p. 1060. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxxi. No. 1834. XIV. 6-9.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—St. Mark IX.-XVI.* p. 162.

THE PASSING OF OPPORTUNITY

'Me ye have not always.'—Mark xiv. 7.

Jesus is a continual surprise. You could never guess, if you did not know, how He will reply to a disputant, or what He will do in a dilemma. He always does the original thing, says the unexpected thing. His deeds and words are a source of astonishment even to the disciples who know and love Him best. Those whom they rebuke, He welcomes; and on those with whom they are indignant, He bestows the loftiest and most deliberate commendation. Verily His ways are not as their ways, and perhaps still less as our ways.

No one could be long with Jesus without learning that He loved the poor; and it is hardly surprising that when a woman, in the wealth of her devotion, broke a box of very precious ointment and poured it over the head of her Lord, the disciples were indignant and harsh. They counted her act one of foolish extravagance and condemned it in words which we might almost imagine were the Master's own. 'What is the good of such waste?' they say; 'for this ointment might have been sold and given to the poor.' It would not have been hard to believe that these were words of Jesus' own—words of mild rebuke to the eager woman who had forgotten how dear the poor were to Jesus. But no! The surprise is here as everywhere. What Jesus said was very different: 'Leave her alone; it is a beautiful work that she has

wrought upon Me. For ye have the poor with you all the time, but Me ye have not always.' Jesus has not forgotten His love for the poor, nor has He forgotten how much might be done with the money; but the poor might be helped at any time, while if He was to be thus honoured, it must be now or never. There is a time to sell the precious ointment, and a time to break the box and pour its treasure over the head of Jesus; and happy is he who knows these times and seasons.

I. Jesus is here enunciating, in His own inimitable way, the great truth of the relative value of opportunities. The good is not the best; and His words suggest that the man who would do homage to the best must be daring enough to rise above the temptation to be merely good, or to govern his life by the standards even of a noble convention. Jesus came not to be ministered unto, yet He was glad, very glad, when such spontaneous ministrations came. Though meek and lowly, He unhesitatingly accepted the costliest service, and counted Himself worthy of the noblest that men could offer. He loved the poor, but to Him life had other than economic aspects; and amid the cruelty, suspicion and misunderstanding that clouded the last of His earthly days, He welcomed with peculiar joy the daring generosity of this woman's heart.

The great words in which Jesus justified the breaking of the alabaster box in His own behalf embody a principle which should run through all wise life. The words were these: 'The poor ye have always with you, but Me ye have not always'. The principle is this—that opportunities differ in value and importance, and that wisdom consists in reading their value aright and in selecting the one which will not be always with us. Certain things may be done at any time; certain other things must be done now or never. Certain privileges may be enjoyed at any time; certain others, now or never. Every life is confronted at many points with this strange contrast—between the ordinary opportunities which come with every day, and some great opportunity which, if not grasped at once, may vanish for ever. The poor and Jesus! There is the living contrast which is symbolical of so much in our life. The presence of the poor we can depend on; the pathetic commonplace is ever about us; but unique opportunities are not always with us. They are rare. Sometimes they come to us but once; and though we should wait for a century, they would never come again.

II. Every life, however humble, has unique opportunities of its own. The Sabbath Day—do we use it for the better things? The holiday—do we let it bring us nearer the God of the mountains and the sea? The rare opportunities of travel—what do we do with them? Are we of those who would rather read a newspaper than watch a brilliant sunset? Common days and common sights will come again; but to him that hath ears to hear, every unique opportunity rings out the reminder, 'The poor ye have always with you, but Me ye have not always'. And if we cannot distinguish between opportunities, we have yet much to learn from Jesus.

In its primary reference, this word of Jesus referred not to getting, but to doing good; and here, as there, opportunities differ. It is not always easy, of course, to judge the real significance of an opportunity. A whole career has often been determined by a choice which at the moment seemed trivial. At the same time, there are opportunities whose greatness no sane man would dispute; and it would be well for those whose life is before them to learn to understand and value how much is theirs and how soon and how surely it will pass away. It is too late to break the alabaster box when Jesus is in His grave.—J. E. McFadyen, *The City With Foundations*, p. 63.

References.—XIV. 8.—T. Binney, *Sermons Preached in the King's Weigh-House Chapel*, p. 188. J. Page Hopps, *Sermons of Sympathy*, p. 53. H. Bushnell, *Christ and His Salvation*, p. 39. E. R. Wilberforce, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lviii. 1900, p. 305. J. M. Neale, *Sermons Preached in Sackville College Chapel*, vol. i. p. 252. XIV. 9.—T. T. Munger, *The Freedom of Faith*, p. 109. Ambrose Shepherd, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxvi. 1904, p. 53.

'And Judas Iscariot, one of the twelve, went unto the chief priests, to betray Him unto them.—Mark xiv. 10.

The Battle of Chalons, where Hunland met Rome, and the earth was played for, at sword-fence, by two earth-bestriding giants, the sweep of whose swords cut kingdoms in pieces, hovers dim in the languid remembrance of a few; while the poor police-court treachery of a wretched Iscariot, transacted in the wretched land of Palestine, centuries earlier, for *thirty pieces of silver*, lives clear in the heads, in the hearts of all men.—Carlyle in *History Again*.

THE GOODMAN OF THE HOUSE

'And the first day of unleavened bread, when they killed the passover, His disciples said unto Him, Where wilt Thou that we go and prepare that Thou mayest eat the passover? And He sendeth forth two of His disciples, and saith unto them, Go ye into the city, and there shall meet you a man bearing a pitcher of water: follow him. And wheresoever he shall go in, say ye to the goodman of the house, the Master saith, Where is the guestchamber, where I shall eat the passover with My disciples? And he will shew you a large upper room furnished and prepared: there make ready for us.'—Mark xiv. 12-15.

Let us take the 'Goodman of the House'. That he was well-to-do seems clear, and though there is no hint of his identity in the narrative, many would like to feel that it was the Evangelist John Mark himself, or at any rate the head of the household of which St. Mark and his mother, who was apparently a widow, formed a part.

I. The first thing we notice about the man is this: that he was an *unknown* friend of Jesus, unknown, that is to say, to the other disciples, as we see from the directions given to St. Peter and St. John. The Master tells them to follow a man bearing a pitcher of water.

II. If the goodman was unknown, he was also *unassuming*. He does not stand upon his dignity, nay, he is quite willing to pass into the background

when he has done his Lord's command. He prepared the room, but there was no place for him in it. His part is to remain alone outside in the passage, to watch that his Guest should be undisturbed.

III. Notice how *prepared* the goodman was for the Lord's message, and how willingly he responded to it. He must have made the offer to Jesus some time before. Can we not almost see the smile of happy contentment on his face when he heard the words, 'The Master saith, Where is the guestchamber where I shall eat the passover with My disciples?' His preparations had not been made in vain—the Upper Room was 'furnished and prepared'—all was ready for the Master's use.

IV. May we not think that the goodman had a greater reward still? If his house really did contain the Upper Room in which the Risen Christ appeared, what a joy to feel that in his house the disciples found their Easter Peace. And may he not have had a share? One Evangelist distinctly tells us that others were gathered with the ten Apostles where the Risen Lord appeared on that first Easter night. Surely we may hope and believe that the goodman this time no longer remained outside the door, but was admitted to that happy circle of rejoicing friends, unknown no longer, but welcomed by the others, and greeted by the Lord Himself.—W. V. Mason, *Short Addresses for Holy Week*, p. 9.

References.—XIV. 12-16.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—St. Mark IX.-XVI.* p. 171. XIV. 12-26.—*Ibid.* p. 175. XIV. 13, 14, 15.—C. S. Macfarland, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lvi. 1899, p. 344. XIV. 14.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xiii. No. 785. XIV. 19.—S. Baring-Gould, *Village Preaching for a Year*, vol. i. p. 341. A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—St. Mark IX.-XVI.* p. 182.

JUDAS

'The Son of Man goeth, as it is written of Him: but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed!'—Mark xiv. 21.

I. Would Christ have chosen Judas as His disciple if he was wholly bad? No; we lose the significance of the lesson of Judas if we do not realize that Judas had his noble side. (1) There must have been something noble in Judas to have made him throw in his lot with the disciples as they went homeless and houseless and almost penniless up and down Judæa. (2) There is not the slightest reason to suppose but that Judas himself took part in spiritual work—the disciples went out; they preached in different villages the Gospel. (3) You find that our Lord Jesus Christ was always appealing to the good side of Judas; He never gave him up even to the last. (4) When we compare the dealings of God with men, we find that He could not possibly have dealt with Judas otherwise than He has dealt with other men; the history of human nature is the same in every generation, and you may be quite certain that in tracing the history of Judas we are tracing the history of a man who had, and displayed before the eyes of the world, a devolution of character, the devolution of which is the greatest lesson to ourselves.

II. What was it that turned a man of probably naturally noble character, with aspirations which made him join a band of poor men standing for the right, into the traitor Judas?

It was the self-deception of one dominant idea, a dominant idea that was fostered and increased by the very things which should have crushed it out of him in the discipline of his character. He was an able man, but, with that business ability which distinguished Judas, he had what so often goes with it—a love of power and a love of money. It became a dominant idea in the mind of Judas to become the treasurer of a great kingdom, and as the idea grew with him, so the impatience became greater with the ways of his Master. When he pressed the fatal kiss upon His Master, probably to the very last he thought he was doing it for His good, and it was not until the lightning flash came at last when his Master was really taken, when the Son of Man was really betrayed, when He was led away and did nothing for His rescue—then the lightning flash showed Judas where he was, the veil slipped from his eyes, conscience had its revenge, and he departed and went and hanged himself.

III. Can there be at this moment some terrible self-deception which may be blinding our eyes, and leading us on almost against our own knowledge to betray our Lord?

1. What self-deception is there about what is called friendship?

2. So again with our churchmanship or our religion.

3. Whom are you working for really in your religious life?—Bishop Winnington Ingram, *Addresses in Holy Week in St. Paul's Cathedral*, 1902, p. 7.

References.—XIV. 22-24.—James Vaughan, *Fifty Sermons* (9th Series), p. 180. XIV. 23.—E. S. Talbot, *Some Titles and Aspects of the Eucharist*, p. 1.

'They went out unto the Mount of Olives.'—Mark xiv. 26.

After moralizing on the pagan uses of the olive-tree, 'which has triple significance from the use of its oil for sacred anointing, for strength in the gymnasium, and for light,' Ruskin finishes by bidding his readers, 'above and beyond all, think how strange it is that the chief Agonia of humanity, and the chief giving of strength from heaven for its fulfilment, should have been under its night shadow in Palestine.'—*Queen of the Air*, sec. 38.

It was when bowed down beneath this internal conflict that Dante, one day, wandering across the mountains of Lunigiana, knocked at the gate of the monastery of Santa Croce del Corvo. The monk who opened it read at a single glance all the long history of misery on the pale thin face of the stranger. 'What do you seek here?' said he. Dante gazed around, with one of those looks in which the soul speaks, and slowly replied, 'Peace,' *Pacem*. There is in this scene something that leads our thoughts up to the eternal type of all martyrs of genius and love, praying to His Father, to the Father of All, upon the Mount of Olives, for peace of soul and strength

for the sacrifice.—From MAZZINI'S essay on *The Minor Works of Dante.*

HERE was a great beautiful chamber for him! And what better bed than God's heather! What better canopy than God's high star-studded night, with its airy curtains of dusky darkness! Was it not in this very chamber that Jacob had his vision of the mighty stair leading up to the gate of heaven? Was it not under such a roof that Jesus spent His last nights on earth? For comfort and protection he sought no human shelter, but went out into His Father's house —out under His Father's heaven! The small and narrow were not to Him the safe, but the wide and open. Thick walls cover men from the enemies they fear; the Lord sought space. There the angels come and go more freely than where roofs gather distrust. —G. MACDONALD in the third chapter of *Donald Grant.*

THE MESSAGE OF OLIVET

'They went out into the Mount of Olives.'—MARK XIV. 26.

OLIVET took its name from the olive-trees which grew in luxuriant abundance upon its slopes. The Jews also called it the Mountain of Three Lights.

Strangely enough, too, the oil obtained from the olive-trees had, in ancient time, a triple significance —that of sacredness, strength, and light. More important still is the truth, as Ruskin puts it, 'that the chief Agonia of humanity, and the chief giving of strength from heaven for its fulfilment' was worked out under the night shade of the olives. For Christ's agony in the garden has endowed the human race with entirely new ideas of sacredness, strength, and light.

I. Sacredness.—The oil from the olive-trees was used for purposes of sacred anointing. Christ's agony under the olives bequeathed to men a fresh and revolutionary conception of the inspiring sacredness of the human soul. Since Christ in His matchless sorrow raised to His lips the brimming cup of man's iniquity, we may rest assured that each one of us is of the greatest value to Him. The intensity of His Passion is the measure, on the one hand, of man's sin—on the other hand, of the greatness of redeeming love. And the revelation of that love bequeathed a new conception of the sacredness of life. Suffering is then seen to be the refining process—the method by which the sacred life finds its highest realization.

II. Strength.—A second use for the oil was found in the gymnasiums. Hence the olive-tree became also an emblem of strength.

But how does the agony of Christ convey a message of strength? Never was there such a wrestling in prayer as in the garden, and never was there such a victory won. And it conveys a message of strength to us because it reveals the unlimited resources that await the beseechings of prayer. Christ therefore has shown us, where, and how, to obtain strength in our Gethsemane trials, by Himself leading us to the supreme source of all power. Your season of anguish is your period of opportunity.

III. Light.—The oil procured from the olive-trees was also used for purposes of illumination. The oil for the Temple lamps was brought from the Mount of Olives. Hence the olive-trees became also an emblem of light. But how does that awful gloom of the agony suggest a lesson in light? I think it is in this wise. When the surging multitude invaded the sanctuary of the Master's devotions, and the profane signal of Judas had been given, Jesus stepped forth and confronted the throng. Then we read 'They went backward and fell to the ground'. What caused the retreat? It was the sudden vision of that face, gleaming with the pure light of heaven. The faces of men who walk and talk with God are lit up with the glowing reflection of Divine beauty.—W. GILBERT, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. LXXII. 1907, p. 100.

REFERENCES.—XIV. 26.—R. J. Campbell, *Sermons Addressed to Individuals*, p. 23. J. Baines, *Twenty Sermons*, p. 125. XIV. 27-31.—W. H. Simcox, *The Cessation of Prophecy*, p. 259. XIV. 29.—C. G. Lang, *Church Times*, vol. xlvi. 1901, p. 25; see also *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lx. 1901, p. 4.

'Thou shalt deny Me thrice.'—MARK XIV. 30.

HE who tells a lie is not sensible how great a task he undertakes; for he must be forced to invent twenty more to maintain that one.—SWIFT.

THE moment we cross the primitive border of equity, all things seem to fail us; one falsehood gives rise to a hundred, and treachery returns to us through a thousand channels.—MAETERLINCK.

'He spake exceeding vehemently, If I must die with Thee, I will not deny Thee. And in like manner also said they all.'—MARK XIV. 31.

IN his *Microcosmography* Earle describes a staid man as 'one that thinks what he does, and does what he says, and foresees what he may do before he purposes. One whose 'If I can' is more than another's assurance; and his doubtful tale before some men's protestations: that is not too hasty to say after others.

RELIGIOUS EMOTION

'But he spake the more vehemently, If I should die with Thee, I will not deny Thee in any wise.'—MARK XIV. 31.

LET us not be content with saying, 'Lord, Lord,' without 'doing the thing which He says'. The husbandman's son who said, 'I go, sir,' yet went not to the vineyard, gained nothing by his fair words. One secret act of self-denial, one sacrifice of inclination to duty, is worth all the mere good thoughts, warm feelings, passionate prayers, in which idle people indulge themselves. It will give us more comfort on our death-bed to reflect on one deed of self-denying mercy, purity, or humility, than to recollect the shedding of many tears, and the recurrence of frequent transports, and much spiritual exultation. These latter feelings come and go; they may or may not accompany hearty obedience; they are never tests

of it; but good actions are the fruits of faith, and assure us that we are Christ's; they comfort us as an evidence of the Spirit working in us. By them we shall be judged at the last day; and though they have no worth in themselves, by reason of that infection of sin which gives its character to everything we do, yet they will be accepted for His sake, who bore the agony in the ga den, and suffered as a sinner on the Cross.—J. H. Newman.

References.—XIV. 31.—J. H. Newman, *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, vol. i. p. 177. XiV. 32-42.—J. Laidlaw, *Studies in the Parables*, p. 177. A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—St. Mark IX.-XVI.* p. 187. XIV. 37.—*Ibid.* p. 194. XIV. 38.—Reuen Thomas, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. liv. 1898, p. 342. XIV. 41.—J. Addison Alexander, *The Gospel of Jesus Christ*, p. 305. J. L. Fraser *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xlviii. 1895, p. 408. J. M. Neale, *Sermons on the Blessed Sacrament*, pp. 103, 113, 124, 133, 138. XIV. 42; XV. 41.—W. H. Bennett, *The Life of Christ According to St. Mark*, p. 232. XIV. 43-54. A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—St. Mark IX.-XVI.* p. 203.

'Judas . . . kissed Him.'—Mark xiv. 45.

The deed of Judas has been attributed to far-reaching views, and the wish to hasten his Master's declaration of Himself as the Messiah. Perhaps—I will not maintain the contrary—Judas represented his wishes in this way, and felt justified in his traitorous kiss; but my belief that he deserved, metaphorically speaking, to be where Dante saw him, at the bottom of the Malebolge, would not be the less strong because he was not convinced that his action was detestable. I refuse to accept a man who has the stomach for such treachery as a hero impatient for the redemption of mankind and for the beginning of a reign when the kisses shall be those of peace and righteousness.—George Eliot in *Theophrastus Such.*

References.—XIV. 46.—C. Stanford, *The Evening of Our Lord's Ministry*, p. 191. XIV. 46, 47.—W. M. Taylor, *The Miracles of Our Saviour*, p. 426.

'They all forsook Him, and fled.'—Mark xiv. 50.

Charles Lamb, in his essay on The South-Sea House, describes the accountant, John Tipp, as endowed by nature 'with a sufficient measure of the principle of self-preservation. Tipp never mounted the box of a stage-coach in his life; or leaned against the rail of a bal ony; or walked upon the ridge of a parapet; or looked down a precipice; or let off a gun; or went upon a water-party; or would willingly let you go, if he could have helped it; neither was it recorded of him that for lucre, or for intimidation, he ever forsook friend or principle.'

This life was to Johnson, and to almost all the earnest thinkers of his time, unhappy in itself—a schoolhouse where the rod was ever active. But in its unhappiness Johnson found no power that could overthrow his faith. To him this world was but a place of education for the happiness that would be to the faithful in the world to come. There was a great dread for him in the question, who shall be found faithful?—Professor Henry Morley.

A CERTAIN YOUNG MAN

'And they all forsook Him, and fled. And there followed Him a certain young man, having a linen cloth cast about his naked body; and the young men laid hold on Him: and he left the linen cloth, and fled from them naked.'—Mark xiv. 50-52.

'Who was this young man?' A good many guesses have been made. Some think that he was only an ordinary bystander who had nothing to do with Jesus. Some have thought it was the owner of the garden himself, who, sleeping hard by, heard the noise and tumult, and hurried out in haste to see what it was all about. Others say it may have been Lazarus of Bethany. The most likely guess is that it was the Evangelist, John Mark.

I. Let us think first of the young man as simply being an ordinary bystander, curious as to the cause of the disturbance, and thus showing greater bravery than our Lord's own followers by hovering on the outskirts of the crowd. It is an instance of the courage of curiosity. Now curiosity as to things unlawful and forbidden is, we need hardly say, wrong and sinful, and the courage that may spring from it is a thing not to be desired. But pass to a higher plane where all is purged, leave the mere animal, and think rather of the spiritual, and we shall find something corresponding to the courage of curiosity, which is higher and nobler both in scope and aim than that could ever be, but yet something which seems to develop quite naturally from it, and this is surely the fortitude of faith. As curiosity brings out brute courage, so does faith bring out that true fortitude which is indeed a Christian virtue. Could the certain young man's curiosity only have become faith in Jesus, then the little courage which he showed might have passed into such fortitude as would have led him even to the Cross itself, and if the disciples had possessed that faith in Jesus which, after all their advantages they should have gained, they would not have turned cowards and fled when danger came.

II. If the 'certain young man' were St. Mark, or some other one of the friends of Jesus, we have a lesson which should come home with especial force to us professing Church people. All the disciples fled, this unknown friend remained at any rate for a short time behind. How often, alas! do we see the same thing happening now. The professing Christian, it may be the regular communicant, who ought to stand up bravely for what is just and true, is put to shame by the man who makes no Christian profession, but whose actions are so clearly good. Why is it? A passage from the late Mr. Holden's book, *The Holy Ghost the Comforter*, supplies the answer. The reason is because Christians forget to use the gift of Ghostly strength. Look at the disciples who now fled and forsook their Lord, and call them cowards if you will, but look a few weeks later at these same men, look at them after Pentecost, and what a change we find. What has wrought the change? There is only one answer: the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in the Upper Room. And all through the history of the Church you will find the

same thing true. The cross is borne, the temptation is overcome, the victory is won, the crown is gained, because men have learnt to trust in a power greater than their own, the gift of Ghostly strength.—W. V. Mason, *Short Addresses for Holy Week*, p. 20.

References.—XIV. 50-62.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. liii. No. 3023. XIV. 51, 52.—B. D. Johns, *Pulpit Notes*, p. 146. XIV. 53.—C. Stanford, *The Evening of Our Lord's Ministry*, p. 216. J. Baines, *Twenty Sermons*, p. 107. XIV. 55-65.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—St. Mark IX.-XVI.* p. 211.

STOPPING PLACES IN EVIDENCE

'What need we any further witnesses?'—Mark xiv. 63.

Let us take this in a way that is not usually taken; let us regard the question as equal to: Why not stop the case here? why add to the edifice? That is an illustration of what occurs in our own day in many a legal instance; the judge inquires whether the jury cares to proceed any further in the matter, and the jury notifies to the judge that they have heard enough, they have made up their minds, and so far as they are concerned they wish an end to be put to the case. I have thought that this might well apply to Christ and His Gospel, the question being asked, not with a view to the condemnation of Christ, but with a view to His being accredited and glorified as the Saviour of the world. Why call any more witnesses? why publish any more volumes of apologetics? is not the case proved? why add to the witness, the testimony, and the vindication? I think Jesus Christ is entitled to have this question asked.

The subject is the stopping places in Christian evidences. What further need have we? why go on with the case? may it not be well settled at this point?

I. Apply that inquiry to the whole range of Christian thought. Apply it to the Bible.

Let us turn the high priest's question the other way, and if men will only be faithful to their own spiritual apprehension and appreciation of the Bible, and repay the Bible what it has already paid them, we shall terminate many a foolish controversy. I want Christians and Bible students to speak up for their Bible; do not make a secret letter of it, but say, 'This is the Book that helped me; whether it can help you or not I say not, but this is the Book that made a man of me'. More testimony, personal testimony, experiential testimony, and the case is established for ever.

II. Well, suppose it is, in the second place, the Gospel that is on its defence, where do you join the Gospel? One man says: 'I really cared nothing about the Gospel as an energetic and reclamatory force until I saw what it did in our neighbourhood'. What did it do in your neighbourhood? 'It made a new neighbourhood of it; the wilderness blossomed as the rose, and the wayside is as a garden of God.' Ah, how so? 'The Gospel was preached in its simplicity, power, and holy unction; man after man, woman after woman fell before its gracious power and accepted it.' And what became of them? 'Their very houses were cleaner, and their children were more attended to, and all they had to do was sweeter, wholesomer, gladder, diviner.' Well? and the man whom I am inquiring of answers, 'I could not resist a Gospel that has done such wonderful things in my own neighbourhood'. That will do; what further need have we of witnesses? stop the case there, declare what you have seen, yield to facts.

III. Well, what do you say about the effect of the Gospel upon heathen and barbarous countries? Marvellous, beyond all imagining. The Gospel has gone into a kind of hell, it has gone amongst people who have never heard of its existence, who have never heard of the Cross and the blood and the offer of redemption, and these men have been threatened, many of them have been murdered, and still the Gospel has gone on repeating its sweet, tender, redeeming story; and places that have been embruited and bedevilled, places that have been next door to hell, if not part of its very centre, have become civilized, evangelized, and now there are schools and homes and churches, and the altar of God is beloved and adored, and the Cross gathers up into its grim symbolism all that is holy, inspiring, and blessing in human life. What further need have we of witnesses? None, stop the case.—Joseph Parker, *City Temple Pulpit*, vol. v. p. 165.

References.—XIV. 63, 64.—Gordon Calthrop, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 798, vol. xiv. p. 82. XIV. 64.—R. Winterbotham, *Sermons Preached in Holy Trinity Church, Edinburgh*, p. 175. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxviii. No. 1643. XIV. 67.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons Preached in Sackville College Chapel*, vol. i. p. 219. XIV. 68.—C. Jerdan, *Pastures of Tender Grass*, p. 387. XIV. 69, 75.—G. Jackson, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lviii. 1900, p. 284. XIV. 71.—T. H. Archer-Hind, *Some Scripture Problems and their Solution*, p. 19. XIV. 72.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xlvii. No. 2735. XV. 1-4.—R. M. Benson, *The Life Beyond the Grave*, p. 53. XV. 1-20.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—St. Mark IX.-XVI.* p. 219.

'But Jesus no more answered anything; so that Pilate marvelled.'—Mark xv. 5.

There are few tests of a man's spiritual condition more searching and decisive than the temper with which he bears unmerited insult and railing speech. I do not refer to mere self-command, to the self-respect which forbids an answer in kind, and imposes an external calmness of manner on a swelling indignation within. . . . The question is not one of self-mastery under, but of superiority to, insult, which feels no anger or resentment at insolence or contempt; and this not from an abject or craven spirit, but from living on a plane of feeling up to which personal insult does not reach. This equanimity in no wise prejudges the question whether injurious language should not be reproved, and in some cases punished; as by a judge for contempt of court. We are only concerned with that serenity of spirit which is not touched or wounded by opprobrious speech, and all will admit it is a very rare gift.—Mr. Cotter Morison's *Service of Man*, iii.

'But the chief priests stirred up the multitude, that he should rather release Barabbas unto them.'—MARK XV. 11.

A CERTAIN People, once upon a time, clamorously voted by overwhelming majority 'Not *he*; Barabbas! not he! *Him*, and what He is, and what He deserves, we know well enough; a reviler of the chief priests and sacred chancery wigs; a seditious heretic, physical force chartist, and enemy of His country and mankind: To the gallows and the cross with Him! Barabbas is our man; Barabbas! we are for Barabbas!' They got Barabbas;—have you well considered what a fund of purblind obduracy, of opaque *flunkeyism* grown truculent and transcendent; what an eye for the phylacteries, and want of eye for the eternal noblenesses; sordid loyalty to the prosperous semblances, and high treason against the supreme Fact, such a vote betokens in these natures? For it was the consummation of a long series of such; they and their fathers had long kept voting so. A singular People, who could both produce such Divine men, and then could so stone and crucify them; a People terrible from the beginning! Well, they got Barabbas; and they got, of course, such guidance as Barabbas and the like of him could give them; and, of course, they stumbled ever downwards and devilwards, in their truculent, stiff-necked way.—CARLYLE, *Latter-day Pamphlets*, I.

REFERENCES.—XV. 13.—J. H. Jellett, *The Elder Son*, p. 141. XV. 15.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons Preached in Sackville College Chapel*, vol. i. p. 266. W. J. Knox-Little, *Sunlight and Shadow*, p. 242. XV. 15-20.—C. Stanford, *The Evening of Our Lord's Ministry*, p. 289. XV. 15-39.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xli. No. 2443.

'And the men that held Jesus mocked Him and smote Him.'—MARK XV. 19.

FROUDE, in describing Newman's preaching at Oxford, tells how once he 'described closely some of the incidents of our Lord's Passion; he then paused. For a few moments there was a breathless silence. Then, in a low, clear voice, of which the faintest vibration was audible in the farthest corner of St. Mary's, he said, "Now, I bid you recollect that He to Whom these things were done was Almighty God". It was as if an electric stroke had gone through the church, as if every person present understood for the first time the meaning of what he had all his life been saying. I suppose it was an epoch in the mental history of more than one of my Oxford contemporaries.'

REFERENCE.—XV. 20, 21.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxviii. No. 1683.

SIMON THE CYRENIAN

'They compelled one Simon a Cyrenian, who passed by, coming out of the country, the father of Alexander and Rufus, to bear His cross.'—MARK XV. 21.

I. THE greatness of trifles. If he had started five minutes earlier or later, his whole life would have been different.

II. The blessedness and honour of helping Jesus Christ. Let us share His shame and help in carrying out the purposes for which the cross was borne.

III. The perpetual recompense and record of humblest Christian work.

IV. The blessed results of contact with the suffering Christ. We suppose that he yielded to the soul-conquering power of Christ. He was 'the father of Alexander and Rufus'.—ALEXANDER MACLAREN, *Contemporary Pulpit*, vol. I. p. 378.

SIMON OF CYRENE

'And they compel one Simon a Cyrenian, who passed by, coming out of the country, the father of Alexander and Rufus, to bear His cross.'—MARK XV. 21.

THERE is more than a picture here, there is a parable for the soul. Let us understand not only the honour of the deed, but its blessedness. No one can ever do for Jesus precisely what Simon did. And yet in spirit, in the words and deeds of our daily lives, and pre-eminently in the greater hours of trial and sorrow, what we are called upon to do is this very thing—to walk in the way after Jesus, and to carry His cross.

I. *First:* Mark *the greatness of the service Simon did for Jesus.* As often as our thoughts are true and our love to Jesus rises in flood, we all have a blameless envy of those who did Him service. We know no distinction to compare with theirs. The women who ministered to Him; Martha, who made Him a supper; Mary, who poured her spikenard over His head; Joseph, who gave Him a grave, stand out above all the benefactors of men. All the pre-eminences and attainments of time are less than vanity compared to theirs. But if you will give rank to the services rendered to Jesus, if you will pitch upon the greatest deed done for Him—next to that supreme office of the woman who nursed Him in her bosom and gave Him suck at her breasts—easily first of all is this deed of Simon in bearing His cross.

To this day the greatest service to be done for Christ is to carry His cross.

II. Mark, in the second place, *the greatness of Simon's reward.* Christ never allowed any honour paid to Him, or any service done to Him to pass unrewarded. When a village girl asked Him to her wedding feast, He turned the water into wine. When a humble home offered Him hospitality on the Sabbath Day, He touched its mistress, and expelled her fever. When a Samaritan gave Him a draught from the well, He gave her to drink of the Living Water. When a poor, abandoned, city waif stooped to kiss His feet, He sent her out with a blessing of peace. No cup of cold water given to Christ ever lost its reward. And this pre-eminent service done by Simon enjoyed its great reward.

What was that reward? It was the deepest desire of his heart. Perhaps you say it was his own salvation. There is little doubt that he became Christ's disciple. It would have been contrary, both to nature and to grace, that any man should come so near Jesus, and should do so much for Him, and not be called into His kingdom. But as I read the Evangelists, I conceive that Simon's reward was greater than the saving of his own soul. It was the

answer of his most instant and constant and urgent prayers. Away in Cyrene this pilgrim to the Holy City had left two little sons, and as he looked upon them, exiles from the land of Israel, as he taught them the fear of the God of Jacob, the very passion of his heart was distilled into prayer, that they might grow in the faith and obedience of God. Christ saw the names Rufus and Alexander graven on Simon's heart. And the great reward was given to Simon of seeing both his sons known and loved and honoured in the Church of Christ. As I read a father's heart, I do not know whether he was prouder of the deed done for Jesus, or of the holy fame of being the father of Alexander and Rufus.

III. Mark, in the third place, *the greatness of Simon's opportunity.* That Simon should have been coming into the city as Jesus was coming out might be called a strange coincidence. It was more. It was the predestination of God. That was the predestined moment when Simon's opportunity came to him. It was the moment when he was compelled to be alone with Christ. It was a golden opportunity. How Simon used it we can do more than guess. He might have struggled, like a galled ox, burning with deep resentment at the wrong done to him. He might have carried off his contumely with a bravado which would have appealed to the humour of the crowd. But this devout pilgrim had a spirit prepared for another way. He was precisely the man to profit by being alone with Jesus. We dare not say that any unreported words, or soft whisper, passed from Jesus to Simon. But we can be sure that Jesus turned and looked on Simon—a look of human gratitude and of Divine compassion, and of irresistible appeal. He could not resist the Divine look. Simon saw, on the way to Calvary, the light of the knowledge of the glory of God revealed in the face of Jesus Christ. No man ever saw the face of God and lived. And as Simon looked into the face of Christ, the old nature died within him, and he knew the Lord.—W. M. Clow, *The Day of the Cross*, p. 157.

References.—XV. 21.—E. B. Spiers, *A Present Advent*, p. 192. R. F. Horton, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xlvii. 1895, p. 392. J. Durran, *ibid.* vol. lvi. 1899, p. 6. J. Burns, *ibid.* vol. lxxi. 1907, p. 211. C. Stanford, *The Evening of Our Lord's Ministry*, p. 313. A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—St. Mark IX.-XVI.* p. 237. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxxi. No. 1853. XV. 21-39.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—St. Mark IX.-XVI.* p. 228.

CHRIST REFUSING THE STUPEFYING DRAUGHT

'And they gave Him to drink wine mingled with myrrh: but He received it not.'—Mark xv. 23.

The intention of the soldiers was humane. Crucifixion was so lingering and painful that it was customary thus to deaden the consciousness of the criminal.

I. What was the Saviour's Condition at that Moment?—Intense anguish of soul combined with physical suffering.

Christ's nature was peculiarly sensitive.

The sorrow at Gethsemane had already weakened Him.

Now His sorrow had reached its height.

II. Why did He Refuse the Proffered Relief?—Not to awaken men's admiration.

Not to awaken men's sympathy.

1. Because His sufferings were by *Divine* appointment; not simply accidental. He would not escape the full force of the penalty which He had undertaken to endure.

2. Because He was unwilling to die without a full consciousness of the conquest which He was achieving over sin and death.

III. What Enabled Him to Dispense with this Stupefying Draught?—It was the direct result of His self-surrender to the Father.

He who gives up will, purpose, life, into the hands of God, may expect that God will be all in all to him.

IV. What Lessons does His Refusal Teach Us?

1. His true nobility.

2. Our own duty under trial.

'The cup which My Father hath given Me, shall I not drink it?'

It is our privilege to accept the Saviour's love.

He suffered, died, arose, ascended to heaven, and pleads now for us.—F. G. Austin, *Seeds and Saplings*, p. 19.

'They gave Him to drink wine mingled with myrrh: but He received it not.'—Mark xv. 23.

See Keble's lines on 'The Tuesday before Easter'.

'Johnson,' says Boswell, 'with that native fortitude which amidst all his bodily distress and mental sufferings never forsook him, asked Dr. Brocklesby, as a man in whom he had confidence, to tell him plainly whether he could recover. "Give me," said he, "a direct answer." The doctor having first asked him if he could bear the whole truth, which way soever it might lead, and being answered that he could, declared that in his opinion he could not recover without a miracle. "Then," said Johnson, "I will take no more physic, not even my opiates; but I have prayed that I may render up my soul to God unclouded." In this resolution he persevered.'

In Burnet's *History of My Own Times* it is related that of the regicides punished after the Restoration 'the only one who died dastardly was Hugh Peters, a very vicious man, but a sort of buffoon preacher, who had been serviceable to Cromwell on several accounts, and a fierce instigator of the king's death. He had neither honesty to repent of his sin, nor strength of mind to suffer for it as the rest had done, but was perpetually drinking some strong cordial liquors to keep up his spirits or make him insensible.'

References.—XV. 23.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xli. No. 2443. XV. 25.—W. P. Balfern, *Lessons from Jesus*, p. 220. XV. 31.—R. Winterbotham, *Sermons Preached in Holy Trinity Church, Edinburgh*, p. 148.

FIXING OUR OWN EVIDENCES

'That we may see and believe.'—Mark xv. 32.

'That we may see and believe:' here you have a pack of men who are setting up their own standard of evidence. What a proud 'we' was that; what a blind 'see' was that; what an impossible 'believe' was that! Observe their line of reasoning: they charged Jesus Christ to do something of their own fixing in order that *they* might see and believe. They would arrest the universe in order that they might get a first-class seat upon any chariot that was driving towards the gratification of selfish conceit and desire. Were they so anxious to see and believe that they would call upon God to arrest the sun and the moon upon the hills of time? Certainly not; they were not anxious to believe, they did not want to believe, but they wanted to gratify a conceit or to satisfy a fancy or an ambition; they wanted to create a new anecdote, saying, 'We said, if He would come down from the Cross we would see it and believe Him'; and God sent upon them a great negative, a contemptuous denial. None can be so deaf as God. We must take care how we set up our own little schools of evidence and our small little bodies of apologies for the deity of Christ and the redeeming efficacy of His Cross.

I. We cannot stop at any one definition of evidence, even if God were to grant it to us. He would not satisfy us, He would awaken and provoke a still keener and fouler temptation.

The eye never saved a soul, the eye is a poor instrument at best; the human may probably be the very poorest of eyes in the higher classes of animals. There is a way which the eagle knoweth not, and there is a path which the vulture's eye hath not seen, and there are paths and ways and courses of development which no human eye can see; it is the soul that sees.

II. Jesus Christ never did respond to any test set by the enemy, set by anybody. He does not accept suggestions, He reveals truths. Christ never fell into an intellectual man-trap; He laid down the law, He expounded the kingdom, He spoke in the imperative; in the subjunctive or the potential He could not speak, He was free of all that limited and hesitant grammar. Did Jesus Christ accept the suggestion of the enemy in the wilderness? He said—what a philosophy it was that He spake in that grand retort—'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God': a new conception of life, an enlargement of our limited view of bread, of substance, of tables and dinings. Christ in effect swept all these out of the way, saying, 'Man shall live by every word, every kind of method Divinely conceived and Divinely provided: away!'

III. Many have suggested short and easy methods of proving this and that. Jesus Christ never adopted one of them. They treat Jesus Christ as if He knew nothing about these things; whereas He lived before the universe lived. They seem to think that if He would only accept their ideas, their short and easy methods, all would instantly rise and follow Christ, and make the welkin ring with thunderous acclamation.

From the beginning man has had everything that was necessary to redemption and salvation. Once a lawyer thought not; he conceived the idea that the Divine revelation would be vexed by cross-examination, and he said, 'Master, which is the great commandment of the law?' Jesus answering said unto him, 'How readest thou?' The answer was given before the question was asked; there is no need for such questions, they have all been anticipated. 'Lawyer, how readest thou?' 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and soul and mind and strength.' 'Very good,' said Christ, 'I add nothing to it, there is no need to add anything to it; I came to see the law fulfilled, the written law turned into unwritten life. This do, and thou shalt live.' But the lawyer still thought that his plan was the best; so did they on Calvary, they said, 'O Thou that destroyest the temple and buildest it in three days, save Thyself and come down from the Cross; we would thus put Thee to the test; Thou claimant of the highest throne in Jewry, come down!' The suggestion was not accepted; it was like Christ not to answer foolish, frivolous, and conceited questions. —Joseph Parker, *City Temple Pulpit*, vol. vi. p. 49.

References.—XV. 33, 34.—J. Hunter, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xlv. 1894, p. 187. W. Alexander, *Verbum Crucis*, p. 65.

'My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?'—Mark xv. 34.

In the thirty-seventh chapter of *Transformation*, Hawthorne describes Sodoma's well-known fresco of the suffering Christ at Siena. 'It is inexpressibly touching. So weary is the Saviour, and utterly worn out with agony, that His lips have fallen apart from mere exhaustion; His eyes seem to be set; He tries to lean His head against the pillar, but is kept from sinking down upon the ground only by the cords that bind Him. One of the most striking effects produced is the sense of loneliness. You behold Christ deserted both in heaven and earth; that despair is in Him which wrung forth the saddest utterance man ever made, "Why hast Thou forsaken Me?" Even in this extremity, however, He is still Divine. The great and reverent painter has not suffered the Son of God to be merely an object of pity, though depicting Him in a state so profoundly pitiful. He is as much and as visibly our Redeemer, there bound, there fainting and bleeding from the scourge, with the cross in view, as if He sat on the throne of His glory in the heavens.'

Towards the end of her life Mrs. Fry said to a friend: 'I have passed through deep baptism of spirit in this illness. I may say, unworthy as I am to say it, that I have had to drink in very small measure of the Saviour's cup when He said, *My God! My God! why hast Thou forsaken Me?* Some of my friends have thought there was a danger of my being exalted,

but I believe the danger has been on the opposite side, of my being too low.'

THE CRY OF DERELICTION

'My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?'—Mark xv. 34.

The tragedy of the Crucifixion reached its climax at the sixth hour. The Blessed Master had passed through the outer circle of sorrow, and now the pale, bruised Form is lost in the thick darkness which surrounds Him. During the first hours our Blessed Lord reigns as a King—interceding, absolving, and commending His loved ones. Now a change passes over Him; His soul enters into a great loneliness. This cry shows that there was something deeper, something more awful, than the fear of death. He must taste death for every man, He must be made perfect through suffering; but the cry we hear from the cross was the cry of a soul which had been faithful, loyal all His life, but from Whom the conscious Presence of God had been withdrawn.

I. Do We ever Feel Forsaken?—Such days come to even the best of us—days of darkness, days of depression. But here is our comfort. When all seems lost in life, when our work never seems to bring success, when we toil without any recognition and without any reward, when there seems for us no comfort in our prayers, when there is no light to gladden our eyes, then it is for us to realize that because of that One's bitter cry which rang out in the darkness, Jesus is always with us because He knew what it was to be forsaken even by God Himself. So you and I may always know that when this darkness comes upon us we may of a certainty count, because of this bitter cry, that Jesus is always with us. Oh, let us cling to the cross for this our comfort in our time of darkness!

II. The Guilt of Sin.—And yet surely it must mean more than this, something deeper than this, for it reveals to us the guilt of sin. He Who knew no sin was made sin for us; He came to make an atonement. 'God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself.' What does it all mean? What do you and I mean by that word that is so often on our lips? Let me carry your thoughts back to the old Levitical days when the high priest once in the year made an atonement for the sins of the people. You will remember the ritual of that day. What did it all mean? What was the meaning, then, to the people who saw these acts going on? Surely that sin was something very awful and terrible in God's sight; that God could not look upon sin; that it must be taken right away, and until this was done the people could not approach God. We all feel its power, do we not? We see its stain. But how few of us recognize its guilt! We cannot think little of sin when you and I realize that it cost the best, the noblest, the purest blood, when we realize that it has cost the Blood of God Himself to take away that sin; that for one great atonement it needed God to come down and live our life, it needed God to be surrounded by the darkness on the cross, to live out His life, as it were, just for a few hours making that atonement, forsaken by God Himself. Can you and I think lightly of sin after that? When we are tempted to call some sins little and some great, as they are reckoned in our social life, let us realize what it meant when our Lord cried from the cross, 'My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?'

III. The Punishment of Sin.—I think we have here not only the revelation of the guilt of sin, but we have more—we have a revelation of the punishment of sin. This one hour had loomed before Christ all His life. At this last dread moment we are shown something, only something, but surely sufficient, of what the punishment of sin really is. Our Blessed Master could endure all else but this. The thought of His Father hiding His face, and the thought of entering that darkness, was something which He could not contemplate unmoved. We are inclined—are we not?—to guess at the future condition of the soul; but after we have stood beneath the Cross, after we have heard this cry, we need not have any further speculation, for sin always means here and there separation from God. No bodily penalty, none of those mediaeval thoughts of hell which we are sometimes inclined to have in our mind, can compare with the awfulness of what it must mean for you and me for God to hide His face. Separation from God—does not the sinner know it now? Ah, but the sinner always has a feeling that he can turn to God when he likes; but to realize that sin will bring this separation, entire and complete, from God is the most awful thing that man could contemplate. To-day Jesus calls to us, 'Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by?' nothing to us who stand by the Cross? Was there ever such sorrow, ever such love?

Let us turn with thoughts of devotion and thoughts of love to behold the Lamb slain as an atonement for sin, to look and live.

References.—XV. 34.—*Selected Sermons of Schleiermacher*, p. 52. A. F. Winnington Ingram, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxxiii. 1908, p. 276. A. S. Peake, *ibid.* vol. lxxiv. 1908, p. 1. G. W. Herbert, *Notes of Sermons*, p. 92. A. N. Obbard, *Plain Sermons*, p. 222. Father Bernard Vaughan, *Society, Sin, and the Saviour*, p. 211. A. G. Mortimer, *The Spiritual Life in the Seven Last Words*, p. 37. XV. 34-47.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xl. No. 2390.

MISUNDERSTOOD

'Behold, He calleth Elias.'—Mark xv. 35.

'Behold, He calleth Elias.' They misinterpreted that last drear cry. They thought He was speaking to Elias and not to God. So at the very end, and on the Cross itself, Jesus was misunderstood.

I. I want to follow that misinterpretation into one or two spheres of the earthly life of Jesus, and I notice first that men misunderstood His motives. Think, for example, of His healing miracles—'He casteth out devils by Beelzebub,' they said. Or think of His eating with publicans and sinners. That condescension spelled out love Divine, and they thought it was proof positive of guilt.

Men misunderstood the mystical and poetic speech of Jesus. They took Him very prosaically and literally when He only meant to suggest as music does, and so time and again they misconstrued Him. Take, for example, one of His early words, 'Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up again'. So, too, in the sad sweet story of the house at Bethany you recall how Jesus said to His disciples, 'Our friend Lazarus sleepeth'. They answered at once, 'Lord, if he sleep, he shall do well,' and Jesus, with a touch of pity at their dullness, has to tell them plainly that Lazarus was dead.

I think that Jesus is still misunderstood that way. There are men who love Him as these disciples did, and who are striving to serve Him in a life of duty, but they have taken the music of His speech, that was meant to suggest and to lead into the infinite, and they have built their arguments upon the letter of it, forgetting that it is the spirit that giveth life.

II. The world, then, misunderstood the speech of Jesus; but it also misunderstood His silence. And if ever the silence of Jesus was misunderstood, it was by Herod.

Is not Christ's silence still misunderstood? There is nothing harder for many a mind to grapple with than the apparent silence of our ascended Lord. It is not what God does, it is what He fails to do: it is not what Christ says, it is what He fails to say, that puzzles and perplexes many an earnest soul.

III. 'Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani,' and when they heard it they said He calleth *Elias*. Do you see the reason why they misunderstood Him? They had only caught a fragment of His speech.

There never was a time when Christ was more misunderstood than now, for the very reason that we find at Calvary. There was never a time when fragments of the Gospel were proclaimed with such assurance as the whole round truth. To take a part and think it is the whole is the sure way of misunderstanding Christ.—G. H. Morrison, *The Unlighted Lustre*, p. 244.

Reference.—XV. 37, 38.—'Plain Sermons' by contributors to the *Tracts for the Times*, vol. viii. p. 76.

THE ROMAN CENTURION

'And when the centurion, which stood over against Him, saw that He so cried out, and gave up the ghost, he said, Truly this man was the Son of God.'—Mark xv. 39.

One man, and one man only, is wholly competent to tell us the story of the death of Jesus. That man is this Roman centurion. It was he who sent his band across the brook Kedron, in the soft moonlight, to arrest Jesus. It was he who guarded Him as He was led to the house of Caiaphas, and then marched Him as a dangerous rebel to Pilate, and then to Herod, and then back to Pilate again. He overheard the strange parleying between Jesus and Pilate; he superintended the scourging; he looked on when the soldiers mocked Him; and it was by his lips that the message of Pilate's wife reached the governor's ears. At his word of command the glittering spears began to move along the way to Calvary; he saw the nails driven in, and then he stood with watchful eye and open ear, in the strength of his Roman discipline, and marked how Jesus died. I cannot tell you, and no man can tell you, the precise state of the blessed dead, but surely for all of us it shall be a state in which many things covered shall be revealed. And when the great multitude of the redeemed shall long to know the whole story of the last great day, we shall press round this Roman centurion, and he will inflame our hearts as he tells us how Jesus loved unto the end.

I. Of this man we know nothing certainly until he stands in the light of the dying face of Jesus. That he was a soldier assures us of an ingrained habit of obedience, a perfect courage, an unflinching loyalty, and an honest and greatly simple heart. That he was a Roman soldier tells us that he belonged to the most dauntless army the world has known, whose deeds of valour went back through an almost unbroken record of success through seven centuries. And that he was a centurion tells us that he was a man in middle life, who had seen service, and had risen through merit to his high command. No inexperienced stripling was ever appointed to a Roman post of authority. It may be safely said that among the centurions of the Roman army was to be found the very flower of honour and chivalry. The Roman Empire was already in decline; but, like every great organization, it had begun to die at the heart. And when the pestilence of moral corruption had infected the governors and counsellors of Rome, there were still to be found in its armies men of fearless truth, of fine courtesy, and of incorruptible purity. How the governors in the New Testament stand out in contrast to its centurions! All the four centurions are men of moral, even of spiritual beauty. Of one of them the Jews said, 'He loveth our nation, and hath built us a synagogue,' and Jesus said, 'I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel'. Of another, Cornelius, the record is that 'he was a just man, and one that feareth God'. The third was Julius, the centurion of Augustus' band, who 'courteously entreated Paul, and gave him liberty'. And the fourth was this centurion at the cross, who, as the slow hours of the day passed away, watched Jesus die, and in the few and emphatic words of a soldier's lips, bore to Him his confident testimony.

II. Now the question this man allows us to answer is what a man of a good and honest heart, with only a Roman's education, and with Pagan ideas, thought of Jesus when he saw Him die. He knew nothing about the life of Jesus. He was not even familiar with His name. 'This Man' was the word that came to his tongue as he looked on His head sunken in death. But as he witnessed the dying of the Lord Jesus, the Roman's contempt was changed into an adoration that broke out into great and memorable words of suggestive confession.

1. His first witness to Jesus is 'certainly this was a righteous Man'. It was the innocence, the moral beauty, the unspotted righteousness of Jesus, which

dawned upon Him. He broke the stillness of that awful moment with his strong, soldier-like words: 'Certainly this was a righteous Man'. He had not learned the music of the Hebrew Psalms, but if he had, this wise and true-hearted man could surely have broken out in the fervent words: 'Thou art fairer than the sons of men. Grace is poured into Thy lips. Therefore God hath blessed Thee for ever.'

2. The centurion was arrested, not only by the character of Jesus, but by the manner of His dying. Jesus died as a hero dies. For as two of the Evangelists report, he cried: 'Truly this Man was a Son of God'. His primary meaning is that Jesus was plainly no ordinary mortal, no such man as he was himself, cast in a merely earthly mould, but, like the heroes who had done the great deeds of Roman valour, of the lineage of the gods. Such heroism in dying out-distanced all he knew, and he knew well the meaning of heroism. It was a soldier spirit who had witnessed that 'Never man spake like this Man,' and this fellow-soldier testified, 'Never man died like this Man'.

3. On his darkened pagan mind there fell an awe and a sense of having been in the presence of the Divine. He saw the darkened sky, he felt the vibrating earth, he was appalled by the last great cry, and he looked up at the cross, and realized that the Divine Being whom Jesus had called His Father had owned Him for a Son.

III. Now this is what the Roman centurion saw in Jesus as he watched Him die, and when we remember what he was in mind and training, we see that his confession was very great. It had the greatness of sincerity and of fearlessness. And yet, while we commend, we cannot but pity. We cannot refrain from thinking and whispering to ourselves, 'If thou hadst but known the day of thy visitation'. His eyes were holden. He saw in Jesus only what he had eyes to see.

1. The first defect in the centurion was his *want of the sense of sin.*

2. The second defect in the centurion was his *want of a true conception of God.*

3. The third defect in this centurion was his *ignorance of a love which will die to redeem.*

There are men among us to-day, after all the centuries of the light and the teaching of Jesus and His cross, who see no more in Him than was seen by this sincere and honest centurion.

These do not enter into the secret of Jesus. They never see 'the Lord'. What do they need to cleanse their eyes? They need exactly what this centurion needed. The only evidence which will move mind and heart and will must appeal to the conscience; and the only apologetic which will successfully plead the deity of Jesus must rise above all questions of criticism, must base itself on the history, and prove itself in that experience in which both scholar and peasant have a common ground. Toplady's 'Rock of Ages' is a more convincing and convicting apology than Butler's noble and unanswerable *Analogy*. One vivid sight of the print of the nails alone can evoke the rapturous and adoring confession, 'My Lord and My God'.—W. M. Clow, *The Day of the Cross*, p. 299.

JOSEPH OF ARIMATHAEA

'And now when the even was come, because it was the preparation, that is, the day before the Sabbath, Joseph of Arimathæa, an honourable counsellor, which also waited for the kingdom of God, came, and went in boldly unto Pilate, and craved the body of Jesus.'—Mark xv. 42, 43.

It is significant that all the four Evangelists tell the deed of Joseph. We can understand why it was so indelibly imprinted on their memories, and was deemed so worthy of record. The day of Jesus' death had been one long sorrow and shame. From the midnight hour in Gethsemane until Christ bowed his head in death, there had been the awful contrast between love and constancy and tender pity and holy sacrifice on the one side, and betrayal, denial, desertion, and derision on the other. But then at the close of it all, there is this brave and beautiful deed. It is a touch of tenderness after a day of unrelenting hate and cruel wrong.

I. But now let us look at the doer of this good work on Jesus. His mind and spirit are made very clear to us. Each Evangelist adds some revealing trait. Joseph of Arimathæa was a man of means, of refined mind, and of high social position. He was a member of the Jewish Sanhedrin, and held in good repute among his fellow-counsellors. He stood marked out from many by his high and serious mind, his incorruptible passion for justice, his native goodness of heart. He wore all through his years 'the white flower of a blameless life'. He belonged, to use a pardonable analogy, to that class to which our country in the days of her struggle for civil and religious liberty owed so much—the class of high-minded, devout, patriotic, country gentlemen.

We are told one very revealing thing about him. 'He also waited for the kingdom of God.' The kingdom of God was the phrase into which had been condensed all the high hopes and holy ambitions, all the dreams of a better state, and all the visions of the reign of God among men, foretold by Prophet and Psalmist. To wait for the kingdom of God was to be one of that band of devout and prayerful men and women, who were steeped in the spirit of the Old Testament, who had sure faith in the God of Israel, who waited for the hour to strike when the Messiah would come, and the will of God be done on earth as it was in heaven. It was that kingdom which Simeon and Anna longed to see before death should seal their eyes; before whose narrow door Nicodemus stood and did not know it, or understand its call. It was that kingdom which poor, blinded, reckless Barabbas and his fellow-brigands sought to establish in their mistaken ungodly way. That he 'waited' meant that in the heart of Joseph there was a noble discontent with the corruptions and miseries and bondages of the times, and an unquenchable longing for the reign of righteousness, peace, and joy. As he passed through the land and remembered the great days of old, his heart was pained within him.

As he walked in the city and saw, as Jesus saw, iniquity infesting it, and the vultures of vengeance hovering over it, his mind was filled with brooding thoughts. And as he sat in the council and looked with his clear, honest eyes into the craft and chicanery of Caiaphas and his tools, hope almost died within him. What could such a man, with his shadowed spirit do, but join these who had lost everything but faith in God, who could only wait and long and pray for the kingdom of God?

Very naturally this man became Jesus' disciple. Like the iron to its magnet he was drawn to Christ. Like the flower to the sun he turned his face to Jesus.

It was this man, rich, cultured, of conspicuous social position, of holy and blameless character, with his mind already enlightened by Jesus, and His heart drawn to Him, with everything true and just and pure within him, rising up in a moral horror at the wrong which is being done, who stood under the cross of Christ. The events of the day had all smitten his troubled, questioning, fearful heart. And as he stood over against the cross, and heard Christ's words, and at last saw Him die, not only reverence, not only a hot moral anger, not only an afflicting pity, but a victorious and liberating faith and a passion of remorse for his past shrinking smote him, and forthwith—heedless of the scornful looks, and of the muttered taunts of scribe and Sadducee, 'he went in boldly unto Pilate,' and with the hunger of a man eager to do a service to his Lord, and to atone for days of lost opportunity, he besought the body of Jesus. And then, in his own grave, prepared for his own costly burial, with his own hands, unheeding all thought of defilement, he laid Jesus to His rest.

II. Now very plainly Jesus did more for Joseph of Arimathæa on the cross, and by the cross, than by all the words and deeds of His life. With him, as with every other man, the cross was a savour of life unto life, or of death unto death. Let us think of the deep and enduring spiritual changes which passed upon this disciple as he saw Jesus die.

1. The first of these was the *perfecting of his religious character.*

2. The second spiritual change which passed upon Joseph as he witnessed the cross was an *enlightenment as to the use of his wealth.*

3. The sight of the cross *perfected his religious character; it enlightened his mind in the use of his wealth.* It had a third effect, which was the root and cause of these two great changes—it *filled him with a penitent shame.*—W. M. Clow, *The Day of the Cross*, p. 341.

References.—XV. 42-XVI. 8.—W. H. Bennett, *The Life of Christ According to St. Mark*, p. 268. XV. 43-46.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxx. No. 1789.

'And taking Him down, he laid Him in a tomb.'—Mark xv. 46.

Dostoieffsky, in his powerful romance, *The Idiot*, describes two Russians stopping before Holbein's picture of Jesus being lowered from the cross, with mangled body, and traces of pain, wounds, and bruises on His limbs. 'I like looking at that picture,' says one. 'That picture!' exclaims his friend. 'That picture! Why, some people's faith is ruined by that picture!' He goes on to explain that it is a representation of death as a blind, implacable force, working its will on this grand, priceless Being, Himself worth more than all nature and all the earth. Scepticism, he argues, is started by the sight of this huge monster having power to destroy the Christ.

References.—XV. 47.—R. M. Benson, *The Life Beyond the Grave*, p. 12. XVI.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xlii. No. 2467; vol. xlviii. No. 2780. R. Stier, *The Words of the Angels*, p. 72.

'That they might come and anoint Him.'—Mark xvi. 1.

Geiler of Kaysersberg said on this text: 'If thou desirest, like the three holy women, to anoint the dead Lord, thou must anoint Him inwardly, that is, thou must remember how for thy sake God died and for thy sake was raised again; thou must be willing to do what thou knowest to be the will of God and pleasing unto Him, for this ointment is nothing else but thy resolve to do God's will and that of none other. If thou hast thus spiritually anointed Christ our Lord in His own Person, thou must anoint Him also in His members. . . . Thou must anoint the saints by giving them honour, by speaking of them, by contemplating their holy lives and by invoking them.

References.—XVI. 1.—R. M. Benson, *The Life Beyond the Grave*, p. 12. XVI. 1-4.—A. J. Parry, *Phases of Christian Truth*, p. 266. XVI. 1-13.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—St. Mark IX.-XVI.* p. 248. XVI. 1-14.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xli. No. 2408. XVI. 2, 3.—A. G. Mortimer, *Jesus and the Resurrection*, p. 74.

'And they were saying among themselves, who shall roll us away the stone from the door of the tomb?'—Mark xvi. 3.

The Israelites, marching up to the edge of the Red Sea till the waves parted before their feet, step by step, are often taken as an illustration of what our faith should do—advance to the limit of possibility, and then the seemingly impossible may be found to open.

But there is another illustration in the New Testament, more sacred and striking—the women going to the sepulchre of our Lord. With true woman's nature they did not begin to calculate the obstacles till on the way. On the road reason met them with the objection, 'Who shall roll us away the stone?' And faith itself could not help them, but love did. A bond stronger than death drew them on, and 'when they looked, they saw that the stone was rolled away'.

We may bless God that He can put into men's hearts impulses stronger than reason, and more powerful even than faith, such impulses that, if they are going to Himself, they shall find that He is able to do exceeding abundantly above all we can ask or think.—Dr. John Ker's *Thoughts for Heart and Life*, p. 101.

References.—XVI. 3.—R. H. McKim, *The Gospel in the Christian Year*, p. 240. F. E. Paget, *Helps and Hindrances to the Christian Life*, vol. i. p. 168. XVI. 3, 4.—C. Gore, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lii. 1897, p. 21. S. Baring-Gould, *Village Preaching for a Year*, vol. i. p. 300. XVI. 4.—W. Howell, Evans, *Sermons for the Church's Year*, p. 113. XVI. 4-8.—R. M. Benson, *The Life Beyond the Grave*, p. 63. XVI. 5.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—St. Mark IX.-XVI.* p. 25. XVI. 5, 6.—*Ibid.* p. 274. XVI. 6.—W. P. Balfern, *Glimpses of Jesus*, p. 259. S. Baring-Gould, *Village Preaching for a Year*, vol. i. p. 279; see also 2nd Series, p. 201. H. J. Wilmot-Buxton, *Bought With a Price*, p. 94.

'Go tell His disciples and Peter.'—Mark xvi. 7.

After attending a Quaker's meeting in London, at which he heard Rebecca Collins speak, Locke wrote to thank her for the experience. His letter closes with the remark, 'Woman, indeed, had the honour first to publish the resurrection of the Lord of Love—why not again the resurrection of the Spirit of Love? And let all the disciples of Christ rejoice therein, as doth your partner, John Locke'.

References.—XVI. 7.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—St. Mark IX.-XVI.* p. 284. J. S. Maver, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxiv. 1903, p. 318. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxxiv. No. 2060. XVI. 8.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons Preached in Sackville College Chapel*, vol. i. p. 341. XVI. 9.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—St. Mark IX.-XVI.* p. 302. J. Grierson, *Scenes and Interviews with the Risen Saviour*, p. 42. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xi. No. 625. vol. xiv. No. 792. XVI. 9-11.—R. M. Benson, *The Life Beyond the Grave*, p. 93. B. F. Westcott, *The Revelation of the Risen Lord*, p. 15. XVI. 9-12.—J. E. Rattenbury, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxxiv. 1908, p. 246. XVI. 10.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xliii. No. 2518.

OUR LORD APPEARING IN THE COUNTRY

(*Second Sunday After Trinity*)

'After that He appeared in another form unto two of them, as they walked, and went into the country.'—Mark xvi. 12.

I. 'He appeared in another form.' If we only had eyes to see it, how many ways there are in which He appears to us!

1. He appears to us in the shape of the poor, for He was Himself so poor that He had not where to lay His head; and He will say at the end of the world, 'Inasmuch as ye did it unto them, ye did it unto Me'.

2. He taught His disciples by the flowers: He would teach us by the flowers also. 'Consider the lilies of the field.'

3. Our Lord has left us another lesson. 'Learn a parable of the fig-tree: when his branch is yet tender and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh: so likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it'—that is the Day of Judgment—'is nigh, even at the doors.' All the beauty of the green leaves, and of the woods and of the flowers ought to make us look forward to that Last Day, which will be so terrible a day for all, and should make us ask, 'If the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?' Yes, and they make us look beyond the Day of Judgment to the kingdom that is laid up for God's true servants hereafter. For see how we are told of the Tree of Life that bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month; and the river of the water of life, clear as crystal; and the utmost bound of the everlasting hills.

II. Our Lord may appear to us in a thousand different ways, may teach us a thousand different lessons, and yet, like these two disciples, our eyes may be holden, that we should not know Him. Why? Our Lord Himself teaches us. 'Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.' If we are not trying to be like Him, purifying ourselves, as St. John says, even as He is pure, neither shall we see Him.

If we may see Christ, when we will, in this world, so also we may do work for Him, where we will, in this world.

III. 'He appeared in another form, as they went into the country.' But we desire, as St. Paul says, a better country: that is, an heavenly. And if, of God's great goodness, we are ever permitted to enter into that land, it will be indeed in a different form that our Lord appears to us there. Not in outward signs, but eye to eye, face to face, as a man speaketh to his friend. That will be the sight of all sights; that will be the happiness of all happiness.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons Preached in Sackville College Chapel*, vol. II. p. 9.

References.—XVI. 12.—B. F. Westcott, *The Revelation of the Risen Lord*, p. 41. J. Parker, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. li. 1897, p. 264. J. M. Neale, *Readings for the Aged* (3rd Series), p. 103. XVI. 12, 13.—R. M. Benson, *The Life Beyond the Grave*, p. 387. XVI. 14.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. l. No. 2890. R. M. Benson, *The Life Beyond the Grave*, p. 408. J. Grierson, *Scenes and Interviews with the Risen Saviour*, p. 150. B. F. Westcott, *The Revelation of the Risen Lord*, p. 59. XVI. 14, 15.—R. Glover, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lix. 1901, p. 292. XVI. 15.—S. Martin, *Rain Upon the Mown Grass*, p. 126. A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—St. Mark IX.-XVI.* p. 308. A. M. Fairbairn, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xlvii. 1895, p. 305. J. Parker, *ibid.* vol. xlix. 1896, p. 177. J. Johnson, *ibid.* vol. lvii. 1900, p. 324. J. Shaw Banks, *ibid.* vol. lxiii. 1903, p. 347. Ambrose Shepherd, *ibid.* vol. lxvii. 1905, p. 297. F. W. Atkin, *ibid.* vol. lxxiii. 1908, p. 284. C. E. Jefferson, *The Character of Jesus*, p. 121. Phillips Brooks, *The Mystery of Iniquity*, p. 346.

THE EVANGEL TO CREATION

'Go ye into all the kosmos, and preach the gospel to the whole creation. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that disbelieveth shall be condemned.'—Mark xvi. 15, 16.

The Gospel according to Mark is that which pre-eminently reveals Jesus as the Servant of God. It is interesting to remember that the book of the Old Testament which reveals the Servant of God is the prophecy of Isaiah. To that prophecy Mark made reference in the very first sentences of his Gospel; when introducing the herald of Messiah he declared that he came in fulfilment of the prophecy of Isaiah, which foretold the sending of a messenger to prepare the way of the Lord.

In the messages of the ancient Prophet there are evidences of his almost overwhelming sense of the polluting effect upon the whole earth of the sin of man. Perhaps this is most pointedly and clearly declared in the twenty-fourth chapter. When we turn to the Gospel of Mark we find that he chronicled the words in the commission of Jesus which reveal the fact that the ultimate purpose of His mission was that of the redemption and renewal of the whole creation through the salvation of individual men.

In our consideration of this aspect of the commission we shall again seek to discover the deposit, the debt, and the dynamic.

I. First, then, as to the deposit, that particular truth committed to the Church, for the proclamation of which she is held responsible. This is only suggested by one inclusive word, which, standing alone, is characterized by indefiniteness. The word 'Gospel' is inclusive, but it needs explanation if we would understand the nature of the deposit suggested.

What then is 'the Gospel'? It is the good news that the Lord is risen. It may be affirmed that this is a narrowing of the intention of the great word in this commission; that nothing is said of the teaching of Jesus, the life of Jesus, the cross of Jesus. As a matter of fact all these are involved in resurrection, and become parts of the Gospel because of the resurrection. If we only have the teaching of Jesus, we have no Gospel. If we only have the account of His perfect life, we have no Gospel. If we only have the Cross, we have no Gospel. All these become part of the Gospel because of its central truth, which is that of the resurrection. The deposit then, the essential and central truth referred to in this phase of the commission, is that of the actual resurrection of Jesus from among the dead. The resurrection of Jesus was the demonstration of His perfect victory over all opposing forces; and of the fact that His victory enabled Him to baptize such as believe in Him into union with His life.

If the first phase of the Missionary Manifesto was that of the absolute Lordship of Jesus, which the Church is to affirm and declare, the second is that of the risen Jesus Who is Renewer and Restorer of the whole creation.

This is the great glad news committed to the Church, and we have been in danger of minimizing the meaning of the Gospel. Our outlook has been appallingly narrow, and we have disastrously failed to see the application of the fact of the resurrection of Christ to the whole creation. Our failure to discover His meaning does not mean His failure to work His purposes out to final fulfilment. He is the risen Lord, and is therefore Master of death. He is also, therefore, Master of all the forces that spoil, and is able to renew everything that has been corrupted.

II. What then, in this respect is our debt? At this point the commission leaves us in no doubt. The words of Jesus are perfectly clear. 'Go ye into all the kosmos, and herald the evangel to the whole creation.' A natural reading of these words should immediately arrest attention by reason of the inclusive nature of the terms, 'the kosmos,' and 'the whole creation'.

By translating the former 'the world' we have been at least in danger of thinking that our Lord's reference was to humanity only. As a matter of fact it is a far more comprehensive term, which He interprets by the second of the phrases referred to, 'the whole creation'. To take the first term, 'the kosmos,' and to trace the history of the word, is to be admitted to the larger outlook. The Greek word kosmos originally signified an ornament, or something beautiful. It was a word used entirely in the realm of art. In process of time, long before the ministry of Jesus was exercised or these Gospel stories were written, the word acquired a more spacious meaning, and was used in reference to the whole universe, because the Greek mind came to an understanding of the fact that the universe is beautiful and orderly. Then again, as the Greek mind failed to grasp the truth of the spiritual, the word passed back into a more restricted use, and was applied to the material frame in the midst of which man lives his life. In the days in which John made use of it—and it was peculiarly his word among New Testament writers—it referred to the earth and the heavens enwrapping it, the heaven of the atmosphere and the heaven of the stellar spaces, that system of which our planet is so small a part.

III. We pass finally to the subject of the dynamic. This is no more clearly revealed than is the deposit, but it is as certainly involved. When Jesus said, 'He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that disbelieveth shall be condemned,' He suggested a response on the part of God to a certain attitude on the part of man. The alternative attitudes are described in the phrases, 'he that believeth,' 'he that disbelieveth'. The ultimate results are described in the words, 'shall be saved' and 'shall be condemned'. The dynamic phrase is 'and is baptized'. That refers to the work of God. No man can baptize himself, or be baptized by another. Essential baptism is baptism in the Spirit. Water baptism is symbolic. In the moment in which a man believes, he is baptized by God in the Spirit, and so into the resurrection life of Jesus, and therefore he is saved. If a man disbelieve, he is not saved, but rather condemned because he does not enter into the regenerate life, seeing that he lacks baptism in the Spirit. The suggestion of these words is that as we herald the evangel of the Cross we do so in co-operation with the risen Lord, so that when men hearing the evangel believe, they are immediately baptized into living union with the living Christ, and so come into possession of the regenerative forces which being applied, produce the restoration of creation.—G. Campbell Morgan, *The Missionary Manifesto*, p. 57.

References.—XVI. 15, 16.—George Moberly, *A Sermon Preached in Salisbury Cathedral*, 21 July, 1872. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. x. No. 573; vol. xv. No. 900. XVI. 15-20.—J. Grierson, *Scenes and Interviews with the Risen Saviour*, p.

247. XVI. 16.—C. Perren, *Revival Sermons in Outline*, p. 197. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxxix. No. 2339. F. B. Woodward, *Sermons* (1st Series), p. 292. C. E. Shirley Woolmer, *Church Times*, vol. xxxix. 1898, p. 729. W. Page Roberts, *Our Prayer Book Conformity and Conscience*, p. 225. 'Plain Sermons' by contributors to the *Tracts for the Times*, vol. x. p. 153. J. H. Bernard, *From Faith to Faith*, p. 245. A. H. Bradford, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. lxxiv. 1908, p. 17.

'And these signs shall follow them that believe,' etc.—Mark xvi. 17 f.

In his *Development of Christian Doctrine* (p. 441), Newman applies this passage to Catholicism: 'If it were a falsehood or a corruption,' he pleads, 'like the systems of men, it would be as weak as they are; whereas it is able even to impart to them a strength which they have not, and it uses them for its own purposes, and locates them in its own territory. The Church can extract good from evil, or at least gets no harm from it. She inherits the promise made to the disciples, that they should take up serpents, and, if they drank any deadly thing, it should not hurt them.'

For the use of this passage at the ceremony of touching for scrofula, see Macaulay's *History of England*, xiv.

References.—XVI. 17, 18.—W. Robertson Nicoll, *British Weekly Pulpit*, vol. ii. p. 357. John Wordsworth, *University Sermons on Gospel Subjects*, p. 15.

HE ASCENDED INTO HEAVEN

(For Ascension Day)

'After the Lord had spoken unto them, He was received up into heaven.'—Mark xvi. 19.

It is most inspiring to read what it was that the Lord spake unto His disciples just before His Ascension, how that they were to go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature. But it is not of the Great Commission that we would think now, so much as of the Ascension itself. If we would understand its lessons aright we must read the Epistle to the Colossians: 'If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things that are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God'. Since Christ is in the heavenlies, since He hath risen in His glory, therefore, be ye imitators of Christ as dear children. Walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given Himself for us.

I. The Ground of Hope.—Christ's Ascension means that He Whose words we love, Whose life was love, Whose name is love, is now set in the heavenlies at God's right hand, far above all principality and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world but also that which is to come. It means this, and therefore in whatever aspect we look at it, it means a lesson of infinite hope; it means that He Who died upon the Cross for man is the Lord of man, and that the Judge of man is the Saviour of man. It means that, however deeply we have sinned in the past, in Him is power even on earth to forgive sins. It means that we can find strength in the present, because when He ascended up on high He received gifts for men, and He giveth His Holy Spirit to them that ask Him. It means that we can face the future without terror because His footsteps have illuminated even the dreary valley of the shadow of death; and since all this is involved in Ascension Day, this (*a*) *forgiveness of the past*, this (*b*) *strength in the present*, this (*c*) *hope for the future*, it were well for us, both as individuals and as a nation, if Ascension Day were more carefully commemorated, and if we dwelt more and more devoutly on that truth, 'He ascended into heaven'.

II. The Root of Faith.—But besides our hope, our faith must also depend on the Ascension of our Lord. If Christians dwelt more on the truth that their Lord is exalted on the throne of His Father's glory, they would have more of the calm and the quietness and the confidence of strength. How often have Christians gone rushing up in alarm to the Ark of God because to them it seems to be tottering! Is Christ denied? Is Christ insulted? Is Christ betrayed? Well, the Christian, however sorrowful his heart may be, will not lose his calm or his courage. He believeth that the Lord is in heaven where He sitteth, that He sees it all, and that because He is omniscient and because He is eternal, He, in His own good time, will shine forth again, and for that time Christians will humbly wait.

THE ASCENSION

'So then the Lord Jesus, after He had spoken unto them, was received up into heaven, and sat down at the right hand of God.'—Mark xvi. 19.

The story of the Ascension of Jesus is given three times in the New Testament. It is given in the verse of my text, though candour compels the remark that the last eleven verses of this Gospel are wanting in the oldest MSS. and are probably in the nature of an appendix added to Mark's Gospel by another hand. It is given very briefly in the concluding verses of St. Luke's Gospel, and once again by Luke with more circumstantiality and detail in the opening chapter of the book of the Acts of the Apostles. All three accounts are marked by a certain reticence and reverent brevity.

I. The Ascension *is the natural and inevitable completion of the Resurrection.* When Jesus rose from the dead on the morning of the third day, it was not to resume the old life He had led before dying. You remember when Mary recognized Jesus in the garden her first impulse was to clasp her dear Lord's feet. She thought that now Jesus had come back to them from the dead, the conditions that existed before His dying would be restored also. But Jesus gently and lovingly corrects her. 'Touch me not,' He said, 'for I am not yet ascended unto the Father.' Mary's arms were flung in affectionate embrace around her Lord as if to retain Him, as if to say, 'You shall never leave us more'. But Jesus had not risen from the grave simply to resume His old life, however gracious and beautiful that may

have been. He had risen from the dead in order to enter into glory. His reward for becoming obedient unto death was to be exalted, and to be given a name above every name. He only delayed His entrance upon this life until His disciples were convinced that He was not dead, but *alive*. He remained forty days with them; appearing now to one, now to another; now to two, as they walked together to a country village; now to the whole company of disciples in the Upper Room; and again in Galilee to about five hundred brethren at once. He showed them His hands and His feet; He talked with them, He ate with them, until the most incredulous were convinced, and even Thomas believed, and their doubt and despair had given way to radiant hope and dauntless courage. And having done that, 'He was received up into heaven, and sat down at the right hand of God'. What a day that must have been in heaven when Christ came back again, glorious in His apparel, travelling in the greatness of His strength!

II. When Christ left earth He was not bereaving His people. He was depriving them of a lesser good in order to bestow upon them a richer and a nobler. We have that on His own plain and unequivocal assurance.

Wherein does that expediency consist?

1. In this, primarily. Christ went away from His disciples in order that—paradoxical as it may sound—*He might come nearer to them*. He left them in bodily presence, that spiritually He might be present with them everywhere and at all times.

2. And it was expedient for us that He should go away in the second place, because He went away to *take unto Him His great power and reign*. The Resurrection of Christ proclaims that He is not dead, but *alive*. The Ascension proclaims that He not only lives, but *reigns*. 'He sat down at the right hand of God,' says the sacred writer. Now, the 'right hand of God' always means in the Scriptures the omnipotent energy of God, and to sit down at the right hand of God means to be clothed with all the energy and power of omnipotence. Jesus sat down at the right hand of God. He *ascended that He might reign*. 'Jesus sat down at the right hand of God,' and His disciples went everywhere. Christ in the place of power—indomitable courage in the hearts of His disciples; Christ on the throne—and twelve poor men, with an audacity that was magnificent and sublime, went forth to conquer an unbelieving and hostile world.—J. D. Jones, *The Gospel of Grace*, p. 134.

References.—XVI. 19.—A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—St. Mark IX.-XVI.* p. 312. J. Grierson, *Scenes and Interviews with the Risen Saviour*, p. 333. B. F. Westcott, *The Revelation of the Risen Lord*, p. 173. E. W. Attwood, *Sermons for Clergy and Laity*, p. 182. D. Donaldson, *Pulpit Discourses, Berwick Presbytery*, p. 90. XVI. 19, 20.—R. M. Benson, *The Life Beyond the Grave*, p. 616. XVI. 20.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xlii. No. 2467.

INDEX TO OUTLINES

Aaronic blessing, The, 127.
Abel, The undeveloped, 23.
Abraham, 37, 38, 43, 44, 45.
— and Lot, a contrast, 40.
Absolute good, The, 517.
Adam and Eve—the knowledge of God, 20.
— the child, 7.
Added years, 604.
Advent, 918.
Affliction, The furnace of, 710.
Age and youth, 267.
Agony, The word of, 980.
Ahaz's rejection of God's mercies, and what it pictures to us, 771.
Aims, The blessing of unrealized, 293.
All Souls, 264.
Altar and the Temple, The, 299.
Alternatives, The, 977.
Always with God, 500.
Amos, The Prophet, 736.
Andrew, The call of St., 787.
Angels, Holy, 963.
Angels, Life of the, 814.
— Return of the, 54.
— The ministry of, 449.
Anger changed to compassion, 750.
Anniversaries kept in heaven, The, 443.
Answer by fire, An, 245.
— to a great question, An, 334.
Antagonism, The law of, 161.
Anticipations, Earthly, 350.
Apathy, Civic, 671.
Apologia of the coward, The, 178.
Apostles, List of the, 849.
Apparently ridiculous, The, 332.
Appearances, 343.
Appointments, Divine, 719.
Arise, 842.
Ark in the harvest-field, The, 207.
Armour of God, The, 168.
Arms, The everlasting, 162.
Arrow of the Lord's deliverance, The, 268.
As the man is, so is his strength, 185.
Ascended into heaven, He, 1049.
Ascension, The, 1049.
Asceticism, The place for Christian, 830.
Aspirations, 404.
Assimilation of doctrine, The, 679.
Assurance in God, 375.
Atheism, 372.
Authority, 723.
— of the king, The, 984.
— One having, 834.
Awakings, The two, 376.

Backgrounds of life, The, 46.
Bacteria in the chalice, 111.
Balaam, 136.
Balaam's 'I have sinned,' 137.
Balm in Gilead, 655.
Banner, The sacred, 102.
Baptism, of fire, The, 780.
— The final, 780.
Baptist, Preaching of the, 779.
Barabbas, 970.
Barter, The fatal, 666.
Be of good cheer, 842.
— still, my soul, 399.
Beatitudes, The, 791-6.
— illustrated by events in the Passion, The, 789.
Beer, or the digging of the well by staves, 134.
Belief, Unbelieving, 1018.
Belshazzar's feast, 712.
Benefits, Bundles of, 464.
Benjamin, Birth of, 61.
Betrayal, The, 957.
Bible, The, 4.
— How to read the, 931.
— language, The figurative element in, 33.
— valleys, 296.
— wells, 135.
Bird, The wandering, 528.
Blessing, of unrealized aims, The, 293.
— on the storehouse, A, 158.
— Showers of, 698.
— The Aaronic, 127.
Blessings, Superabundant, 881.
Blood of Christ, The, 124.
Blunder of the builder, The, 482.
Boasting axe, The, 584.
Bones of Elisha; or the power of the past, The, 269.
— of Joseph, The, 89.
Bow in the cloud, The, 35.
Boys and girls, A talk to, 273.
Brazen serpent, The, 134.
Bread in the wilderness, 1013.
Bringing the king back, 225.
Brook, Failure of the, 242.
— that dried up, The, 241.
Brother, Keeping our, 25, 26, 27.
Bruisings, Prophecy of the, 21.
Builder, Blunder of the, 482.
— of Jerusalem, 508.
Building God, The, 427.
Bunyan's application of an Old Testament text, John, 526.
Burden-bearers, Enfeebled, 302.
Burden of Egypt, The, 587.
Burial of Moses, Significance of the, 165.
Burning but not burnt, 75.
Business here and there, 249.

Caiaphas, 965.
Cain and Abel, 22.
Cain, The crime of, 24.
Cain-worship, 23.
Cake of barley bread, A, 184.
Calamity that hurts not, The, 717.
— The deepest stage of, 522.
Caleb, 131
Call of Christ, The, 844.
— of Samuel, The, 206.
— The Divine, 581, 845.
Calm, The great, 841.
Canaan, From Egypt to, 100.
Care, The cure for, 455.
Carrion and the vultures, The, 939.
Cathedrals, Their use and abuse, 284.
Ceasing of the Manna, The, 168.
Cedar and curtains, 279.
Centurion, The Roman, 1044.
Change, The discipline of, 415.
Changes, Imperative and desirable, 142.
Character, Differences in, 86.
— The element of unconsciousness in, 120.
— the spring of life, 868.
Charity, The necessity of selflessness to, 633.
— — spontaneity of true, 1014.
Chastisement and mercy, 749.
Child in the midst, A, 902.
— Samuel, The, 203.
— spirit dies, When the, 908.
Children, Becoming as little, 903.
— Little, 903.
Children's friend, The, 1021.
Choice, The Eternal, 170.
Christ and nature, 823.
— and the national life, 180.
— and the Herodians, 926.
— in the first Psalm, 364.
— is God, 878.
— our Master, 932.
— The all-sufficiency of, 881.
— Compassion of the, 1012.
— The Desire of nations, 754.
— — Ever-evident, 1010.
— — Incomparableness of, 567.
— — Misunderstood, 1007.
— a perplexity, 973.
— refusing the stupefying draught, 1041.
— shrinking from the Cross, 961.
— The Supreme claim of, 854.
— — True Joseph, 41.
— — unconscious service of, 975.
— waiting at the gate, 503.
— walking on the sea, 840.
— with the wild beasts, 988.
Christian faith and modern thought, 928.
— fruitfulness, 71.
Christianity a failure, Is, 871.
— and wealth, 815.
— The catholicity of, 925.
— The reasonableness of, 831.
Christ's advents, 781.
— authority, The springs of, 834.
— conception of the Christian life, 793.
— fame, The mystery of, 1009.
— nearness to His people, 160.
— selection, The principle of, 1025.
— supreme sway, 835.
Church a blessing in the world, The, 646.
— A message to the, 789.
— and social evils, The, 301.

Church, The future of the Christian, 383.
— — unshakeable, 889.
Churchgoing, On, 852.
City of God, The, 443.
Civic apathy, 671.
Clerical training, The moral groundwork of, 346.
Clouds removed, 615.
Collapses of life, The, 656.
Come, He said, 882.
Comfort of physical inferiority, The, 394.
— Vain, 338.
— Comfort ye! 606.
Coming of the Lord, The, 764.
Commandment, The first and greatest, 569.
Commandments, 102, 103.
— Finality of the Ten, 150.
Commonplace people, 52.
Communion of Saints, The, 506.
— with God, Moral effects of, 390.
Comparison, With what, 1000.
Compassion, Anger changed to, 750.
— of Christ, 848, 881.
Compensation, 355.
Compensations, Dark days and their, 474.
Concentration, Religious, 442.
Conception of God, The true, 506.
Confession of Sin, 223, 727.
— St. Peter's, 890.
Confirmation, 760.
Conflicting forces, 244
Contrition, 760.
Conscience, A personalized, 242.
— Perversions of, 577.
— The power of, 66.
Consciousness, The primal, 454.
Consecration, 287.
— and expectation, 439.
— of the commonplace, 278.
Considering, 367.
Contradictions of life, The, 422
Contrition, The way of, 669.
Controversy, 226.
Conversion, 734, 902.
— The Apostle's, 844.
Cords of a man, 730.
Correspondence of the deeps, The, 403.
Courage, Child, 843.
Covenant, People of the, 149.
— Terms of the, 150.
Creation, The, 1, 2.
Creator, The, 10.
Crippledness, Victorious, 602.
Cross, Fourth word from the, 978.
Cross and the throne, The, 914.
— blazoned on the skies, The, 940.
— Shadow of the, 673.
— Words from the, 976.
Cry of the awakened soul, The, 945.
— — heart for God, The, 417.
Cup in the hand of the Lord, The, 430.
Curse God and die, 319.
— turned into a blessing, The, 306.

Daily bread, 816.
— prayer, 395.
— service, 278.
Daniel, 714.
Daniel's self-denial, 706.
Dark, After that the, 707.
— days and their compensations, 474.
Darkness, to light, From, 757.
— The bed of, 336.
— — treasures of, 616.
David, The character of, 214.
David's greater son,' 'Great,' 930.
— harp, 215.
— music and its influence on Saul, 215.
— sin in the numbering of the people, 282.
Dawn, At the gates of the, 6.
Day of the east wind, The, 595.
— The first, 5.
Days that are past, 148.
Death in the desert, A, 164.
— of Israel's first king, The, 218.
— the gate of life, 375.
Deborah, 177.
Deceptions of God, The, 660.
Decision, The great, 244.
Deeps, Correspondence of the, 403.
Defeat under sin, The, 60.
Deliverance, A message of, 735.
Delusions, The genesis of, 648.
Denial, The, 967.
Dereliction, The cry of, 978, 1043.
Desert Place, A, 1005.
Desertion, The, 963.
— 965.
Despondency, Remedies for, 398.
Details of life, The, 933.
Development, The twofold, 874.
— Spiritual, 999.
Devotion, True, 673.
Devourers and endeavourers, 691.
Devout life, An outline of the, 339.
Dew and its influences, The, 732.
— — manna, 128.
— — the plants, The, 732.
Discernment, Spiritual, 885.
Disciple, Mark of the, 893.
Discipline, Of, 945.
Discontent of the times, The, 533.
Discouragement, 133.
Disheartened, To the, 402.
Dislike of the commonplace, The, 262.
Disobedient Prophet, The, 239.
Distinctiveness of the Christian life, The 809.
Divine Acceptance, The, 950.
Divine call, 205.
— fellowship, The first token of, 110.
— power, Hiding of the, 753.
— requirements, The, 745.
— scrutiny and guidance, 501.
— service a speculation, 491.
— voice in man, The, 246.
Divinely girded, 616.
Doctrine, The assimilation of, 679.
Donec aspiret Dies, Advent, 564.
Doubt, The sword of, 852.
Draw me, 559.
Dreams, 52.
Drink from the depths, 435.
Dwarf, Limitations of the, 125.
Dwell among your own, 258.
Dying to live, 905.
— year, The, 446.

Easter Day morning, 483.
Easy work, 692.
Eating of God's words, The, 658.
Egypt to Canaan, From, 100.
Elijah or Jeremiah, 888.
Elijah's disappointment, 248.
Elijah's farewell to Elisha, 254.
Elisha, The bones of, 269.
Emotion, Religious, 1037.
Emotions of a saint in heaven, 376.
Empire day, 307.
Encouragement to return to God, 147.
End of the Christian year, The, 765.
Endurance, the Christian's portion, 61.
Enduring trial, 317.
Enemy in the field, The, 873.
Energy, Divine, 875.
Enlargement of heart, 639.
Enoch, 28, 29.
Enthusiasm 996.
Enthusiasm of God, The, 664.
Environment, Response of the, 478.
Environments, Two, 982.
Envy, 586.
Envy's evil work, 971.
Ephraim and his idols, 726.
Equipoise of God, The, 542.
Equivalents, The law of, 545.
Esau, 50.
Escape, The wish to, 656.
Eternal and His habitations, The, 631.
— God thy refuge, The, 163.
Eternity of God, The, 532.
Evangel to Creation, The, 1047.
Evangelization of the world, The, 24.
Eve the unfolded, 14.
Even from thence, 147.
Everlasting arms, The, 162.
Evidences, Fixing our own, 1042.
Evidences sealed and evidences open, 663.
Evil, The Divine coercion of, 431.
— — Genesis of, 1008.
— — Plea of, 990.
— — punishment of, 668.
Examination, Self, 958.
Expectation, 591.
Experience, Personal, 1003.
Eye of the soul, The, 819.
Ezekiel, The significance of, 694.

Fading leaves, 645.
Failure, 993.
Failure, God's pity for, 660.
— Reasons of, 900.
Fair play? Does God have, 154.
Faith, 837, 887.
— An act of, 590.
— and character, 331.
— Defenders of the, 1019.
— — haste, 597.
— — obedience, 909.
— Anticipations of, 94.
— in darkness, 765.
— The expectancy of, 942.
— — leisure of, 597.
— — mustard seed of, 900.
— — obedience of, 31.
— — omnipotence of, 1024.
— — reward of, 847.
— — title for justification, 838.
— — true outlook for, 441.
— — ventures of, 913.
— Vicarious, 992.
— The victory of, 899.
— to morality, The necessity of, 752.
— tried and triumphing, 330.
Faithfulness, The fact of, 948.
Fall, The, 14, 18, 19, 21.
False standard, A, 728.
Family, Religion in the, 662.

Far off, Yet nigh, 601.
Fasting, The dangers of, 633.
Father and his children, The, 467.
Fathers and children, 406.
Fear of God, The, 66, 316.
— — man and the fear of God, The, 620.
— The antidote to, 612.
Fearing the Lord from one's youth, 244.
Feast of tabernacles, The, 156.
Feeding his flock, 697.
Fellow-labourers with God, 180.
Fellowship with the past, 257.
Fences and serpents, 549.
Fever, Life's, 839.
Fewness of saints, 226.
Fig-tree, The barren, 920.
Fishers of men, 989.
Flood, Story of the, 32.
Follow Me, 789.
Forfeited gift, A, 193.
Forgetfulness, The Divine, 437.
Forgive us our debts, 817.
Forgiven, 844.
Forgiveness mingled with judgment, 461.
— Nature and possibility of, 412.
— The infinite, 466.
Formalism, 935.
Forsaking Christ, 964.
Forty days, 108.
Foundation, From the, 915.
Free-thinker among the Prophets, The, 751.
Friendship of Christ, The, 155.
Friendships, Our, 295.
Frivolous spirit, The, 922.
Fruitlessness, 920.
Fulfilment, 800.
— Not destruction, the method of Jesus, 801.
Full house, A, 266.
Future all unknown, The, 167.

GARDEN, A watered, 634.
Gehazi, 262.
Genesis, The first chapter of, 356.
— — Gospel of, 20.
Gethsemane, 961.
Giants, Great and small, 280.
Gideon the humble, 182.
Giving, 55.
Gladness, The goodness of, 542.
— — pattern of human, 406.
Gleaning, The duty of, 197.
Glory of God, The, 712.
Go thou thy way, 724.
God, Assurance in, 375.
— fearing, Reward of the, 492.
— in human life, 279.
— is a consuming fire, 600.
— of the frail, The, 467.
— our father, 812.
— the builder of the home, 491.
— — character of, 372.
— — giver, 42.
— — irony of, 377.
— — sole delight of the elect, 429.
— with the judges, 175.
— with us, 583, 772.
God's answer to man's trust, 450.
— bounty, 394.
— cure for a hero's depression, 248.
— dealings with men, 654.
— deepest horror in sin, 516.
God's doings in the time of old, 405.
— face, The dark line in, 117.
— goodness to man, 397.
— greatness and condescension, 369.
— house, Delight in, 439.
— — The glory of, 764.
— inheritance in saints, 511.
— inner circle, 448.
— love for Israel, 732.
— microscope, 502.
— omnipresence, The comfort of, 498.
— pity for failure, 660.
— presence and God's rest, 115.
— promises conditional, 204.
— requirements, 155.
— riddle, 529.
— second best, 211.
— two homes, 632.
— will, On doing, 814.
— word, The honey of, 378.
— work for us, 425.
Gold and onyx not enough, 12.
Golden age, The, 744.
Good and evil, The knowledge of, 18.
— soil, 872.
Goodman of the house, The, 1035.
Goodness not good enough, 943.
— of the Lord, The prevenient, 382.
— Prevenient, 381.
Gospel of the left hand, The, 341.
— palaces, The, 437.
Grace, Law of the Life of, 952.
— of God to sinners, The, 750.
— Prevenient, 380.
Greatness and condescension, God's, 369.
— — littleness of human life, The, 69.
— by service, 915.
Green pastures, In, 385.
Grief that implies Glory, The, 1015.
— and silence, 320.
Growing great ideas, 153.
Growth, Three typical forms of, 453.
Guests at Christ's Own Table, The, 993.
Guide, The heavenly, 651.
Guided by God, 386.
Guiding pillar, The, 127.

HABIT, 657.
Hands of the Lord, Let me fall into the, 229.
Happiness, 163.
Harvest-field, Ark in the, 207.
Healing of the leper, The, 836.
Hearing for others, 151.
Heart, A bad, 659.
— — new, 699.
— — perfect, 290.
— Enlargement of, 639.
— purity, 794.
Heart's obstruction to the hearer, The, 83.
Heaven, The way to, 607.
Heavens and man, The, 368.
Helper, The one, 618.
Hem of Christ's garment, The, 846.
Heroism, 228.
Hezekiah, 272.
— and the brazen serpent, 271.
Hezekiah's confidence, 271.
Hiding of the Divine power, The, 753.
High priest and the atonement, The, 123.
Highway in the sea, The, 433.
— of holiness, The, 603.
Hobab's opportunity, 127.
Holiness, The highway of, 603.
Holy and common, 123.
— communion: The bread of life, 96.
— eucharist, 246.
— ground, 76.
— Spirit, Guidance of the, 633.
— things, On guarding, 827.
Homeliness of Jesus, The, 859.
Hope, A message of undying, 447.
— The reason of, 674.
House and its battlement, The, 157.
— of God, The, 440.
— — the Lord, The, 284.
How long? 582.
— not to pray, 191.
— to die well, 333.
Human coins, 924.
— solidarity, 251.
Humanity, The prospect of, 370.
Humbling questions, 334.
Humility, 220.
— Some aspects of, 837.
Hyssop, The bunch of, 231.

I THOUGHT, 261.
I will build My Church, 888.
— — make all My mountains a way, 618.
Ideal city, The, 704.
Ideas, Growing great, 153.
Image of God, The, 925.
Immanence of God, The, 614.
Immortality, Man's need of, 444.
— The hope of, 926.
Impatience, 856.
Imperialism, True, 598, 628.
Imprecatory Psalm, An, 475.
Inadequacy of spiritual solitude, The, 303.
Incarnate Son of God, The, 1032.
Incentives to worship, The, 761.
Incomparableness of Christ, The, 567
Indirect aim, Advantage of an, 294.
Inferiority, Comfort of physical, 394.
Influence, The gift of, 64.
Inheritance of blessing, An, 101.
Innocence, The state of, 546.
Innocent's Day, 778.
Instruments of God, Unlikely, 669.
Interpretation, The ministry of, 354.
Interpreter, The, 771.
Interruptions of life, The, 784.
Interviews, Unreported, 1000.
Intruder at the feast, The, 923.
Intrusion of the world, The, 938.
Inventions, Their, 473.
Investments, Wise, 629.
Invisible Church, The, 507.
— realities of the eternal world, The, 263.
Inward truth, 413.
Irony of God, The, 377.
Is it nothing to you? 671.
Isaac, 45, 50.
Ishmael the outcast, 43.
Israel, God's love for, 732.
Israel's first king, The death of, 218.
Issachar, 70.

JABESH-GILEAD, The relief of, 211.
Jabez, 275.
Jacob, 53, 55, 56, 58, 68.

Jealousy, 23.
— The Divine, 118.
Jehoiakim's penknife, 665.
Jehovah our Redeemer, 643.
— Jireh, 48.
Jeroboam, The sin of, 238.
Jesus, beholding him, loved him, 1022.
— charged with blasphemy, 966.
— and Joshua, 772.
— Christ our refuge, 140.
'— Lover of my soul,' 474.
— only, 898, 1017.
— the Saviour, 769.
Jews, The Old Testament a history of the, 431.
Jewish zeal, a pattern to Christians, 182.
Jezebel, The character of, 265.
Job, The book of, 360.
John the divine, Old age of St., 913.
Jonah's character, 741.
Jonathan, Character of, 216.
Joseph of Arimathea, 1045.
— and his brethren, 62.
— The bones of, 89.
— the optimist, 65.
— The trial of, 470.
Joseph's faith, 71.
Joshua encouraged, 166.
— The character of, 166.
Joy of our Lord? What is the, 949.
Joyful sound, The, 444.
Judas, 1026.
— Iscariot, 962.
Judas's 'I have sinned,' 969.
Judge the quick and the dead, From thence He shall come to, 897.
Judgment on Moses, 146.
— Redemption by, 574.
— Reversal of, 910.
— The, 538.
Just and the unjust, The, 808.
Justification, 343.
— by words, 869.

Kedesh, 659.
Keeping of the heart, The, 515.
Key of the house of David, The, 589.
Kindness of the Lord, The, 628.
— The ministry of, 837.
Kingdom, Not far from the, 1030.
Kingdom of the saints, The, 708.
— Substance of the, 942.
Kiss of the Prince of peace, The, 558.
Knowledge: Revealed and secret, 159.
— through spiritual insight, True, 479.
Known and the unknown, The, 345.

Lamp, My, 487.
— of heaven, The glorious, 440.
— — memory, The, 153.
Land flowing with milk and honey, A, 129.
Laughter and sorrow, 520.
Law of antagonism, The, 161.
— — equivalents, The, 545.
Lawfulness, True, 995.
Laws, The book of, 123.
Lead, Kindly light, 378.
League of Christians, The, 207.
Least, One of the, 954.
Leaven, Parable of the, 876.
Legs of the lame are not equal, The, 526.
Lengthening and strengthening, 627.
Lengthening the cords and strengthening the stakes, 326.
Lent, Temptations to sin, 751.
Leper, Healing of the, 836.
Lessons from an unfamiliar text, Some, 240.
Let me fall into the hands of the Lord, 229.
— nothing you dismay, 450.
Leviticus old and new, 747.
Life on God's plan, 51.
— The religious, 557.
— — sum total of, 573.
— — value of, 606.
— — verdict of, 531.
— transfigured. Its necessity for the Church, 566.
Life's discipline, 521.
— unfinished tasks, 164.
Light, 3, 4.
— and truth, 404.
— in earthly darkness, Heavenly, 478.
— obtained: light diffused, 637.
— of other days, The, 764.
— — the Lord, The, 575.
— shine, Let your, 798.
Lightheartedness, The religious ground of, 416.
Lightning, 939.
Lilies, Human, 822.
Limitation and co-operation, 285.
Limits, 328.
Listening stones, 171.
— to God, 410.
Little child shall lead them, A, 585.
— lower than God, But, 371.
Living Christ, The, 138.
Long-suffering of God, The, 84.
Looking and not finding, 426.
— for the coming One, 857.
Looks, Seven, 613.
Lord coming out of His place, The, 595.
— in His temple, The, 373.
— of hosts, The God of Jacob, 408.
— our judge, The, 601.
— will provide, The, 821.
Lord's prayer, Cosmopolitanism of the, 813.
— servant deaf and blind, The, 613.
Losing the soul to save it, 895.
Lot's choice, 39.
Love and courtship, 49.
— — peace, The consummation of, 392.
— to God—service to man, 928.
— your enemies, 807.
Loving-kindness of Jesus, The, 865.
Lowering the sea, 270.

Magi, Visit of the, 775.
Magnitudes, Mistaken, 934.
Maid of Israel, The, 261.
Making light of the Gospel, 922.
Man, A, 653.
— — good, 715.
— after God's own heart, A, 212.
— God and, 8.
— succeeding man, 274.
— The brotherhood of, 27.
— — first temptation of, 15.
— — origin and destiny of, 7.
— — real and the ideal, 370.
— — serpent tempting, 17.
— unaccountable, 879.
—? What is, 8, 368, 370.
— with the measuring line, The, 755.
Manna, Ceasing of the, 168.
Man's schemes, 598.
Many called, but few chosen, 912.
Marks of a true man, Three, 747.
Marriage, 22.
Marring, The marvellous, 622.
Massah and Meribah, The lesson of, 98.
Material and the Spiritual, The, 1031.
— to the Spiritual, Through the, 587.
May, The Prophet, 940.
Mediocrity, Useful, 947.
Meditation, The subject of, 409.
Melchisedek the uncanonical, 40.
Memorable days, 504.
— sights in life, 323.
Memory, On, 1014.
— at the altar, 804.
— hope, and effort, 435.
— The lamp of, 153.
— — religious uses of, 617.
Men of the world, 376.
Mercies of God, The manifold, 9.
— It is of the Lord's, 675.
— Remembrance of past, 58.
Mercy, Chastisement and, 749.
— and not sacrifice, 728.
— — truth, 389.
— preferred to sacrifice, 845.
— seat, The, 109.
Message of the book of Genesis, 2.
— — — — Exodus, 88.
— — — — Deuteronomy, 152.
— — — — Joel, 734.
— — — — Joshua, 166.
— — — — Judges, 176.
— — — — Leviticus, 125.
— — — — Numbers, 130.
— — — — Ruth, 199.
— — books of Chronicles, The, 274.
— — — — Kings, 231.
— — first book of Samuel, 201.
— — second book of Samuel, 222.
— Micah, 748.
Messianic consciousness of Jesus, The, 782.
— watchword, The, 401.
Middle-aged, Perils of the, 449.
Might have been, The, 225.
Mighty to save, 642.
Mind, Directing of the Early, 1020.
Ministry and the masses, The, 809.
— of angels, The, 396.
Minute philosopher, The, 668.
Miracles, 883.
— Nothing but, 421.
Mirage and the pool, The, 603.
Missing one, The, 194.
Missionary, The first, 37.
Missions, Foreign, 1034.
— Growth of the kingdom, 428.
— Home, 24.
— Promises and prophecies, 364.
Mistrust that destroys, 436.
Misunderstood, 1043.
Moments, The use of isolated, 117.
Money cannot buy, What, 347.
Moral consequences of single sins, 140.
Morality, The Distinctiveness of Christian, 1022.
— Jesus' appreciation of, 1023.
More than human, 220.
Morning, The desired, 158.

Moses, Significance of the burial of, 165.
— The death of, 164.
— — sin of, 132.
— to Israel, The address of, 146.
— smites the rock, 132.
Moulding of the vessels, The, 292.
Mountains, Bible, 489.
Music and religion, 512.
— as a factor in culture, 512.
— Prophetic, 286.
— in the house of God, 52.
My beloved is mine, 563.

Naaman was a leper, but—, 259.
Name of God, The, 58.
— and surname, 956.
Nameless girl heroine, A, 260.
Names of God, The, 82.
Nathan and David, 222.
National life, Christ and the, 180.
— prosperity, The test of, 155.
— repentance, 495.
— safeguards, 158.
Nature, The powers of, 468.
Near-cuts not God's, 89.
Nearer, my God, to Thee, 55.
Negative side, The, 76.
New period, The portal of a, 432.
— song, A, 457, 459.
'No mores' of life, The, 636.
Noah, 31, 32, 33.
Not afraid of sackcloth, 309.
— far off, 1030.
— peace, but a sword, 853.
— sufficient, 609.
Nothingness of this world, The, 896.

Obadiah, a palm in the desert, 243.
Obedience, 213.
— the remedy for religious perplexity, 400.
Obscure, exultation of the, 855.
Obviousness of the essential in questions of faith, The, 859.
Offence of the Cross, The, 622.
Offerings for the sanctuary, 639.
Old paths, 654.
Olivet, The message of, 1037.
Omer for each man, An, 97.
On the edge of the land, Afraid to go up, 131.
One thing, everything, 997.
Opportunity, The Passing of, 1034.
Optimism, 644, 984.
Optimist, Outlook of the, 698.
Outward business, 306.
Over-prudence, The fault of, 551.
Over-righteousness, 543.
Ownership, Divine, 688.

Pain, The Christian palliation of, 850.
— The endurance of, 976.
Palm Sunday and its lessons, 917.
— — The message of, 607.
Palm-tree, I said, I will go up to the, 568.
— The, 452.
Pantheism? What is, 445.
Parable of harvest, The, 325.
— in a miracle, A, 991.
Parables, Principle of the, 875.
Pardon with punishment, 460.
Partial exclusion of God, The, 249.
Partial truth, 144.
Passion, In view of the, 672.
— of God, The, 642.
Passover, The, 87.
Past and present, 541.
Patient waiting, The, 944.
Patriotism, Christian, 496.
— Imperial, 496.
Peace, The gift of, 583.
— — mark for recognizing God's, 592.
— — reign of, 744.
Peaceful in the midst of strife, Kept, 592.
Pearl of great price, Parable of the, 877.
Penalty of hate, The, 313.
Penitent, Psalm of the, 413.
Pentateuch—Genesis, The, 619.
People near unto Him, 511.
— of the Covenant, The, 149.
— who think they have done no good in life, 594.
Permanence of spirit in the fleetingness of nature, The, 463.
Persecution, The blessing of, 605.
Personality, 992.
— and power, 1001.
Pessimistic and optimistic views of life, The, 554.
Pharaoh, 83, 84, 85.
Pharisaism still alive, 1029.
Pilate, 967.
— washing his hands, 974.
Pilate's wife, moral influence of women, 972.
Pillar, The guiding, 127.
Plants grown up in their youth, 506.
Play the man, 221.
Pleasant Land, The, 472.
Pleasure to affliction, From, 196.
Plural yet singular, 652.
Pollution of the world, The, 743.
Poor and needy, The, 593.
Possessions possessed, 739.
Poverty of spirit the other side of greatness, 791.
Power, On, 870.
Praise and life, 507.
— Reasons for, 374.
— The argument for, 289.
— — life of, 475.
Prayer, 1027.
— A pattern of, 442.
— and conduct, 714.
— Daily, 395.
— for middle life, A, 752.
— of a patriot, The, 441.
— Private, 811.
— Simplicity in, 173.
— The golden key of, 829.
— — mystery of, 419.
— — practical difficulty of, 721.
— — reasonableness of, 829.
— — spirit of, 715.
— Times of private, 812.
Prayers of the Saints, The, 647.
— that must cease, 144.
Preacher and his message, The, 138.
— Requirements and difficulties of the, 555.
Preparation and power, 297.
— for a religious life, The, 438.
Preparation, The spirit of, 943.
Presence, The abiding, 985, 987.
— of Christ Jesus in the Holy Eucharist, The real, 959.
— God's, 115.
— of God, The, 42.
— — — — invisible, 600.
— that never faileth, The, 986.
— The real, 986.
— shall enlighten the way, The, 115.
Present, The attraction of the, 50.
Presentation, 292.
Presuppositions of Christianity—The Old Testament, 799.
Prevenient goodness, 381.
— — of the Lord, The, 382.
— grace, 380.
Priest after the order of Melchizedek, A, 477.
Principle, The solitariness of, 309.
Proclamation, The great, 629.
Profit and loss, 1016.
Promising without doing, 921.
Prophecy, The cessation of, 767.
— — supreme need of our age, The gift of, 767.
Prophet, A, 856.
Prophetic element, The, 90.
Prophets of righteousness, 573.
Proportion, The doctrine of, 934.
Providence, An ever-watchful, 313.
— as revealed in the Gospel, A particular, 41.
— or a temptation, A, 216.
Prudence of Christ, The, 621.
Psalm for the day, The, 277.
Public spirit, 312.
— worship, 731.
Punishment, 919.
— of evil, The, 668.
Purification, 758, 762.
Purpose in life, 301.
— of God, The, 237.

Qualification and duty, 276.
Queen Esther, The story of, 311.
Question on the Cross, The Saviour's, 980.
Questions, Humbling, 334.

Race not to the swift, The, 548.
Rachel the placid, 56.
Rain and the word, The, 630.
Rainbow, The, 35.
Reason of things, The, 545.
Rebekah the far-seeing, 48.
Recollection, 811.
Recompense, Just, 827.
Reconquests, 208.
Recreations and amusements, 113.
Redemption by judgment, 574.
— The mightiness of, 438.
Refuge, The eternal God thy, 163.
Refused stone, The, 481.
Religion at home, 462.
— for the entire man, 927.
— in the family, 662.
— made easy, 238.
— mistaken views of, 81.
— Natural and supernatural, 860.
— of the threshold, The, 488.
— Permanent elements of, 417.
— Sincerity in, 858.
— The irksomeness of, 128.

Religion, The office of, 786.
— — perfect ideal of, 748.
Religious aspect of history, The, 148.
— enthusiasm, True and false, 215.
— excitement, The use of, 897.
— life, The, 557.
— solidity, 560.
Remembering the past, 145.
Remnant of God's people, The, 586.
Remonstrance with his soul, The Psalmist's, 405.
Renewed confidence, 740.
Repent and return, 730.
Repentance, 400, 740.
Reputation of God, The, 630.
Requirements, The Divine, 745.
Respectable sin, 936.
Responsibility for your brother, Your, 157.
— of office, The, 696.
Rest the basis of character, 1006.
— for God s servants, 725.
— — the sufferers, 862.
— — the workers, 861.
— — weary feet, 862.
— The soldier's, 505.
Return to Christ's love, The, 577.
Returns, The two, 553.
Reuben, 70.
Revelation, A Divine, 6.
Revenge, The law of, 805.
Reverence, Christian, 365.
— The call to, 77.
Reviews, The book of, 142.
Revivals, Their necessity, 753.
Reward, The Christian's highest, 518.
Righteous over-much, 543.
Righteousness, The blessing of, 453.
— — illuminating power of, 766.
— — Lord our, 661.
— — standard of, 13.
River of God, The, 408, 420.
Rizpah, 228.
Rod and staff, 337.
— that is in Thine hand, The, 79.
Room, The large, 391.
Royal kinship of service, The, 276.
Rule, The Gift of, 948.
Ruth, The book of, 423.
— — Moabitess, 198.

Sabbath, The, 994.
Sackcloth, Not afraid of, 309.
— The transfigured, 310.
Sacramental moment, A, 268.
Sacred privileges, Difficulty of realizing, 432.
Sacrifice, 895.
— of God, The, 1028.
— and song, 297.
— of thanksgiving, The, 411.
— without obedience, 138.
Sad, Making the righteous, 684.
Saint in heaven, Emotions of a, 376.
— of God, A, 426.
Saints, The weapons of, 911.
Salt without savour, 797.
Samuel the seer, 202.
Samuel's dismissal, 211.
Sanctity and salubrity, The connexion between, 423.
Sanctuary, Jesus Christ our, 659.
— of God, The, 433.
Sarah the steadfast, 43.
Satan in history, 13.
Satan's wiles, 15.
Satisfied, 625.
Saviour and the Maniac, The, 1003.
Saul and the witch of Endor, 217.
Saul's hiding himself, 211.
— 'I have sinned,' 213.
Scapegoat, The, 123.
Schemes, Man's, 598.
Schism, The tragic, 635.
Scriptures, According to the, 979.
Sea to the city, From the, 473.
Seal upon thine heart, Set Me as a, 570.
Seals, Bible, 569.
Seamen, A sermon to, 420.
Searching of God, The, 497.
Seaside sermon, A, 455.
Season for Divine help, The, 57.
Second mile, The, 806.
Secrecy of God, The, 434.
Secret of the Lord, The, 390.
— — — Son, The, 860.
— — Jesus, 981.
— — Tranquillity, The, 399.
— and the unrevealed things, The, 159.
Security of insecurity, The, 415.
Seeing and following, 917.
Seeking God's kingdom and righteousness, 823.
— the beloved, 564.
— — Lord an immediate duty, 729.
Seen all, 534.
Seer and prophet, 209.
Self-confidence, The sin of, 379.
Self-containedness, 520.
Self-deceiver detected, The, 924.
Self-encouragement, The golden art of, 217.
Self-examination, 953.
Self-judgment, 223.
Selflessness to charity, The necessity of, 633.
Self-love—new version, 929.
Self-mutilation for self-preservation, 904.
Self-offering, The highest, 47.
Self-reliant or God-reliant? 514.
Self-respect and companionship, 210.
Self-sacrifice, 311.
Servant-Lord and his servants, The, 916.
Servant, Qualification of a, 488.
Service, Daily, 278.
— The call to, 788.
— — condition and obligation of, 849.
Severity to pardon, The relation of, 460.
Shepherd-Psalm, The, 384.
Shoot out of the dry stock, The, 584.
Sigh, The Saviour's, 1011.
— of the sincere, The, 501.
Sights in life, memorable, 323.
Silence, Divine, 884.
— Thoughts on, 537.
Simeon and Levi: bad brothers, 70.
Simon the Cyrenian, 1040.
Simplicity in prayer, 173.
Sin, 23.
— against God, 412.
— — the Holy Ghost, The, 866.
— and its mockers, 519.
— — redemption, Beginning of, 16.
— as separation from God, 635.
— — the transgression of law, 687.
— Causing others to, 904.
— An Eternal, 996.
Sin, Far-reaching consequences of, 283.
— God's deepest horror in, 516.
— — use of, 332.
— Making light of, 519.
— of self-confidence, The, 379.
— Original, 688.
— put away, 224.
— Respectable, 936.
— Temptations to, 751.
— The confession of, 727.
— — contagion of, 252.
— — knowledge of, 331.
— — sinfulness of, 30.
— — unpardonable, 867.
Sincerity, 414.
— in religion, 858.
Singing time, The, 562.
Sinner and the saviour, The, 486.
Sinners, The grace of God to, 750.
Sins always find us out? Do our, 465.
— of the fathers and the children, The, 689.
— — Scripture saints, 393.
— Spiritual, 901.
— Unobserved, 74.
Sleep, The gift of, 492.
Sluggard in harvest, The, 522
Smoking flax, The, 612.
Social reform, 872.
— worship, 906.
Sojourning with God, 126.
Solicitude of success, The, 220.
Solidarity of Man and God, The, 954.
Solidity, Religious, 560.
Solitariness of principle, The, 309.
Solomon and toleration, 235.
— The reign of, 640.
— — temple builder, 235.
Solomon's decline, 236.
— folly and sin, 306.
— garden, 565.
— prayer, 233.
— temple, 232.
Song and the prayer, The, 403.
— of the builders, The, 494.
— — — well, The, 134.
Songs of Zion, The, 495.
Sons of Eli, yet sons of Belial, 202.
Sorrows of the night, The, 493.
Soul, Ascent of the, 425.
— Biography of a, 470.
— food, 436.
— Individuality of the, 553.
— its meaning and value, The, 896.
— Preparation of the, 490.
— Refuge of the devout, 449.
— The Pursuing, 419.
Souls, Little, 11.
Soul's master, leader, and restorer, The, 386.
— summer, The, 562.
— thirst and satisfaction, The, 418.
Sources of delight, The Christian's hidden, 454.
Sow to yourselves, 729.
Sower, Parable of the, 871.
Sowing and reaping, 550.
— in tears, 490.
Sown light, 459.
Spade-work of the kingdom, The, 232.
Speaking in the wrong temper, 326.
Spell of Christ, The, 432.
Sphere not prohibited, The, 1008.
Spikenard of the bride, The, 560.
Spiritual beauty, 119.

Spiritual diversity, 308.
— experiences at home, 681.
— health, 227.
— sins, 901.
— transformation, 575.
— transports, 567.
Springtide, A sermon for, 822.
Stand still awhile, 209.
Star of the wise men, The, 773.
— The guiding, 777.
Stars that lead to Christ, 777.
Startling absences, 865.
Steadfastly minded, 196.
Steadfastness in the old paths, 655.
Steward, The unjust, 907.
Still small voice, The, 247.
— with thee, 499.
Stopping places in evidence, 1039.
Storehouse, A blessing on the, 158.
Strength in joy, 305.
— of the Lord, Going in the, 428.
— The secret of, 599.
Success, 410.
Successive monarchies, 707.
Suffer, Does God, 1010.
Suffering, Manifestation of, 624.
— The consecration of, 590.
— — mystery of, 396.
Sun of my soul, Thou Saviour dear, 366.
Supreme acquisitions, 515.
Surprise, The ministry of, 382.
Sword and trowel, 303.
— of the Lord, The, 282.
— Sending of the, 854.
Sympathy and sacrifice, 892.
— of God, The, 642.

Table prepared in presence of foes, The, 387.
Talent was buried, Why the, 951.
Talents, The use of, 946.
Talk to boys and girls, A, 273.
Telling Jesus, 880.
Tell me where thou feedest, 559.
Temperament and grace, 68.
Temple and the Church, The, 288.
— Profanation of the, 1025.
— The visible, 933.
Temptation, 513, 783.
— in the Garden of Eden, The, 16.
— in the wilderness, The, 784.
— of Abraham, The, 44.
— of Jesus, The, 783.
— of man, The first, 15.
— The sources of, 813.
Temptations to sin, 751.
— of the Spirit, 988.
Tempters, 513.
Tenderness of God, The, 651.
Ten virgins, The, 943.
Thanksgiving, The duty of, 572.
— The sacrifice of, 411.
— — spirit of, 469.
That thou mayest do it, 161.
Theology and science, 469.
Things no man could say, 803.
— that matter, The, 251.
Thirst for the living God, The, 402.
Thistle and the Cedar, The, 269.
Thou killedst the Egyptian, 75.
— shalt answer, Lord, for me, 623.
Thought, 523.
Threefold cord, A, 527.
— — The, 539.
Three hundred men that lapped, The, 183.
Threescore years and ten, 446.
Throne, Next the, 914.
Thy God thy glory, 639.
Time, The lapse of, 548.
Tower, The lesson of the, 30.
Towers of Zion, 409.
Trance and trench, 139.
Tranquillity, The secret of, 399.
Transfiguration, The, 898.
Travail of Christ's soul, The, 624.
Travels of the heart, The, 263.
Treasure of heaven, The, 338.
Treasury, Casting into the, 1030.
Tree and the chaff, The, 363.
— planted by rivers of water, A, 363.
Trifle, Providence of the, 851.
Trimming, 650.
Trinity, Fourteenth Sunday after, 480.
— in the Resurrection, Love of the, 891.
— The Holy, 2, 6.
— Twenty-fourth Sunday after, 480.
Trouble, Trivial, 657.
Troubles, A sea of, 67.
Troubling, The valley of, 726.
Trust in God, 593.
Truth, Buying the, 524.
— Inward, 413.
— The tenure of, 952.
Twilight and trembling, 588.

Unbelief, 899.
— Abnormal, 1004.
— of the fool, The, 374.
Unconsciousness in character, The element of, 120.
Unemployed, The, 388.
Unfinished life, An, 462.
Unlighted lustre, The, 397.
Unpossessed possessions, 250.
Unrealized purposes, 234.
Unseen environment, 264.
Until I went into the sanctuary, 428.
Unto all nations, 423.
Upward and onward, 610.

Variedness of the Divine benevolence, The, 305.
Veiling from man of Divine energy, The, 1013.
Verdict of life, The, 531.
Verifying faculty, The, 596.
Victories in old age, 169.
Victory of conscience and faith over impulse and opportunity, The, 64.
— The Lord's, 483.
Vigilant, Be, 910.
Vision and drudgery, 106.
— — duty, 206.
— Isaiah's, 578, 580.
— of God and the feast before Him, The, 106.
— — — The, 107, 580.
— Redeeming, 578.
— The unseen, 720.
— which saves, The, 528.
Voice of the Church, The, 832.
Voices of God, The, 344.
— — — — unrecognized, 202.
Vox clamantis, 608.

Waiting, 599.
— for God, 591.
— — Samuel, 212.
Waiting, The patient, 944.
Walking without fainting, 611.
Wall of fire, The, 756.
Wandering bird, The, 528.
War for the sake of peace, 391.
Wasted gains, 518.
Watching, 1032.
Watchword, The Messianic, 401.
Way in the wilderness, The, 154.
Weakness our strength, Our, 230.
Wealth, Christianity and, 815.
Weapons of Saints, The, 911.
Wearied in the greatness of the way, 631.
Weather, The, 509.
Weather-wise, 550.
Weaving, Hopeless, 636.
Wells, Bible, 135.
— The choked, 48, 51.
'What are these wounds in Thine hands?' 761.
— God will do for us, 451.
'— is this?' 918.
— think ye of Christ? 930.
Whose son art thou, young man? 215.
Wild flowers—the thyme and the daisy, 577.
Wilderness, Coming up from the, 569.
— The Christian in the, 726.
Will of God, The, 319.
Willing mind, The, 286.
— offerings, 288.
Wills, The two, 969.
Window, The open, 716.
Windows, The opened, 716.
Wings of the dove, The silver, 424.
Winter is past, The, 561.
Wisdom, Man's best, 349.
— — highest, 347.
— The beginning of, 477.
— — builder, 525.
— ? Where is, 348.
Wise men from the East, The, 774.
— over-much, 544.
— woman of Abel, The, 227.
— Words of the, 555.
Witness of the children, The, 774.
— — — saints, The, 143.
Woes of the unjust, The, 661.
Woman's logic, A, 188.
Women, Moral influence of, 972.
Word of the Lord, The, 204, 251.
Words of the wise, The, 555.
— Our, 503.
Work for Christ, Our, 1033.
— The conditions of Successful, 1011.
— A great, 303.
— and play, 759.
— Easy, 692.
— for us, God's, 425.
— in God's vineyard, 911.
— The day's, 468.
— and watch, The call to, 1033.
Working as unto God, 447.
— for the master, 921.
— towards Ideals, 1026.
Works of God, The, 737.
World for Christ, The, 365.
Worry, 824, 825.
Worship, A preparation for Christ's coming, 600.
— and conduct, 747.
— Christian, 440.
— Social, 906.
— The incentives to, 761.

Worship, The spirit of, 418.
Worshipping Christ, 775.
Wrestling with God, 59.
Writing on the roll, The, 665.
Wrong in the heart, 457.

Years, Added, 604.
Yoke of Christ, The, 863, 864.
Young and getting old, On keeping, 647.
— man, A certain, 1038.
— — The choice, 208.
Young men, A message to, 758.
— people, The religious life of, 510.
Youth and after, 36.
Youth and age, 510.
— of Jesus, Creation's witness to the, 476.
— The secret of immortal, 610.
Youthfulness recovered, 464.

[The following outlines are indexed as specially suitable for the Church Year and Special Occasions. A full Church Year Index will be supplied at the end of Vol. II.]

THE ADVENT SEASON

Advent, 918.
Christ's advents, 781.
Donec Aspiret Dies, 564.
Faith, The expectancy of, 942.
Invisible presence of God, The, 600.
I will make all My mountains a way, 618.
Lord our judge, The, 601.
Preparation, The spirit of, 943.
Redemption by judgment, 574.
Sum total of life, The, 573.
Ten virgins, The, 943.
Waiting, The patient, 944.
Worship, A preparation for Christ's coming, 600.
Waiting for God, 591.

CHRISTMAS DAY

Child in the midst, A, 902.
Christ's nearness to His people, 160.
Expectation, 591.
God with us, 583.
Jesus the Saviour, 769.
Little child shall lead them, A, 585.
Personality, 992.
Worshipping Christ, 775.

HOLY INNOCENTS' DAY

Child in the midst, The, 902.
Innocents' day, 778.
Witness of the children, The, 774.

THE EPIPHANY

Christ the good Maker and Doer, 1012.
Epiphany, 114.
God's presence and God's rest, 115.
Guiding star, The, 777.
Light obtained: Light diffused, 637.
Some aspects of humility as suggested by the story of the Centurion, 837.
Star of the wise men, The, 773.
Stars that lead to Christ, 777.

SUNDAYS BEFORE LENT

Creation, Story of the, 11.
Seeking God's kingdom and righteousness, 823.
Fall, The, 18.
Sinfulness of sin, The, 30.

ASH WEDNESDAY

Conversion, 734.
Deliverance, A message of, 735.
Fasting, The dangers of, 633.
Repentance, 740.

LENT

Interruptions of life, The, 784.
Temptation in the wilderness, 784.

PALM SUNDAY

I said, I will go up to the Palm-tree, 568.
Message of Palm Sunday, 607.
Palm Sunday and its lessons, 917.
Shadow of the Cross, The, 673.

HOLY WEEK AND PASSIONTIDE

Long-suffering of God, The, 84.
Suffering, The mystery of, 396.
Sympathy of God, The, 642.

GOOD FRIDAY

Blood of Christ, The, 124.
Good Friday, 671.
Return to Christ's love, The, 577.
Saviour's question on the Cross, The, 980.
Word of agony, The, 980.
Words from the Cross, The, 976.

EASTER EVEN

Sin put away, 224.

EASTER DAY

Easter Day Morning, 483.
Environments, Two, 982.
Faith the title for justification, 838.
Lord's victory, The, 483.
Sacred privileges, Difficulty of realizing, 482.
Singing time, The, 562.
Winter is past, 561.

ASCENSION DAY

Abiding Presence, The, 987.
Ascended into Heaven, He, 1049.
Ascension, The, 1049.
Incentives to worship, The, 761.

WHIT SUNDAY

Presence that never faileth, The, 986.

TRINITY SUNDAY

Divine revelation, A, 6.
God our Father, 812.
Holy Trinity, The, 2.
Isaiah's vision, 580.
Lord appearing in the country, Our, 1047.
Lord will provide, The, 821.
Sins of the fathers and the children, The, 689.
Where is wisdom? 348.

MISCELLANEOUS

ST. ANDREW'S DAY

Call of St. Andrew, The, 787.

ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST'S DAY

Preaching of the Baptist, The, 779.
Sincerity in religion, 858.

ST. JAMES THE APOSTLE'S DAY

Cross and the throne, The, 914.

ST. MATTHEW'S DAY

Consecration, 287.
Divine call, The, 845.

FEAST OF ST. MICHAEL AND ALL ANGELS

Holy Angels, 963.

EMPIRE DAY

Empire day, 307.

AUTUMN

Fading leaves, 645.

UNIVERSITY SERMON

Friendship of Christ, The, 155.

CHURCH GUILD SERMON

Three hundred men that lapped, The, 183.

SERMON TO CLERGYMEN

Lengthening the cords and strengthening the stakes, 626.

SUNDAY SCHOOL ANNIVERSARY

On keeping young and getting old, 647.

SERMON TO THE YOUNG

Heavenly Guide, The, 651.

SERMON FOR WOMEN

Civic apathy, 671.

HARVEST

Feast of tabernacles, The, 156.
Gleaning, The duty of, 197.
God's goodness to man, 397.
Harvest festival, 34.
— thanksgiving, 34.
Parable of harvest, The, 325.
Sowing and reaping, 550.

NEW YEAR

Future all unknown, The, 167.
Memory, hope, and effort, 435.
New Year's promise, A, 116.
— — thoughts, 5.
Old paths, 654.
Portal of a new period, The, 432.
Presence shall enlighten the way, The, 115.
Watchwords for a New Year, 162.

FIRST SUNDAY OF THE YEAR

Jacob's retrospect of life, 68.
Threefold cord, A, 527.
Way in the wilderness, The, 154.

LAST SUNDAY OF THE YEAR

Remembering the past, 145.